

# The Wall Street Journal

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By Lance Esplund

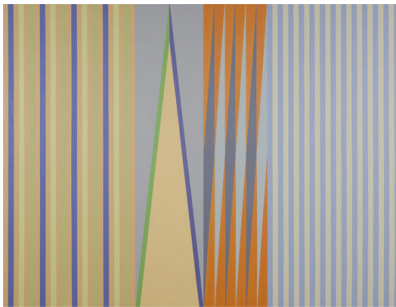
## **James Little: Ex Pluribus Unum**

June Kelly Gallery

166 Mercer St., (212) 226-1660

Through June 21

To stand in James Little's show of large, horizontal, multicolored abstract paintings is to be hit with various associations. These include the frontal regal processions in Byzantine mosaics; a candy store display; and light drifting across either striped wallpaper or the rippling surface of a lake. At times Mr. Little's colored vertical stripes appear to expand and contract, creating an optical illusion suggesting wind in the grasses or the vibration of harp strings.



Mr. Little (b. 1954) works in encaustic. He builds his flat, hard-edged stripes and elongated triangles through the application of numerous translucent layers, culminating in bold patterns of astringent colors that seem to advance toward the viewer, but which at the same time feel milk-softened, held at a filtered distance.

The exhibition's title, "Ex Pluribus Unum" (meaning "one from many"), suggests not only a system but also the exponential force of repetition. An aftereffect of uniformity lingers. But Mr. Little's color is finely tuned. In "If Only..." (2010), the best work here, diagonals and verticals, oranges and blue-grays transcend pattern, coalescing into an organic whole. The painting's unexpected appearance of a row of diamond shapes surprises like an early spring.

—Mr. Esplund writes about art for the Journal.