

The New Mexican's Weekly Magazine of Arts, Entertainment & Culture



June 3, 2016

Pasatiempo

Pasatiempo

June 3, 2016

pasatiempomagazine.com

ON THE COVER Drawing parallels

24

The parallel lines and triangles that populate Jeff Kahn's graphically clear, elemental paintings may reference landscape topographies in Saskatchewan, where he grew up; the decorated garments of the Plains Cree, of which he is a member; and the inventions of the mid-century abstractionists. His artistic concertos are the results of dedicated experimentation — and when he comes up with a pattern he likes, he revels in repeating it, with adjustments only to the palette. An exhibition of new paintings opens on Friday, June 3, at Chiaroscuro Contemporary Art. On the cover is Kahn's acrylic on canvas, *Emerge* (2016).

30



BOOKS

- 16 **In Other Words** *Madonnaland: And Other Detours Into Fame and Fandom* by Alina Simone; and *Window Left Open* by Jennifer Grotz
- 16 **Subtexts** Muse Times Two reading: Crystal Williams and Lauren Camp
- 18 **Babel, simplified** Linguist John McWhorter speaks on "The Language Hoax" at the Lensic Performing Arts Center

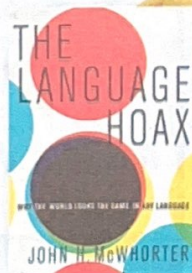
MUSIC & PERFORMANCE

- 20 **Pasa Tempos** Music by Mr. Fingers and Prins Thomas
- 23 **Random Acts** Leon Russell plays the Lensic; Growing Old Men take Center Stage; Wayne "The Train" Hancock rocks Skylight; and *The Last Five Years* shows at the Santa Fe Playhouse

ART

- 30 **Art in Review** *Sacred Spaces* at the Rubin Museum of Art in New York and *Sacred Realm* at the Museum of International Folk Art
- 34 **Requiem in photos** Nick Brandt's homage to the lost animals of East Africa

55



18

MOVING IMAGES

- 38 **Dheepan**
- 40 **Almost Holy**
- 41 **Presenting Princess Shaw**
- 42 **Chile Pages**



CALENDAR

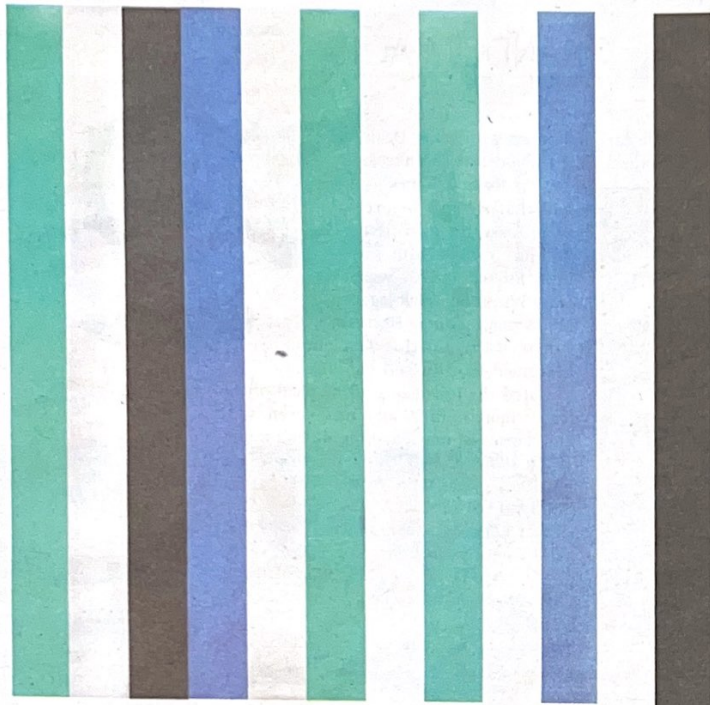
- 48 **Pasa Week**
- 55 **Exhibitionism**

