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Art and Design: "Carlos Estrada-Vega"

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What seems at first to be little more than a mosaic color study reveals itself to be much more complex. **Carlos Estrada-Vega** draws parallels between his meticulous process and the monastic life. His unique methodology puts a twist on the concept of painting as object.

First carving out hundreds of tiny wood blocks, **Estrada-Vega** then painstakingly covers each with canvas. Next, he applies a unique medium composed of heavily pigmented wax, oleopasto and oil. These blocks are then magnetically affixed to a metal backing in arrangements that vary not only in color, but in depth.

In some instances, the pieces converge to create a monochromatic field of color, with only the slightest variation from piece to piece. In others, we get eye-popping primaries arranged like an unorganized box of Crayolas.

Estrada-Vega's use of a palette knife as opposed to the brush gives these cubes an appetizing texture; their surface looks like frosting. On opening night, we saw many visitors fighting the impulse to reach out and touch the works.

His *Artemio* is a battleground of fiery reds and oranges, speckled with an occasional lime or baby-blue; *Colonia* delivers the colors of moss, spring, and morning rain; *Carmelita* of sun-washed Spanish villas; *Girasoles*, the yellows of the flower for which it's named.

Estrada-Vega's work is simplistic at first glance, but if you allow yourself to get into the rhythm of his colors, his delicate variations and patient craftsmanship, you'll find yourself drawn into his paintings. Just don't eat them.