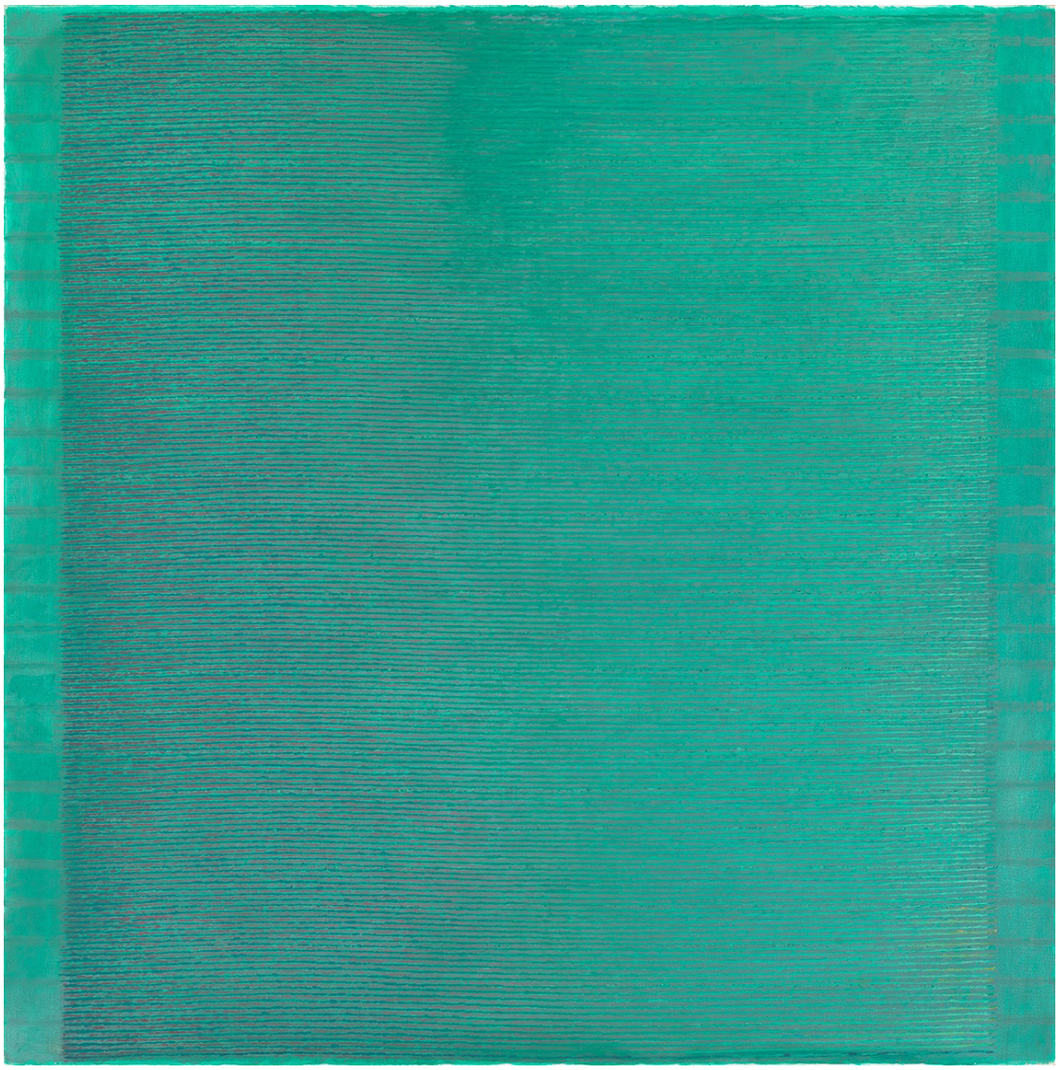
WARREN ROHRER

Recollection

NOVEMBER 6 – DECEMBER 19

LOCKS GALLERY



Apple 3, 1985, oil on linen, 72 x 72 inches

Within Warren Rohrer's quiet, meticulously composed paintings lies a series of paradoxes. From a distance, his gradient squares of color appear as simple swaths, but upon closer inspection, the repetitious system of daubs and strokes becomes an ever-shifting field of experience. Emerging out of the 1970s, Rohrer's unvarnished compositions adopt a loose grid through which he orients his mark-making—opaque slants of color are layered atop one another to create subtle shifts of hue and directionality that reflect a rhythmic movement across the canvas.

The eponymous *Recollection* (1985) contains a febrile energy with a mass of deep red emanating from a blue-black base, the flecks of paint transforming into scales beneath a shifting light. In *From Black 3* (1979), coloration becomes structural as the tiny strokes create the effect of iridescence over a dark surface and the color moves from earthy green to muddy mauve. In paintings such as *Amish 5* (1975) and *Woven Sky* (1972) Rohrer's brushstrokes are fibrous, organized in rows like the weft of a weave, recalling the sensorial qualities of Amish quilts and his connection to Lancaster, PA.

And then there is the question of edges: how and where do the paint layers meet the borders of the painting? Along the margins of the canvas, where his paintings should find their terminus, Rohrer instead directs us to the beginning, revealing stray markings of earlier iterations and deeper layers. His paintings—like landscapes—do not end, but rather cycle and repeat. In the words of his wife, poet Jane Rohrer, "There was no looking back, and [yet] all he did was look back."

Warren Rohrer (1927–1995) was born in Lancaster County, Pennsylvania and became one of Philadelphia's leading abstract painters in the late 20th century. Coming from a Mennonite upbringing, he strayed from a conventional religious path when he began to pursue art and art education. After graduating from Eastern Mennonite College in 1950, and while working as a high school teacher, he studied art under Hobson Pittman at the Pennsylvania State University summer program. In the 1960s, he lived for a time in a converted barn in Christiana, PA, and taught for 25 years at the Philadelphia College of Art (subsequently the University of the Arts). For the latter part of his career, he lived in the Chestnut Hill neighborhood of Philadelphia (owning the former studio of early-20th century artist Violet Oakley) where he worked until his untimely death in 1995.

The subject of a retrospective at the Philadelphia Museum of Art in 2003, Warren Rohrer's work is now in many museum collections, including the Metropolitan Museum of Art, The Philadelphia Museum of Art, The Pennsylvania Academy of the Fine Arts, The National Gallery of Art, The Phillips Collection, Denver Art Museum, Smith College Museum of Art and the Delaware Art Museum. Locks Gallery has represented the artist (now his estate) since 1974.