



**Gabriele Evertz**

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*Exaltation*

January 11 – February 29, 2020

M – N U S  
S P A C E

# Exaltation

by Mary Birmingham

Gabriele Evertz's studio in the Dumbo neighborhood of Brooklyn has always been an oasis of calm in the middle of a bustling setting, but lately it feels more like the eye of a hurricane. Like many of us, Evertz worries about the current, turbulent state of the world, but she does not allow it to distract her. She responds in the only way she can, by continuing her devotion to the creative act. Believing that art may help us transcend our troubles, she proposes that "the ills of our time suggest art as an antidote."<sup>1</sup> This conviction has empowered and inspired her studio practice for the last several years as she has worked with renewed dedication and purpose, constantly aware of the world around her with all its beauty and brutality but never discouraged by it.

While her practice has changed and evolved over the past three decades, Evertz's subject matter—color sensation and its transformative effect on the viewer—has remained consistent. *Exaltation*, her latest exhibition at Minus Space, features paintings from 2018 and 2019 that reveal an artist at the height of her achievement but still challenging herself. For about the past fifteen years, Evertz has utilized the same basic structure in her paintings: plumb vertical stripes in an array of hues, interspersed with subtly tapered bands in various shades of gray and white. The color wheel is always her point of entry and helps establish the order of hues in a painting, whether she incorporates the full, twelve-hue spectrum or concentrates on select hues. Since 2014 Evertz has also experimented with metallic paint, and often interrupts the hue sequences with narrow, metallic stripes that brighten the paintings by reflecting incoming light. Recently, she has made some changes to this signature structure that have taken her work in a new direction highlighted by this exhibition.

Although her studio practice may be solitary, Evertz is never completely alone. The potential viewer is always with her because the consideration of how that viewer will experience her work is an essential part of its creation. She also places herself in the company of artists she admires from the near and distant past, bringing them into her studio through their work or writing. Feeling deeply connected to certain artists, she sometimes makes work in response to theirs, especially their thoughts on color.

It is easy to appreciate Evertz's work on a purely formal level, enjoying the optical sensations triggered by her deep understanding of color. But when she also shares how her reflections on art history specifically relate to her paintings, we are able to appreciate the work on a conceptual level as well. While her subject is always color perception, what motivates or inspires her to make a painting is often something different and unexpected.

Leon Battista Alberti (1404–1472) was an Italian writer, humanist, and architect who wrote the first modern treatise on painting, in which he stated that the painter’s goal should be to create paintings that “will hold the eyes and soul of the observer,” an idea that is clearly manifested in Evertz’s work.<sup>2</sup> Alberti was prescient in noting the psychological ability of colors “both to arouse emotions in the observer and to create a sense of vivacity and movement.”<sup>3</sup> His advice on color placement struck a particular chord with Evertz: “Grace will be found,” Alberti wrote, “when one color is greatly different from the others near it. . . . This contrast will be beautiful where colors are clear and bright. There is a certain friendship of colors so that one joined with another gives dignity and grace. Rose near green and sky-blue gives both honor and life.”<sup>4</sup>

In her painting *The Friendship of Colors (Alberti)*, 2018, Evertz pays homage to the Renaissance master by incorporating his color suggestions into her signature structure. Building on a grid of one-inch, achromatic vertical bands, she places an extended progression of rose, green, and sky-blue verticals in varying widths across the center of the painting, their brightness offset by darker sequences of red-violet and blue-violet along the left and right edges. It is an uplifting work, not only in its use of Alberti’s “clear and bright” colors but also by the suggestion in its title that colors can embody the human attribute of friendship. (And, implicitly, if colors can befriend one another in a composition, might they extend that positive relationship to the viewer? Can color be an antidote for difficult times?)

This work became a point of departure for Evertz, as she began to make paintings that felt more expansive, such as *Exaltation RYB* and *Exaltation GOV* from 2019. Like most of her recent works, these two paintings are seventy-two-inch squares, their large scale confronting the viewer in a way that is almost overpowering. Both read as expansive fields of vertical lines—subtly tapered light grays juxtaposed with sequences of red, yellow, and blue in one; and green, orange, and red-violet in the other. The diagonal divisions in the gray bands create subtle triangulations that are nearly imperceptible at first glance. A close look also reveals that each hue stripe is evenly split into two near-value tones and bordered by off-white lines, which increases the optical vibration and makes them appear to glow. The addition of one-eighth-inch-wide, metallic stripes causes the already dazzling surfaces to sparkle.

