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Art: "A treatise on time, in stencil; Paintings that multiply"

By Christopher Knight
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In his indispensable little 2000 book, "*Chromophobia*," the British artist David Batchelor demonstrated the degrees to which the Western imagination since antiquity has displayed a profound fear of color, as an agent of moral contamination or a sensual sign of corruption. By contrast, **Carlos Estrada-Vega** is an artist who might easily regard the garishly painted statuary of Hellenistic Athens as superior to the supposed "purity" of the museum-bound Elgin marbles.

At d.e.n. contemporary, **Estrada-Vega** is showing a dozen new paintings in which color comes in luscious, bite-size chunks. Each painting is composed from scores of small, canvas-covered cubes (and a few short dowels), and each cube is slathered with a thick mixture of oil, wax, paste and pure pigment in a single color. The surface fairly bristles with life.

The back of each little cube has a magnet, with which it is adhered to a metal panel. The cubes are of different sizes, so the surface topography is uneven. A brilliant painting such as "*Daisy*" at first seems to be a bright yellow, but closer inspection reveals a wide array of vivid colors that includes greens, browns, oranges and ochre. Think Van Gogh's sunflowers, exploded.

Estrada-Vega titled his show "Between 12 and 5,000 Paintings," and the proliferation of tiny canvases to make a big picture mimics the propagation of art today. In addition to joyous, this is sly and savvy work.