

# Art in America

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## Jim Hodges CRG

Eschewing stylistic uniformity, Jim Hodges's work finds consistency in the artist's sensibility, which is at once poetic and unassuming. His projects have been the result of labor-intensive and time-consuming, repetitive processes and, conversely, of emphatically economical means. What also remains consistent is his ability to bridge the gap between private and public, the obvious and the esoteric, the visual and the conceptual. In this, Hodges works from personal history, cultural associations and an intuitive understanding of the significance and charge of the understated.

Hodges's recent exhibition consisted of two room-filling installations (plus a room of recent works on paper). In one gallery, he erected a freestanding work titled *and still this* (2005-08), consisting of 10 canvases arrayed in a gently angled arc that, if continued, would roughly describe a circle with a diameter approaching 17 feet. The largest panel measures 89 by 54 inches, and each successive panel diminishes by 1 inch in both dimensions. Approaching, one first saw the exterior, which consists of exposed wooden stretcher bars and the backs of the canvases, all dappled by the light that bleeds through. Entering the enclosure, one saw that the canvases' surfaces feature gold-leaf images ranging from an all-over camouflage pattern to repeated sunbursts and rays of light breaking through cloud formations. The structure's aperture was oriented to capture the natural light that comes through the gallery's windows.

The companion piece, *the dark gate* (2008), is a large wooden box that was installed in a room painted black and barely illuminated by the single light-bulb contained within the box. The box could be entered through a pair of doors. Inside, one encountered what first appeared to be a black-on-black



Jim Hodges: *and still this*, 2005-08, gold leaf on gessoed linen, 10 panels, approx. 17 feet in diameter; at CRG.

sunburst image. Closer inspection disclosed that the back of the box features an aperture sprouting large, sharp steel spikes whose tips have been daubed with perfume. Sensuous attraction involved real danger, for the scent beckoned one to sniff the tip as one would a flower.

With the canvases of *and still this*, Hodges sets in motion a game of quotes and references (the Hudson River School, Warhol's camouflage paintings). By pairing the two works, he staged an eccentric comparison between the worlds of light and darkness, outside and in, and architecture and nature. Taken together, the installations could be interpreted as the outcome of a meditation on artifice and illusion, and on the experiences of terror and transcendence in the sublime.

—Saul Ostrow