

## Cubist Art, Fresh Angles

By Carol Diamond

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Two gallery shows of contemporary art in Manhattan bring geometry and tactility together with vibrant results. New York-based artist Celia Gerard is exhibiting her signature large-scale mixed media drawings alongside relief sculptures in ceramic and bronze at Sears Peyton Gallery in Chelsea. At Fox Gallery on the Upper West Side, Greek artist Eozen Agopian adds thread and fabric to her abstract paintings. Large and small-scale works by Ms. Agopian fill two rooms of the salon-style gallery. Both artists use the pictorial language of geometric abstraction to take on the mantle of Cubism.

In Ms. Gerard's drawings, triangles appear and disappear in transparent veils of muted hues that press toward and away from the picture plane. Black lines zigzag playfully across the page, creating scalene triangles in "Ghost Bird," 2016. Translucent layers of aqueous blues cover large areas of the composition, delineating white and pale-yellow birdlike forms. Ms. Gerard achieves formal tension here by combining soft, barely-there atmospheric color with resolute, geometric clarity. Her abstracted birds in flight recall Georges Braque's iconic "*oiseaux*," a recurring symbol in the Cubist master's late work.

While Ms. Gerard's ethereal abstract drawings evoke airy landscapes, her sculpted pieces are dense and earthy. These relief sculptures are modeled with stamped triangular shapes, sometimes gouged into thick slabs of plaster to make concave forms, sometimes built up into bulging convex objects. Works here have been cast in bronze and patinated in umber tones. In "Dymaxion Love Letter," 2016, undulating rows of stamped triangles cover a ragged-edged square.

Ms. Agopian's energetic paintings have the rigor of Analytic Cubism. In "Arshalous/After August," 2012, among the larger paintings on display uptown, black and white triangles are subdivided into smaller triangles, creating staccato rhythms that move the eye this way and that. Veils of vertical lines overlay her triangular design. The sides of triangles line up to create rhythmic axial divisions. A blue haze across the picture unifies the composition.

Achromatic artworks in black and gray hang alongside canvases that explode with color. She incorporates intensely hued thread and fabric into her paintings, a device, Gallery Director Annette Fox says, reflects the artist's interest in traditional women's crafts of Greece. In an interview in the

catalog accompanying the exhibit, Ms. Agopian explains that thread holds a symbolic meaning for her: "As a young girl growing up in Greece, needle-work was an activity that deliberately kept us busy in the late afternoons."

Another large artwork here, "Between Two Continents – Off Broadway," 2016, synthesizes flat shapes of high-chroma fabric with black and gray paint. Layers of white thread and patterned fabrics hang off the canvas, adding areas of sculptural relief.

For both Ms. Gerard and Ms. Agopian, their Cubist language of shapes, forms and tactile forces, inspires captive viewing and sensory fulfillment.

*Celia Gerard: Ascent/Descent* is on view through May 6, 2017, Sears-Peyton Gallery, 210 Eleventh Avenue, Suite 802, New York, NY, 212-966-7469, [www.searspeyton.com](http://www.searspeyton.com)