

SHELDON KREVI: GOLDEN

JAY ETKIN GALLERY
703 CAMINO DE LA FAMILIA, SANTA FE

THERE IS SOMETHING FUNDAMENTALLY OPTICAL IN THE PAINTINGS OF

Sheldon Krevet on display at Jay Etkin Gallery. My use of *optical* relates not to Duchamp's derogatory sense of that word in regard to painting, but to a positive sense, based in Santa Fe resident David Abram's *The Spell of the Sensuous: Perception and Language in a More-Than-Human World*—a book that I read years ago but that remains with me as a touchstone, particularly in regard to perception. Perception is embodied. We see with eyes that are embedded in a body, and that body co-evolved along with the planet. Though for many contemporary global humans it is not always the case, seeing can (perhaps more often should) be an embodied experience. This particular body of work asks that of us. You need to be in the same space so as to, among other things, alter your distance to the paintings in order to experience them fully. To some extent that is the crux of much of Modernism; it addresses itself explicitly to the perceptual act and the interaction between audience and artwork to a far greater extent than artworks had done in the Western historical past.

Krevet's paintings are done on canvas or birch panel. He uses sand in several of them, in addition to acrylic or oil paint, and the color variations are subtle. Most are multi-panel works, and the horizontality or verticality of the adjoining panels adds another dimension to an ongoing enquiry into stasis versus change. This can lead to a meditation on representation in terms of how we imagine, spatially and visually, relations among past and present and future. Consideration of how we represent

to ourselves mentally these conceptual dimensions is not a trivial issue; it has occupied some great minds over the centuries. Sometimes artists are exploring this without necessarily being explicit.

Granularity—which comes up in relation to image resolution as well as data processing in the current sense of scientific research and modeling—seems to be Krevet's field of operation, the grainy dimension where our perceptual apparatus is engaged kinesthetically. This is implicit in Minimalism, which used to connote works that present a continuous, repetitive stimulus (notes, brushstrokes, what have you) that at some point is subtly altered. The viewer/listener has been both relaxed and sensitized so that the small variation becomes a pleasurable surprise, enhancing one's attention to even more subtlety of pattern. I suspect that the pleasure is entangled with the fact that we are very much pattern-recognizing creatures; that capacity is almost one of the hallmarks of intelligence, as we denote it. There are versions of this "minimalist" strategy or process in the music and art of a variety of indigenous cultures, so it is not a modern invention, but its eruption into the mainstream arts in the 1970s, for example in the music of Steve Reich and Philip Glass, was a significant moment. As shown here, Krevet's works could be associated with this general artistic strategy.

The painting I had the most pleasurable time with was *Meeting of the Spirits*, a thirty-by-forty-inch canvas

whose proportions and subtle dot matrix of pale blue-green-yellow gradations pulled me into it; one of those rare and lovely moments when one loses oneself inside a painting. This may seem to contradict the idea of being embodied while looking at a painting, that is of becoming aware of how the act of seeing is occurring within a larger context in which one's body and the artwork co-exist in dynamic relation. In Abram's thinking, the shaman is a sort of conduit or mediator between the human collective order (village, clan, tribe, nation, species) and the wider natural sphere, with which humans must have a good relationship if they are to survive. The shaman role rests on the capacity of certain individuals to detach themselves, at least temporarily, from the perceptual boundaries or dominant thought mode of their culture and enter the spheres of animals, plants, earth, sky, wind, and other natural forces. This allows the shaman to facilitate the flow of necessary "nourishment" in both directions. In our very different civilization, the viewing of an artwork can be a small opportunity for that kind of opening, a greater-than-self experience, which seems to be a natural human craving. The artist at his or her best can be an intermediary whose rapport with a wider field of awareness (plus skill and hard work) makes that wider realm available to us.

—MARINA LA PALMA

Sheldon Krevet, *One Thing Leads to Another*, diptych, acrylic on linen, 28" x 76", 1995, 2013

