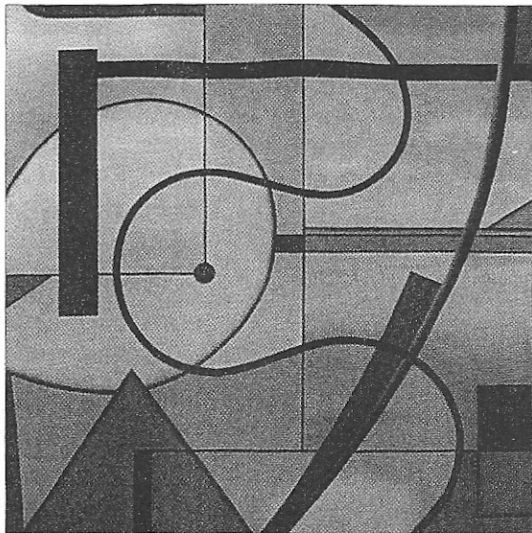


William Conger

Roy Boyd
Chicago

William Conger has said he believes his life's mission is to take the burden off the rectangle. It's a whimsical wisecrack that reflects a playful streak in the artist's geometric abstractions, but it hints at something serious, too. In this show of oils from the past five years, Conger didn't avoid right-angle geometry, but he introduced subtle imperfection—lines crafted with a wavering human touch rather than a straight edge—and there were plenty of circles, ellipses, and flowing curves to balance the compositions.

Resolutely abstract on first viewing, many of these colorful collections of shapes eventually come together into unexpected objects and landscapes. The shapes in *Navigator* (2006) recall bicycle wheels, carnival rides, toys, and trains—all associations that suggest movement and rhythm. Several of the paintings took on almost musical properties, as tones of color sounded chords and shapes seemed syncopated. In *Morn* (2005) flat geometry in shades of blue



William Conger, *Morn*, 2005, oil on wood, 36" x 36".
Roy Boyd.

and taupe with red accents became a view of the shore through a stained-glass window. This last impression may be the truest to Conger's intentions. Rather than reflecting light the way solid objects do, stained glass filters and tints it while remaining flat.

Much of the expressive force in the best of these works comes from Conger's increasingly bright palette. If his paintings from 2002 and 2003 appear to be seen through a grimy window, in more-recent works that window appears to have been washed. —Margaret Hawkins