

## Christopher French

Holly Johnson

Dallas

Wresting rhythm from rigor, Christopher French creates energetic paintings that play off the endless potential of color and geometric form. The artist, who is best known for optical abstractions of circles painted on the perforated grids of Braille texts, has broken through self-imposed barriers in his recent works. His earlier densely packed, apparently unordered compositions, which forced the viewer's eyes to bounce around, have segued into minimal abstractions structured by circles laid out on a grid, and, more recently, by sensuous squiggles that swim across the picture plane. Whether working on paper or linen, French paints uniform backgrounds that thrust the iconography forward, adding dimension to works that are essentially flat.

Though the vocabulary is limited, French, an *ARTnews* contributor, imbues each painting with a distinct character. In *The Sky is Blue, so Blue* (2006), a kaleidoscopic array of tiny circles coalesces into constellations. In *House of Sand and Fog* (2005), a rosy-hued ground backs up pastel dots of various sizes on a grid, with one vertical column of circles at the center and most of the others aligned along the edges of the canvas. And in *The Green Eye of the Yellow God* (2007), the dots zigzag in a diagonal path.

The most dramatic painting here, *The Colors of the World Unite and Divide Seven Days a Week* (2007), uses a stylized squiggle motif derived from the top of the "T" in the *New York Times* font. Laid out as a series of brightly colored spirals, this form evokes Arabic calligraphy while remaining resolutely abstract.

—Janet Kutner



Christopher French, *The Colors of the World Unite and Divide Seven Days a Week*, 2007, acrylic on linen, 36" x 36". Holly Johnson.