

Christopher French

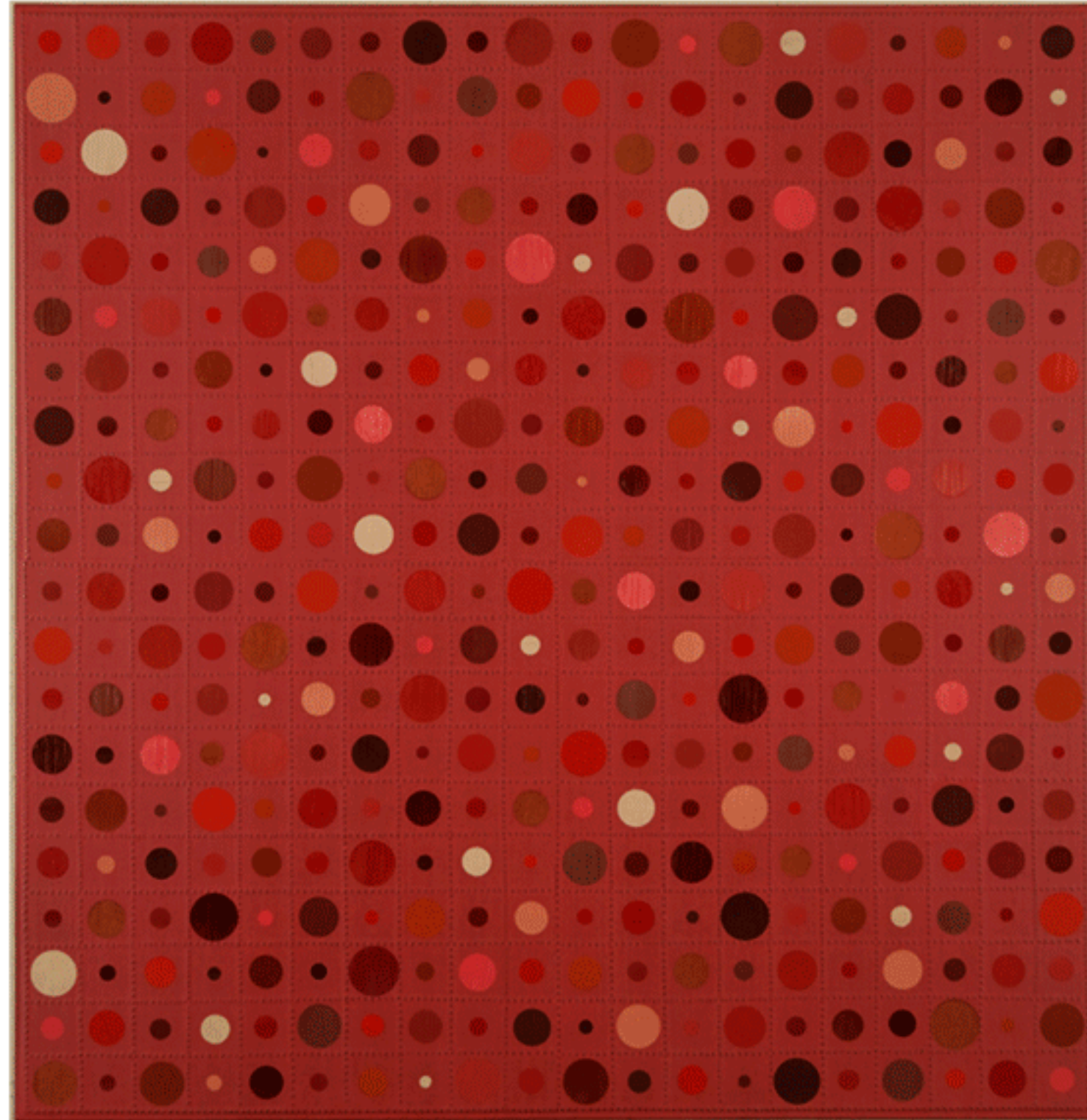
Devin Borden Hiram Butler
Houston

Christopher French's deceptively simple paintings provoke complex pleasures. Two distinct bodies of work were on view here: five oil and acrylic paintings on Braille paper mounted on wood panel and two more-recent works, in acrylic on canvas, featuring iterations of the cross-bar of the "T" from the Gothic masthead typeface of the *New York Times*.

All of these paintings were principally about color, but French (who writes occasionally for *ARTnews*) also sets up logical problems to solve. The raised surface of the Braille paper imposes a grid on his compositions; he counters with circles of color, one to a square. Each dot is of a different size, but viewers must often look hard to be sure. Similarly, each color is selected from a predetermined set of hues, frequently very close in tone to one another. No row or column contains two of the exact same color—a kind of visual Sudoku. Because the tonal variations are so subtle, it is hard to determine that they do, in fact, differ. French plays with the color of the paper, as in *Tracing Red While Waiting for Tomorrow* (2007), in which most of the circles are tones of red on red paper, or he will play against the paper, as in *50-50 Proposition* (2005), in which colors from every band of the spectrum dance across a grayish green paper.

The Colors of the World Sing the Blues and the larger *Evening's Empire* (both 2008), the paintings animated by the crossbar of the "T," demonstrated the artist's sure color sense in a much looser arrangement. If there is a pattern to these works, it is an enjoyably elusive one.

—**John Devine**



Christopher French, *Tracing Red While Waiting for Tomorrow*, 2007, Braille paper with oil and acrylic on wood panel, 21" x 20½".
Devin Borden Hiram Butler.