This energetic movement of color and line transforms each painting into a shimmering field of light and calm that may produce the kind of rapturous feeling articulated by Barnett Newman in his 1948 essay, “The Sublime Is Now.” In it, he pushed beyond the nineteenth-century, Romantic notion of the sublime landscape as a reflection of the divine and argued instead that artists could create abstract paintings that would overwhelm viewers’ senses and convey similar feelings of transcendence and exaltation. He proclaimed, “We are reasserting man’s natural desire for the exalted,” and suggested that artists, freed from the need to reference outmoded legends or images, might make “cathedrals” out of their own feelings.<sup>5</sup>

Evertz has noted that throughout her recent period of creativity, Barnett Newman was often on her mind.<sup>6</sup> It is tempting to see *Exaltation RYB*, with its division of red, yellow, and blue vertical stripes, as an acknowledgement of, or a response to, Newman’s series titled *Who’s Afraid of Red, Yellow and Blue*. These four large, abstract paintings feature fields of red punctuated with a few vertical stripes of yellow or blue that Newman called “zips.”<sup>7</sup> Evertz was also thinking about Newman’s engagement with the abstractions of Piet Mondrian, and his

belief that Mondrian’s quest for formal perfection “swallowed up” the potential for exaltation in his work.<sup>8</sup> If Newman was indeed confronting Mondrian in *Who’s Afraid of Red, Yellow and Blue*, Evertz may be adding to their imagined dialogue, reclaiming in her painting some of the exaltation that Newman found lacking in Mondrian’s work. It is as if she has aerated Newman’s color fields and zips, dividing them into multiple red, yellow, and blue stripes and breathing atmospheric light into them with grays, whites, and metallics. Moving from left to right across *Exaltation RYB*, Evertz repeats the sequence of red, yellow, and blue stripes five times and ends with a sequence of red and yellow alone, as if the expected blue stripe had fallen off the right edge. This intentional asymmetry has an interesting affinity with the slightly off-balance spaces in Newman’s *Who’s Afraid of Red, Yellow and Blue* paintings.

Evertz has also responded to the ideas and work of Henri Matisse as she employs her unique vocabulary of form in the pursuit of color sensations. She created *Exaltation GOV* in response to Matisse’s painting from 1916, *The Piano Lesson* (MoMA, New York). Once the viewer is privy to this conceptual connection, the formal affinities between the works seem obvious. They share a verticality in the division of pictorial space, with similar hues progressing from left to right against a field of achromatic gray tones, the diagonal divisions of Evertz’s grays echoing Matisse’s steep, triangulated forms. But Evertz is never interested in a literal interpretation of work she admires; rather, she responds to something she intuitively feels from it. In the case of *The Piano Lesson*, she explains, “I was thinking about the erosion of light and time in the painting and the feeling of melancholy it evokes—a familiar feeling for most of us. But Matisse is generally known to advocate for painting to offer a kind of balance to our daily chaotic experiences and that is what I revere most of all.”<sup>9</sup>

Evertz may also have been thinking of Matisse, who famously dreamed of art as “a soothing, calming influence on the mind,” when she made a small painting titled *Antidote* in 2017 to soothe herself in the wake of the contentious 2016 presidential election.<sup>10</sup> In 2019 she revisited its composition, in which she had discovered something formally interesting, with two larger versions, *Antidote* and *Antidote Spectrum*. These works reveal a break from her customary structure, where parallel hue stripes extend from the top to the bottom edges of the canvas and contrast with tapered, achromatic bands. In the *Antidote* paintings she changes that format, representing the hues as long, diagonal, zigzagging lines and the grays as parallel bands of consistent widths. In both works, Evertz returns to her earlier practice of utilizing a full spectrum of hues.

*Antidote* is the simpler of the two paintings from 2019, its straightforward composition masking a conceptual complexity. The painting seems to lean toward the right as the eye follows the path of twenty-three alternating plumb and diagonal stripes zigzagging across a field of grays, lightening in value from left to right. Beginning with yellow-green and moving through the spectrum of her twelve-hued system, Evertz repeats the sequence twice but omits the anticipated green hue at the right edge, perhaps referencing the repetitive and cyclical nature of the color wheel. The dynamism of the diagonal hues—all tertiary colors—is in counterpoint with the stability of the vertical hues, all of them primary and secondary colors.