ET CETERA

- 12 **Mixed Media** Photographer Magda Biernat at Photo-eye Bookstore
- 14 **Star Codes**
- 46 **Restaurant Review** Anasazi Restaurant

Visit *Pasatiempo* at pasatiempomagazine.com, on Facebook or at pasatiempomagazine.com ©2016 The Santa Fe New Mexican

Pasatiempo is an arts, entertainment and culture magazine published every Friday by *The New Mexican*, 202 E. Marcy Street, Santa Fe, New Mexico, 87501. Email: pasa@sfnewmexican.com • Fax: 505-820-0803 • Editorial: 505-986-3019



Paul Weideman | The New Mexican

DRAWING PARALLELS

ARTIST JEFF KAHM

JEFF KAHM'S NEW PAINTINGS AT CHIAROSCURO

Contemporary Art are simple but subtly energetic — bold abstractions in lines, bands, rectangles, and triangles. In one series of acrylic-on-canvas paintings, 22 inches tall and 20 inches wide, he explores one design using different colors for each painting. Every work is composed of an arrangement of four triangles and a trapezoid, and perhaps the dominant image is of a tricolored isosceles triangle pointed downward and with a different-colored background on either side. In fact, if turned upside down, the design looks like a tepee with a flap opened.

That is a strong image from the artist's reality. Of Plains Cree heritage, Kahm was born in Edmonton, Alberta, Canada, and grew up on an Indian reservation in Saskatchewan. But his feeling about the "V" pattern repeated in these paintings is definite and nonreferential: "There's something about the visual weight I like. It feels more complete."

His designs relate to perceptions and memories of landscape, traditional Native arts, and the attitude of modernist experimentalism that attracted him when he was an undergraduate in the early 1990s. "I'm coming from a lot of geometrical abstraction, looking at Color Field paintings, the New York School, looking at everyone from Kenneth Noland to Frank Stella and also historic Plains Native art, including parfleche [carrying cases made from painted hides] designs, and also aerial views of landscapes. You see this in Saskatchewan, where there are crop fields and lines of cultivation. You see this also in quillwork (Native American porcupine-quill embroidery) from the Plains tribes. The Cree did a lot of quillwork. I love looking at it."

