

M A R Y B O O N E G A L L E R Y  
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JOE ZUCKER

On 1 March 2013, Mary Boone Gallery will open at its Fifth Avenue location *Empire Descending a Staircase*, a new series of paintings by JOE ZUCKER.

The exhibition title references Marcel Duchamp's "Nude Descending a Staircase", a painting famously excoriated for its deconstruction of representation when it was displayed at the Armory Show exactly one hundred years ago. Since the late 1960s, Joe Zucker has devised his own startling ways to fracture a chosen image, often through some imposition of a grid. For the current series of paintings he continues a process of physically breaking down not just the ostensible subject -- here, fluted Doric columns -- but the materials of painting itself.

Using panels of gypsum board (an eight-by-two-foot format is used for works depicting paired columns; a four-foot square format depicts colonnades), Zucker scores the surface into a quarter-inch grid, then picks off the top layer, exposing the porous core. Each tiny square is painted with watercolor in a broad tonal range from black to white, with only an occasional leaning toward color. The nuanced shading imposes dimension to the columns, yet Zucker obliterates a realistic chiaroscuro effect by slicing and restacking the columns, misaligning shadows to create effects of rhythm and motion.

The broken column serves as a metaphor for the historic empires for which the individual paintings are named. The magnitude of these empires is palpable in the over one million "pixels" (the squares of the grid) that comprise the series' dry fresco-like surfaces.

Relevant to understanding these works is that Zucker endured a detached retina while developing the series. His ideology that the material and image of painting are vulnerable became sharply in accord with his experience of physical deterioration and altered vision. During the miraculous but slow regeneration of his eye, Zucker painstakingly ordered fragments of column rubble into compelling new paintings.

The exhibition, at 745 Fifth Avenue, will continue through 27 April 2013. For further information, please contact Ron Warren at the Gallery, or visit our website [www.maryboonegallery.com](http://www.maryboonegallery.com).