In *Antidote Spectrum* Evertz increases the number of zigzagging stripes to forty-seven, contracting the spaces between them and dividing each line into two hues adjacent to one another on the color wheel. She arranges them against a field of eight gray panels that gra-

date from dark to light and back to dark as the eye moves from left to right across the canvas. As she often does, Evertz interrupts the perceived symmetry by adding a gray panel of a uniquely darker value on the right edge of the painting. The triangulated forms become more attenuated in this version of *Antidote*. Colors and values advance and recede, creating an active visual field that seems to pulsate.

Evertz continued her exploration of these ideas in her 2019 painting, *ZimZum*. As in *Antidote Spectrum*, she juxtaposes forty-seven divided stripes of color, some vertical and some diagonal, with gray bands (although in *ZimZum* the spectrum is incomplete, missing blue, blue-green, green, and yellow-green). The color sequence is also more complex, progressing from red-violet on the left edge, to yellow, then back again in reverse order to blue-violet, and finally reversing back to orange—rather like a pendulum swinging around the color wheel.

These paintings with zigzagging lines are in part a response to Barnett Newman’s final sculpture, *Zim Zum 1* (1969, weathering steel, San Francisco Museum of Modern Art). The term “zimzum” (derived from the Hebrew word for “contraction”) is used in the Jewish mystical tradition of Kabbalah to describe the process by which God contracted to make space for the creation of the universe. Newman created a visual representation of this concept by placing parallel to one another two steel plates configured like folding screens, forming a uniform, zig-zag space between them. The viewer becomes an active participant in the completion of the artwork by entering into the passage between the steel plates. The artist has made a space for creation that the viewer enacts.

One could argue that in *ZimZum*, Evertz makes a similar space for creation, setting up visual sensations that require the viewer’s eye for completion. She intentionally pairs yellow lines with the lightest gray background values, and blue-violet lines with the darkest grays, to create a sense of movement. “Your eyes are naturally drawn to the lightest part of the painting (the heart of the painting),” Evertz says, “but in order to seek relief, you find yourself pulled over to the darkest area.”<sup>11</sup> The spikes and dips of the jagged hue stripes also lead the eyes up and down. With these visual rhythms, the painting almost seems to breathe—the contraction and expansion of color and space suggesting a kind of inhalation and exhalation. The flow of light grays across the pictorial field creates an atmospheric effect like fog or mist, lending a quality of airiness to the painting.

For both Evertz and Newman, “zimzum” represents an act of creation. In his influential 1961 article, “The Abstract Sublime,” art historian Robert Rosenblum described Newman’s artistic production as “awesomely simple mysteries that evoke the primeval moment of creation.”<sup>12</sup> In this light, one could argue that Newman—an artist fully committed to abstraction—was also a romantic. One can certainly say the same of Evertz, who has stated unequivocally, “My work has as its goal a certain kind of rapture.”<sup>13</sup>

Some people see creation as the most hopeful act possible—an antidote for difficult times and a true exaltation of the spirit. Gabriele Evertz is wholeheartedly one of them. **M.B.**

*Mary Birmingham is Curator of the Visual Arts Center of New Jersey.*

1. Written correspondence with the author, November 15, 2019.

2. Leon Battista Alberti, *On Painting*, rev. ed., trans. John R. Spencer (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1966), 89.

3. *Ibid.*, 130n83.

4. *Ibid.*, 84–85.

5. *Barnett Newman: Selected Writings and Interviews*, ed. John P. O’Neill (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1990), 173.

6. Conversation with the author, November 15, 2019.

7. The full series comprises: *Who’s Afraid of Red, Yellow and Blue I*, 1966, oil on canvas, 190 × 122 cm, private collection; *Who’s Afraid of Red, Yellow and Blue II*, 1967, acrylic on canvas, 305 × 257.7 cm, Staatsgalerie Stuttgart, Germany; *Who’s Afraid of Red, Yellow and Blue III*, 1967–68, oil on canvas, 224 × 544 cm, Stedelijk Museum, Amsterdam, Netherlands; and *Who’s Afraid of Red, Yellow and Blue IV*, 1969–70, oil on canvas, 274 × 603 cm, Nationalgalerie, Berlin, Germany.

