THE BOSTON PHOENIX

Art

FASCINATING RHYTHMS

MATT RICH AND ZOE PERRY-WOOD

_BY GREG COOK
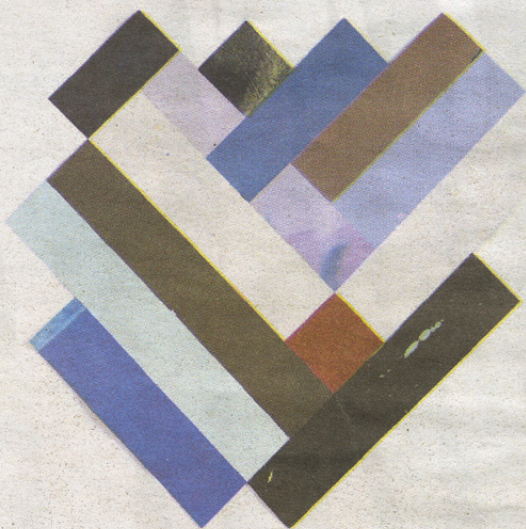
STACKS Matt Rich's rhythmic abstractions suggest Frank Stella in their formal design and street art in their gritty surface textures.

If street art made a baby with Frank Stella's 1960s geometric abstractions, the offspring would look something like Matt Rich's show "Ghost Muscle" at Samson (450 Harrison Ave Boston, through April 28). The Cambridge artist choreographs and weaves swatches of cut-out paper, slathered and sprayed with paint, into handsome triangles, color bars, and one curious, busted star that all float on Samson's big, open white walls.

Rich's geometric designs resemble Stella's. In *Stacks*, you can feel the thought going into the careful placement of each stripe to create harmonies of various blues and browns, each band angled down, one perpendicular to the next, to become a series of Vs, the pattern slightly syncopated so that it never repeats the same way twice. Rich's textures bring to mind the grit of the streets. In reproduction, the painted paper abstractions appear flat. In person, the colors have fades or are painted one atop the other in ways that bring to mind those found Rothkos you see where graffiti in underpasses has been painted over with rectangles of paint that don't quite match the original wall. And the paper in Rich's show is scuffed and ripped, dented and bent, like something you'd find wheatpasted to a wall.

One of the things that's easy to overlook about Rich's work is its delicacy. When his paintings were exhibited at the Institute of Contemporary Art as one of the 2010 Foster Prize finalists, the supersized galleries dwarfed his pieces, making them seem both physically and intellectually small. Back at Samson, where his 2009 show got people to stand up and take notice, Rich's works look great again. And increased painterliness gives them more juice. *Scribble*—which stands out because it's the one piece to eschew hard geometry — features blue, purple, white, and yellow paint scraped and scribbled atop paper strips and sheets taped and pasted together into a bumpy shape that resembles a charmingly goofball cartoon cloud.