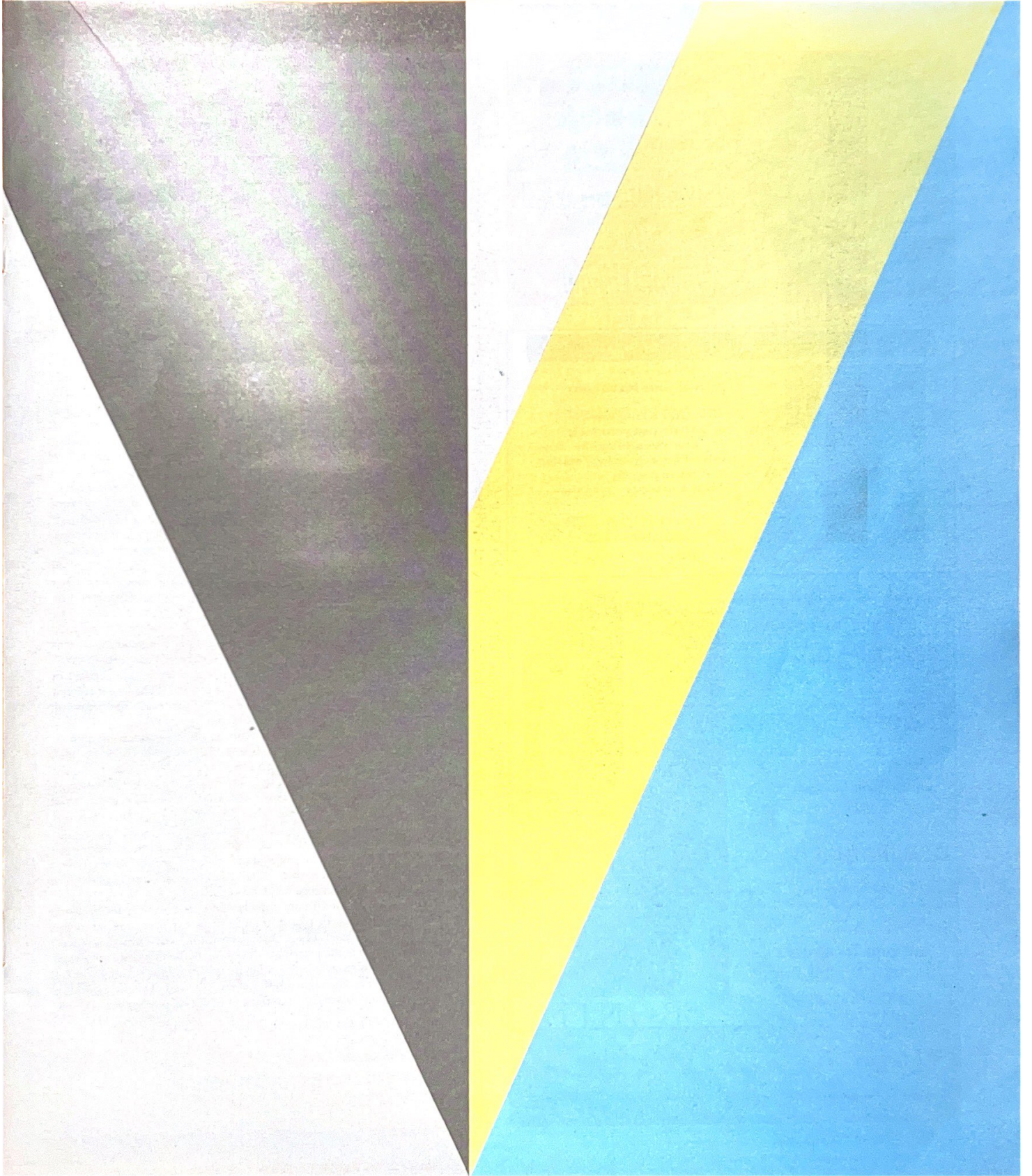
Kahm began working in abstraction when he was an undergraduate student at Kansas City Art Institute. "Before that, I did representational work — landscapes and portraits — like everybody else. I did my first painting when I was about thirteen, and I was drawing when I was nine years old. I was drawing things I saw in magazines and newspapers and things I knew — the Native people and powwow dancers and tepees."

He first came to Santa Fe in 1990 to study painting and photography at the Institute of American Indian Arts. After getting an art degree from the Kansas City school, he went on to earn his MFA in painting at the University of Alberta. In 2002, he returned to New Mexico. He has made strides in painting but has not been able to pursue photography. "I could do other things, but there's just not enough time," Kahm said. "I'm not a full-time artist. I'm a full-time instructor. I've taught at IAIA off and on since 2005, and I've been full-time teaching studio art at IAIA since 2009." He has been one of the stable of artists at Chiaroscuro Contemporary Art since March. His longtime representation has been with Madison Gallery in La Jolla, California, and William Havu Gallery in Denver.

In conversation at his studio on Santa Fe's south side, Kahm pulled out a variety of working drawings, evidence of his experiments and explorations. One series of small colored-pencil drawings featuring variations on an hourglass shape go back to about 2000, when he was still living in Saskatchewan.

continued on Page 26


Above, Jeff Kahm: *Domain*, 2016; right, *Valor*, 2016, both acrylic on canvas



Shopping! Food! Fun!
9am-4pm Fri-Sun Mar-Dec
Free Parking/Admission & Pets Allowed!
15 Flea Market Rd * Santa Fe, NM 87506
(505) 670-2599
www.SFTFM.com

THE TENIQUE FLEA MARKET
The Flea & More!

STERLING REFLEXOLOGY



feel your feet again

After a long week of being on your feet, there's nothing like a refreshing reflexology session to make you feel like a new person again.