8. *Barnett Newman*, 173.

9. Email correspondence with the author, November 15, 2019.

10. Matisse’s words are from an interview with Guillaume Apollinaire in 1907; see *Matisse on Art*, rev. ed., ed. Jack Flam (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1995), 29.

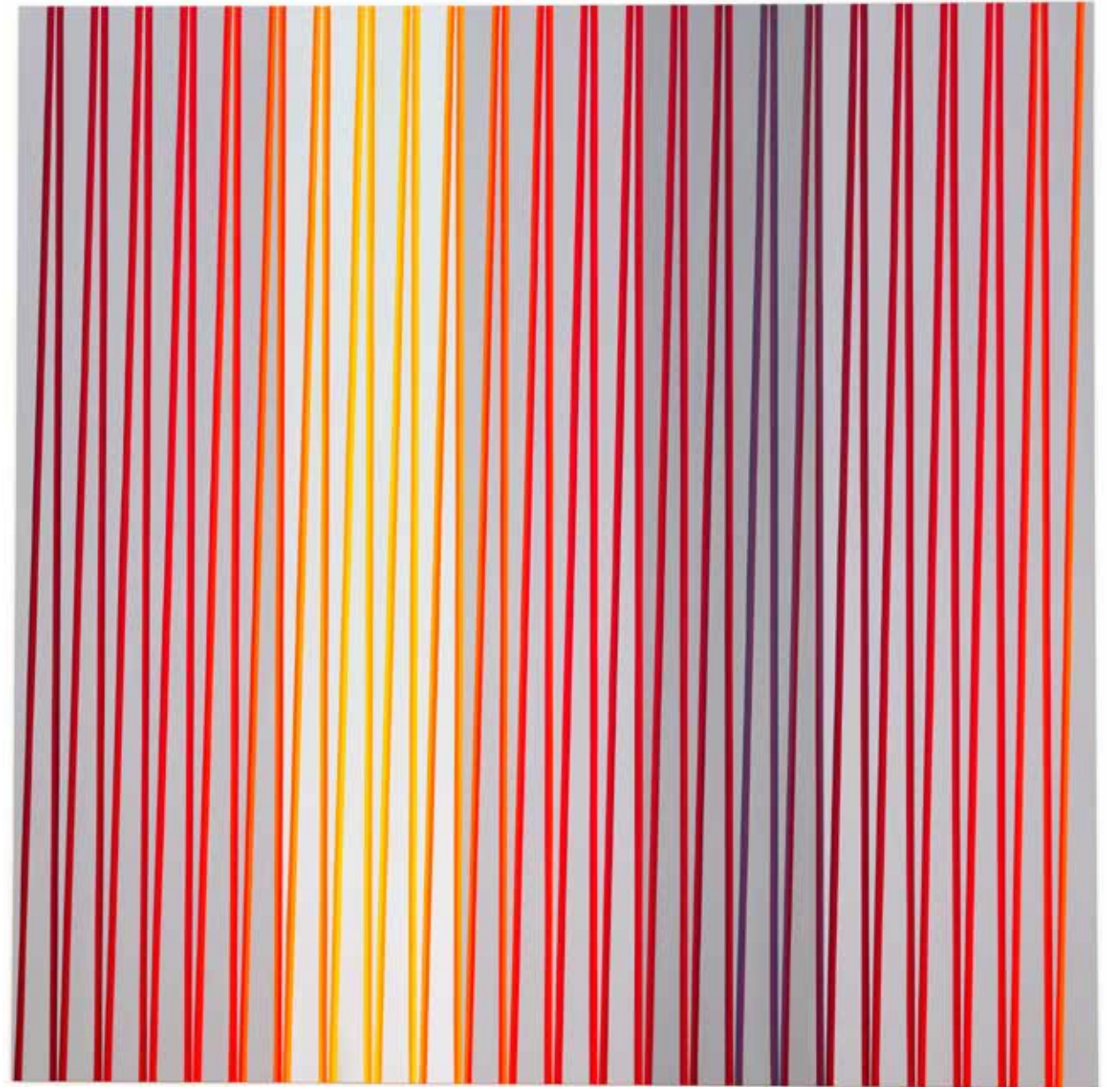
11. Email correspondence with the author, January 1, 2020.

