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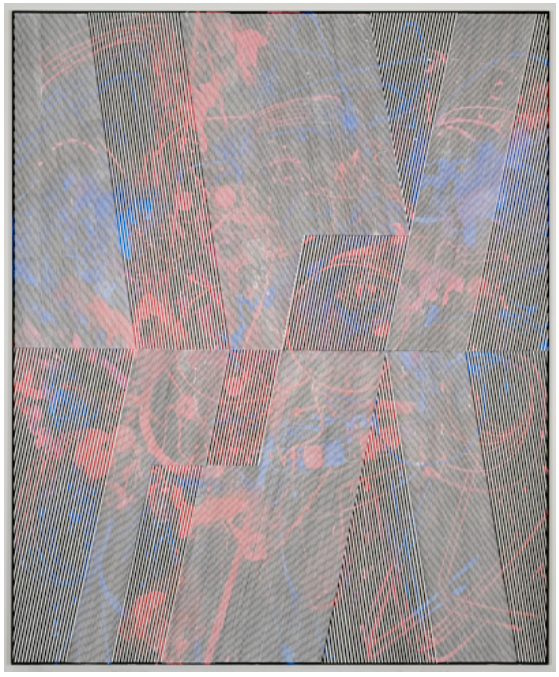

Logocenteric
by Ava Jancar

GARTH WEISER
Altman Siegel Gallery
49 Geary St., San Francisco, CA 94108
February 19, 2010 - March 27, 2010

For the 1968 Summer Olympics held in Mexico City, graphic designer Lance Wyman conceived of a logo as a part of the first ever integrated identity for an Olympic Games. The logo, the word MEXICO, the numbers 68, and the five Olympic rings enveloped by alternating black and white lines, parallel and concentric in relation to the rounded typeface of the words and numbers, is more visually enthralling than it is legible, its message swallowed by optical undulations. This Op pattern, à la Bridget Riley, comes to enunciate a distinct time-based visual sign, signifying Mexico in 1968 more so than the written language itself.

Like Wyman's logo, Weiser's paintings at Altman Siegel Gallery are an iconic blend of language and pattern. Weiser employs a discourse between graphic design and art historical reference, layering abstract gestural strokes amidst neatly hard-edged logo-inspired bitmaps. The line between corporate identity and Lewittian geometries becomes fuzzy and the references begin to accumulate, almost to the point of excess.

The paintings, in a sense, simulate collage; the allusions to the neo-plastic, the abstract expressionist, his airbrushed gradients and brassy gold leafed surfaces pushed toward one another. Initially seeming oblique in intention and almost purely aesthetically driven, the compositions are refreshingly open. In spite of the swaths of pattern that conceal the imagery below, Weiser exposes the slippage of the medium and the discipline, toward a definition of painting at this moment.

— Ava Jancar