Tess DeGange, CR
 505.690.2708
 my location or yours

18 years and still love what I do

Get Your Glow Back

With Aesthetician Renée Barela

clear+ brilliant

Laser treatments even out skin tone, boost radiance & reduce dark spots.

Buy One Treatment Get Second At Half Price!

Offer Good Thru June 30, 2016



BONITA
 Medical Center

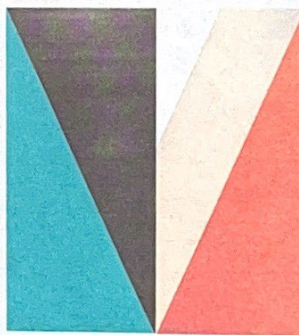
Oral Surgery & Facial Enhancements
 Edward Urig, DMD, MS | bonitamedical.com
 1700 Hospital Drive, Santa Fe | (505) 988 2121

Jeff Kahm, continued from Page 24

"Sometimes these ideas will be developed, and other times they just get laid aside and forgotten, but I like getting them out and looking at the ideas. I'm doing a lot of studies in Photoshop, too. You're just seeing what the possibilities are for more serious, large pieces." Some of the studies are three-dimensional mini-works assembled from separately cut and painted foam-core shapes. A few in this vein were made as actual paintings — stretched canvas on thick panels, the elements bolted — instead of glued — together, as in the sketch works. These small paintings can bring to mind machines or perhaps Transformers toys. "Some of it can suggest contemporary architecture and structure. I enjoyed that, at one time," he said.

The new exhibition's other series is similar in the variations-on-a-theme aspect. These paintings are also vertically oriented, this time 70 inches tall and 60 inches wide, but the pattern is even simpler: 10 vertical and parallel bands of equal width and of various hues, but never the same color on two adjacent bands.

The works in Kahm's just-previous series are also very large (90 inches by 90 inches) and also feature designs of lines and bands, with the triangle a common motif, but in this case, he explored variations of surface: The marks range from very finely textured up to an almost impasto effect. Also, there is a distinct impression of folded planes and layering. In



Tenacity, 2016, acrylic on canvas

one sense, the new parallel-line paintings in Chiaroscuro's show represent a further abstracted sense of these layered surfaces.

The newer work is elegant and understated but still carries with it a strong presence. "Stripes as geometric structures are the most recognizable of all patterns and have been used throughout the centuries," he says in his artist statement. The sense of overlapping we may experience in his small paintings in the show, *Valor* and *Tenacity*, is real, a deliberate artifact of his process. "The larger colored

shapes are painted first, then the successive bands are made after masking. I'm basically masking and using a roller and a lot of gel."

The texture on the parallel-band paintings is exceedingly smooth — almost liquid-looking — and this is a result of the fact that, for these, he applies his pigmented gels with a steel trowel. "As I'm dragging the paint, I'm kind of agitating it a little bit, giving it a little bit of history underneath. These are several layers, very thin veneers, of mostly gel and some color. It's very transparent gel, and I'm remasking a lot, doing very thin layers, and over time it suggests some depth."

Asked about his palette, he said, "I don't do a lot of color. I do variations of certain colors that I enjoy, but I do avoid certain colors. I don't use a lot of purple. And I avoid certain combinations, like red-green for Christmas and black-orange for Halloween."

Kahm makes his own frames. First he stretches canvas on frames faced with birch plywood. This hard, smooth surface is necessary when he's troweling the thin layers of gel. Once the painting is dry, he will remove it and install it on a regular stretcher. "I've been doing this since art school. I don't like to buy stretchers. I'd rather determine all the scales. I take full ownership of this when I'm building them. It's kind of tricky, but this is fun to do. I think it's really important to really enjoy what you do." ◀

details

- ▼ Jeff Kahm: *New Paintings*
- ▼ Opening reception 5 p.m. Friday, June 3; exhibition through July 4
- ▼ Chiaroscuro Contemporary Art, 558 Canyon Road, 505-992-0711