12. Robert Rosenblum, “The Abstract Sublime,” first published in *ARTnews* in February 1961; republished by the editors of *ARTnews* in “Beyond the Infinite: Robert Rosenblum on the Sublime in Contemporary Art, in 1961,” March 27, 2015, <https://www.artnews.com/art-news/retrospective/beyond-the-infinite-robert-roosenblum-on-sublime-contemporary-art-in-1961-3811/>.

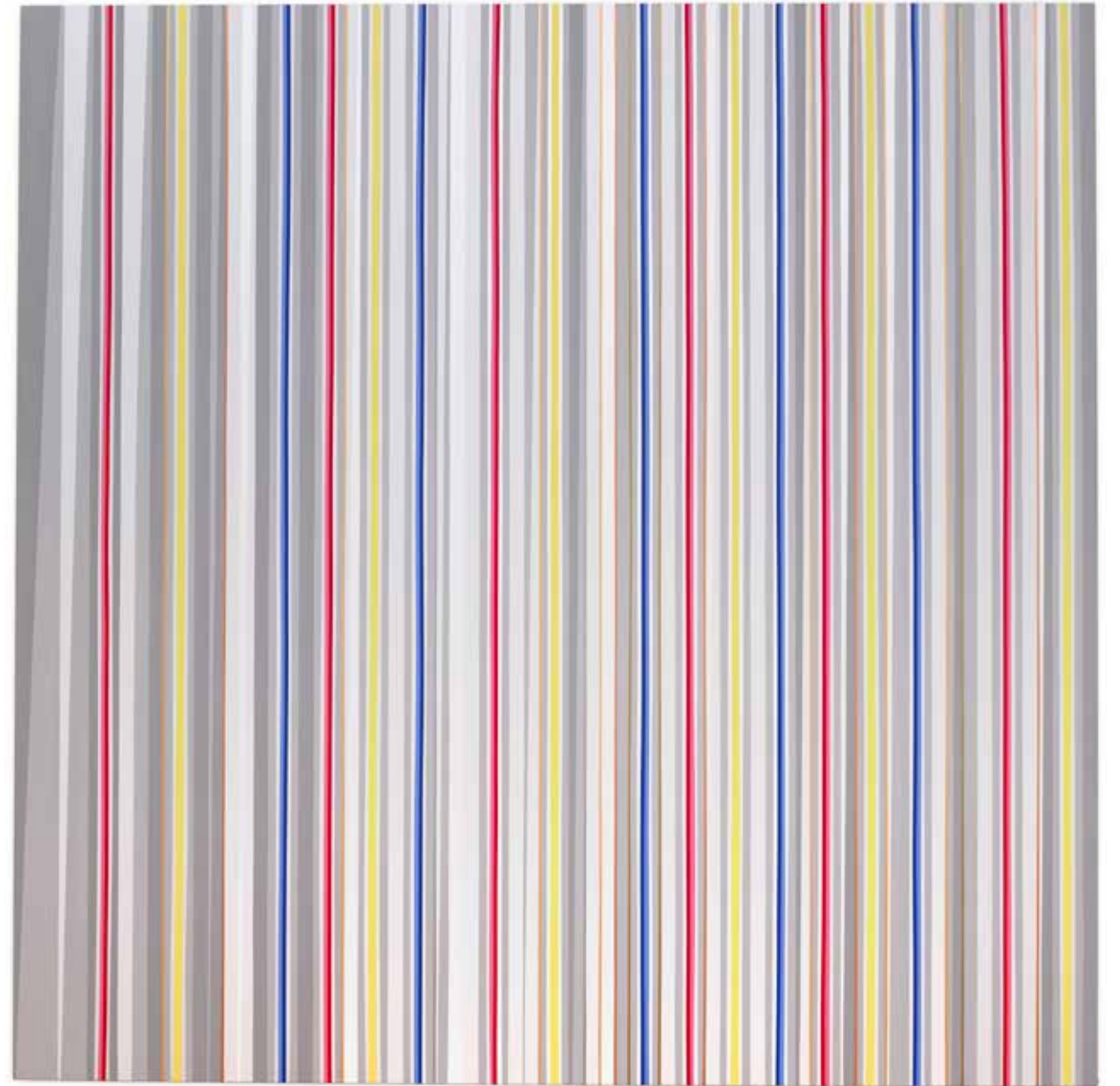
13. See Evertz’s website: *The Paintings of Gabriele Evertz*, accessed November 15, 2019, [gabrieleevertz.com](http://gabrieleevertz.com).



