

## CRITICS' PICKS

CURRENT   PAST

## San Francisco

Laura Paulini and Jill  
Sylvia

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ELEANOR HARWOOD GALLERY

1295 Alabama Street

April 25–May 30, 2009

Laura Paulini and Jill Sylvia dissect Rosalind Krauss's assertion that the grid is a purely optical device free from the intrusion of speech. Paulini builds her grids organically, while Sylvia dismantles them to the point of collapse. In testing the boundaries of structural integrity, they simultaneously comment on the emotional repercussions of economic free fall, relaying quiet and anxious narratives of loss, faith, and accountability.

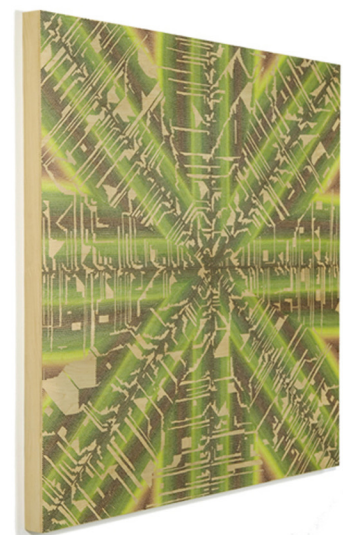
Sylvia uses a drafting knife to cleanly carve out the entry spaces in bookkeeping ledgers, leaving behind only a fragile lattice. The resulting filigreed objects are displayed as individual sheets recomposed in book form with pages held apart or, in the case of *Untitled (Vertical Installation)*, 2009, hung as a cascading scroll. These stripped-out ledgers suggest that our financial systems are incapable of transparency, as any tangible measure of profit and loss disappears along with the boxes. While Sylvia excavates existing arrays, Paulini constructs hers intuitively, applying uniform dots of egg tempera to panel, often working out from the center. She miscalculates points of convergence, encouraging seams to misalign and rhythms to fall apart. Often, the structure veers off course, as in *Kaleidoscope*, 2008, in which radiating arms clumsily shift and collide. Tension is exacerbated by lacunae peppered throughout her compositions, resembling random punch-card patterns.

Their differing approaches create distinct vantage points. The individual colors shimmer on close inspection in Paulini's paintings, but the overall palette is muted from a distance. Sylvia's objects resonate most when the skeletal forms come into full view. Both artists emphasize the grid's malleability, not its mathematical function and logic. However, the works on view depart from purely formal concerns to take measure of trust and intuition in a time of prevailing uncertainty.

— Patricia Maloney



Jill Sylvia, *Untitled (Vertical Installation)*, 2009, hand-cut ledger paper, dimensions variable.



Laura Paulini, *Kaleidoscope* 2008, egg tempera on panel, 40" x 40" x 2".

Installation shots from *Allegories of Control: Laura Paulini & Jill Sylvia*, Eleanor Harwood Gallery, San Francisco, CA, April 25-May30, 2009.

