

ARTNEWS

David Klamen

Richard Gray
Chicago

In this impressive show of recent oil paintings, David Klamen transforms trite Romantic landscapes into meditations on knowledge and memory. Klamen's windswept seas and verdant groves could be mistaken for 19th-century originals, were it not for the intrusion of abstract forms. Several works are covered with tiny, closely spaced white dots; the rest are partially obscured by white, rectilinear shapes that evoke fragments of maps or floor plans. All of them reflect the systems that people use to understand their surroundings and that ultimately create distance between us and our environment.

Klamen's paintings defy the easy analysis promised by their subject matter. In the stunning *Daimoku Constellation #6* (2007), a veil of dots hides the underlyings gray and blue seascape. Each dot represents the recitation of a Buddhist chant called the *daimoku*. In an untitled 2006 work, vertical and horizontal lines



David Klamen, *Untitled*, 2006, oil on canvas, 53" x 78 1/2". Richard Gray.

that look as if they could have been lifted from an engineer's schematic interfere with the viewer's gaze, their mechanical appearance contrasting with the unspoiled grass and trees behind them.

Although Klamen renders individual leaves and shifting light in a cloudy sky with remarkable precision, the trees stand resolutely still even in the stormy weather. The dusky light, often making the images difficult to read, and lack of figures or landmarks further contribute to the landscapes' oddly generic quality.

These conditions suggest that Klamen is depicting remembered places rather than real ones; they ask us, as viewers, to consider how we make sense of our world and how we reconstruct it.

-Lauren Weinberg