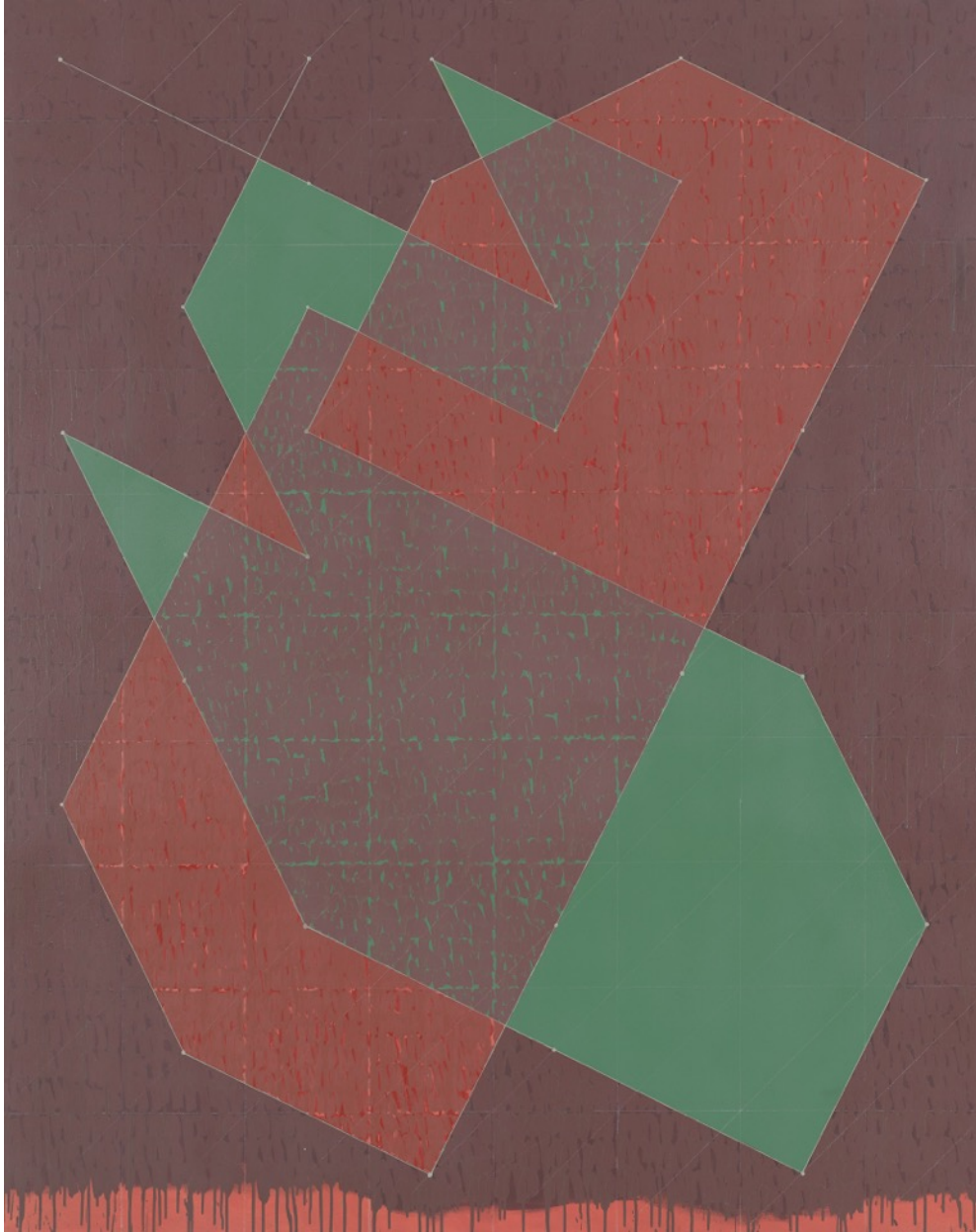


Jack Tworkov: Knight Series (1974–77)

