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Work on Monday: Cerulean Bridge by Richmond Burton



"CERULEAN BRIDGE" BY RICHMOND BURTON, COURTESY OF THE ARTIST
JULY 7, 2014 BY OLIVER PETERSON

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Following some weeks off, Work on Monday returns with a painting by former Hamptons resident Richmond Burton, who recently moved upstate to Woodstock, NY. The artist returns to the East End this week to exhibit some of the last canvases he painted while still living and working in Elaine de Kooning's former home and studio in East Hampton's Northwest Woods.

While chosen in part because its horizontal positioning works best for this online format, Burton's "Cerulean Bridge" is also emblematic of his body of work painted before leaving East Hampton—though it was actually painted more recently in Woodstock.

Cerulean Bridge
Richmond Burton (b.1960)
Oil on canvas
36 x 72 inches, 2013

Like many of Burton's recent works, "Cerulean Bridge" is an abstraction informed by the painter's background in architecture. Beneath his expressive flourishes, drips and colors, the bulk of this canvas features at its core a hard geometric grid of triangles, squeezed above and below by an elongated arch.

Keeping an eye toward architecture, one could easily imagine Burton's grid of triangles bearing the load of that simple gray arch, the weight of it pushing, vice-like from two sides, as the firmer shapes interlock under extreme pressure.

Taking the action a step further, the painter softens the "meat" of this sandwich with a palette of delicious blue, purple and yellow drips and smudges, which, to continue the thought, appear to be squeezed out from the structural center.

Viewed another way, "Cerulean Bridge" could also be seen to demonstrate a subtle, curve, arching the grid itself, rather than the negative space around it. From this perspective, the painterly marks feel more like drips of rust and hard water stains on the decaying skeleton of some once-glorious carnival ride or amphitheater. The work's significant, if not monumental, size also lends itself to this view.

However one experiences it, Burton's "Cerulean Bridge" combines beautifully its elements of structure, abstraction and expression, and its import and complexity only grows commensurate with the amount of time spent considering it. As each thought is fleshed out and each question answered, we are only confounded with more. In this way, much like an episode of *Lost*, the painting has a sort of addictive quality that can't easily be ignored, and there's really no reason to try.

Richmond Burton is exhibiting at Silas Marder Gallery in Bridgehampton (120 Snake Hollow Road) from July 12–August 11. An opening artist's reception with Burton will be held on Saturday, July 12 from 5–8 p.m.