

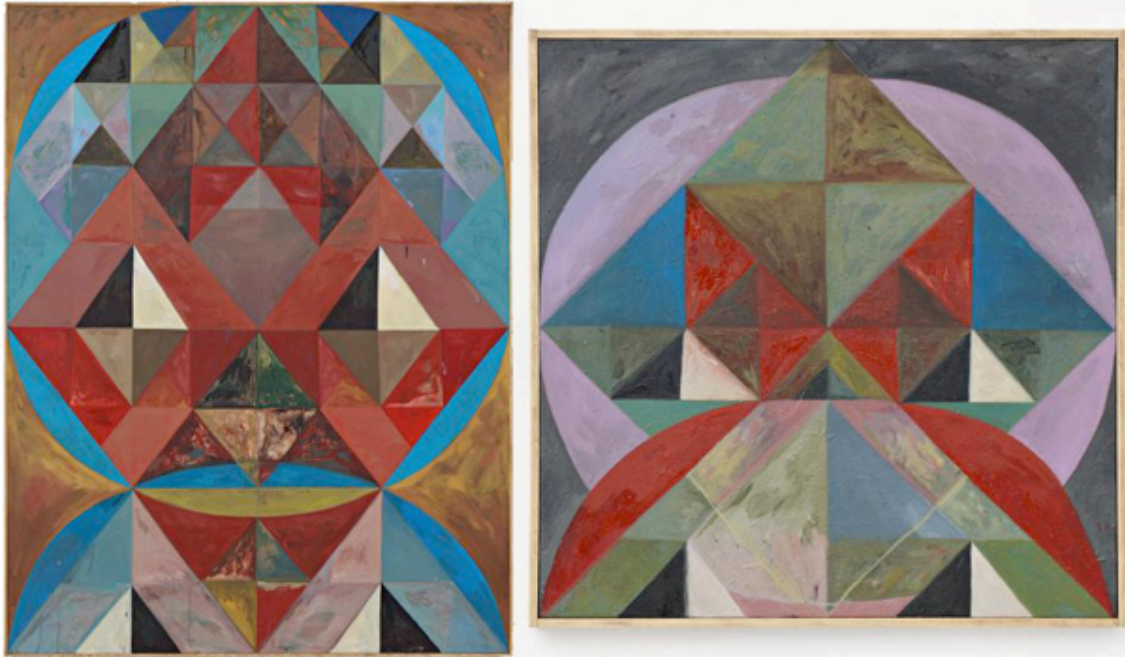
# BLOUIN ARTINFO

## BERLIN ART BRIEF

Emerging: Brent Wadden Puts Characters into the Kaleidoscope at Peres Projects

By Alexander Forbes

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**Brent Wadden**'s paintings demand a second look. And a third. And a fourth. And a fifth. Their multitude of geometric abstractions reveal new patterns, divisions, and indeed characters with each look. With two canvases currently on view in **Peres Projects'** summer group show and a third stashed in new dealer, **Javier Peres'** office, Wadden, who splits his time between Berlin and Canada, has shown an entirely new depth, not only within the paint itself but in relationship to the viewer.

The geometric patterning within the paintings gives immediate reference to traditional arts such as Navajo rug weavings. However, Wadden says, "I'm not directly referencing that, but I am really interested in aboriginal art and the totem poles on the west coast of Canada." Instead, the geometrical patterns that are consistent across all of his current body of work come from an equally historical painterly reference: the grid. "The canvas is broken up into sections by a freehanded grid pattern. Then from there I draw diagonals, and then I break it up with the spheres, which make the portraits or the characters."

At first, these characters lay outside of the eye's focus. Because of their immediate approachability as a form of reference to traditional arts or op-art, one passes over the fact that in many ways, they're a form of portraiture. "Eventually the characters pull out of the pieces," says Wadden. "For me each painting has a different mood even though I use the exact same structure for each painting. I'm just working within this grid pattern, but whether through color or technique something different comes out, each takes on a different identity," he continues. "Within the space when they're hung, each of the characters are either looking at each other or looking away from each other. This is determined by the placement of an eye consisting of two black and white right-angled triangles placed back to back. If I removed these triangles or simply changed the colors, the characters would probably disappear entirely and the painting would become a pure abstraction." They make the viewer work for them, Peres suggests, explaining, "His work is quiet and complex, much like him, and it doesn't scream for attention; it doesn't need to." On the gallery wall, Wadden's paintings are far from the most eye catching works in the show, but they are certainly the most intimate. Even down to the raw wood framing, which Wadden tacks on, marking the end of each work, there is a real sense of touch in each of the works.

This was not always the case, however. Previous to this series of works and a forthcoming set, which will compose his first solo show with Peres, Wadden worked almost exclusively on paper in neon colors and psychedelic themes. The use of pseudo-portraiture and geometric abstraction were constant. However, reviewing the works in comparison to the new series is something like returning to one's teenage bedroom after a first year away at college. This is a transition that Peres notes as well in his decision to start working with Wadden in an artist-dealer relationship — for the past five years he had worked as a preparator at the gallery.

Of the transition, Wadden explains, chuckling, "Last summer I went to spend a month with my parents on Cape Breton Island in the very north of Nova Scotia. I busted out some art supplies that I had left up there and just started working. It was the first time I had done oil painting since art school, but the change of materials really refined what I was doing previously." By working more quickly, the extra flash, squiggly lines and Sega-like characters disappeared in exchange for works that warm rather than accost the iris.

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