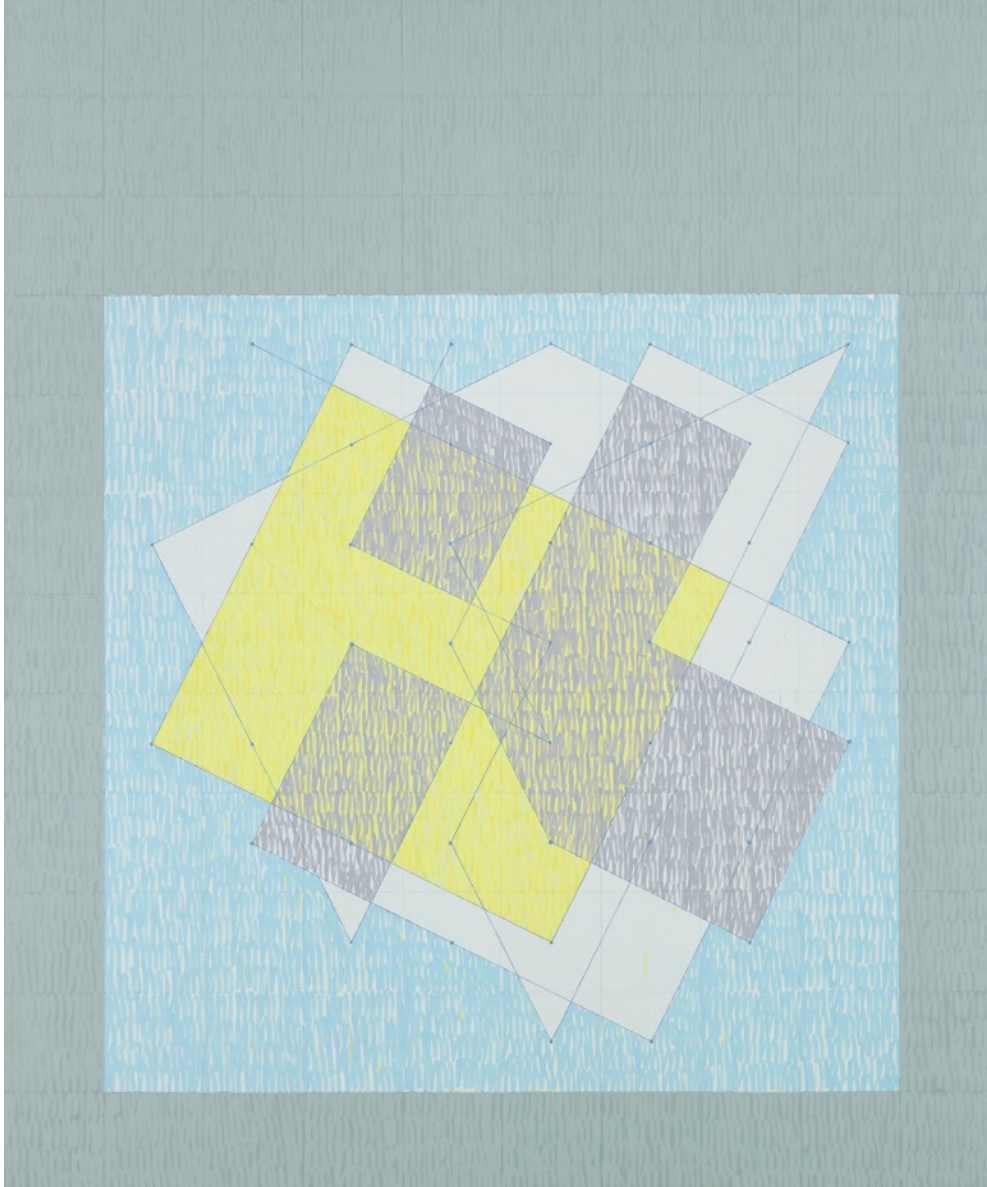
In 1975 Tworkov began the “Knight Series,” exploring issues of limits, systems, and intuition. In these compositions he determined the structural points by tracing a sequence of the knight’s moves on a chessboard and then connected the points with lines that showed its progress. While each composition adopts a familiar grid system, they are layered in a formulaic way with visible construction lines that provide a delicate but firm framework for what is seen in the painting. The divisions within the grid are reinforced by changes in color that are applied with small vertical strokes in rows filling out each square. As Andrew Forge noted in the catalog essay for *Jack Tworkov: Fifteen Years of Painting*, organized by the Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum (1982), “this repeated stroke...is small enough to provide a completely unified surface, open enough to be transparent, and vigorous enough to set up a faint background vibration.” With overlapping layers of color, the surface takes on a more complex tone, yet does not interfere with the grid structures for which the color serves as an infilling. For Tworkov, it was vital that the intersecting vertical, horizontal, and slanted lines that resulted from this technique still allowed the viewer to see the simplicity of the painting’s fundamental structure.

The series consists of paintings and works on paper that served as carefully worked-out studies of the markings and measurements that he could repeat at will. Unlike the heavily structured drawings, the painting’s loose, but regulated brushwork reveals his experimentation with planar illusion and geometric form, representing Tworkov’s belief that “planning does not exclude intuitive and sometimes random play.” Art historian Lois Fichner-Rathus writes, “the derived patterns differ widely from work to work, just as the patterns of chess games differ. Still, they remain delimited by the confines of the game board as the rules that govern the movement of the pieces.” Works on paper, particularly *39 Continuous Knight Moves (NY 12-28-74 #6)*, 1974, and *Knight Series - Pencil on paper #10 (Q4-75 #1)*, 1975, illustrate this process in formation, providing insight into the mechanism behind the large-scale canvases.

Related to strategy and war, Tworkov’s selection of the Knight icon is far from arbitrary. Taking an ardent position against the Vietnam War, Tworkov’s first painting in the series closely followed the fall of Saigon. Within the works, the metaphors of strategy and sequence serve as a response to the political climate, with compositions and processes where the artist favored logic and order over chaos and ambiguity. As art historian Lois Fichner-Rathus writes, “the derived patterns differ widely from work to work, just as the patterns of chess games differ. Still, they remain delimited by the confines of the game board as the rules that govern the movement of the pieces.” Works on paper, particularly *39 Continuous Knight Moves (NY 12-28-74 #6)*, 1974, and *Knight Series - Pencil on paper #10 (Q4-75 #1)*, 1975, illustrate this process in formation, providing insight into the mechanism behind the large-scale canvases.



Jack Tworkov
Knight Series #8 (Q3-77 #2), 1977
Oil on canvas
90h x 72w in
(228.6h x 182.88w cm)



Jack Tworkov
Knight Series #3 (Q3-75 #4), 1975
Oil on canvas
90h x 75w in
(228.6h x 190.5w cm)

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Jack Tworkov
Knight Series - Pencil on paper #10 (Q4-75 #1), 1975
Graphite and colored pencil on paper
29h x 23w in
(73.66h x 58.42w cm)



Jack Tworkov
39 Continuous Knight Moves (NY 12-31-74 #7), 1974
Graphite and colored pencil on paper
28.75 x 20 in
(73.03h x 50.8w cm)