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ZimZum, 2019, Acrylic on Canvas, 72 × 72 inches (183 × 183 cm)

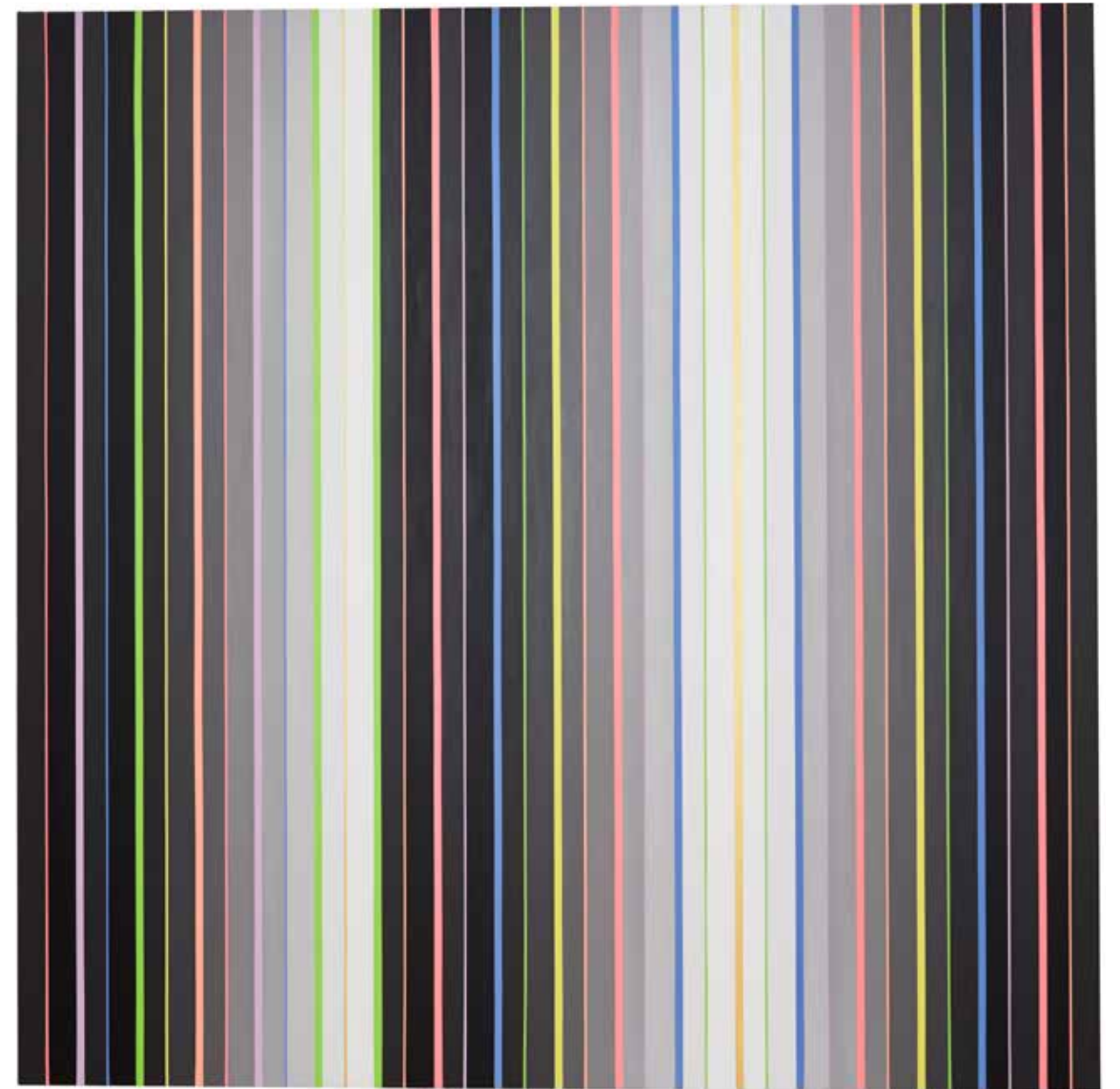


*Exaltation, RYB, 2019, Acrylic on Canvas, 72 × 72 inches (183 × 183 cm)*





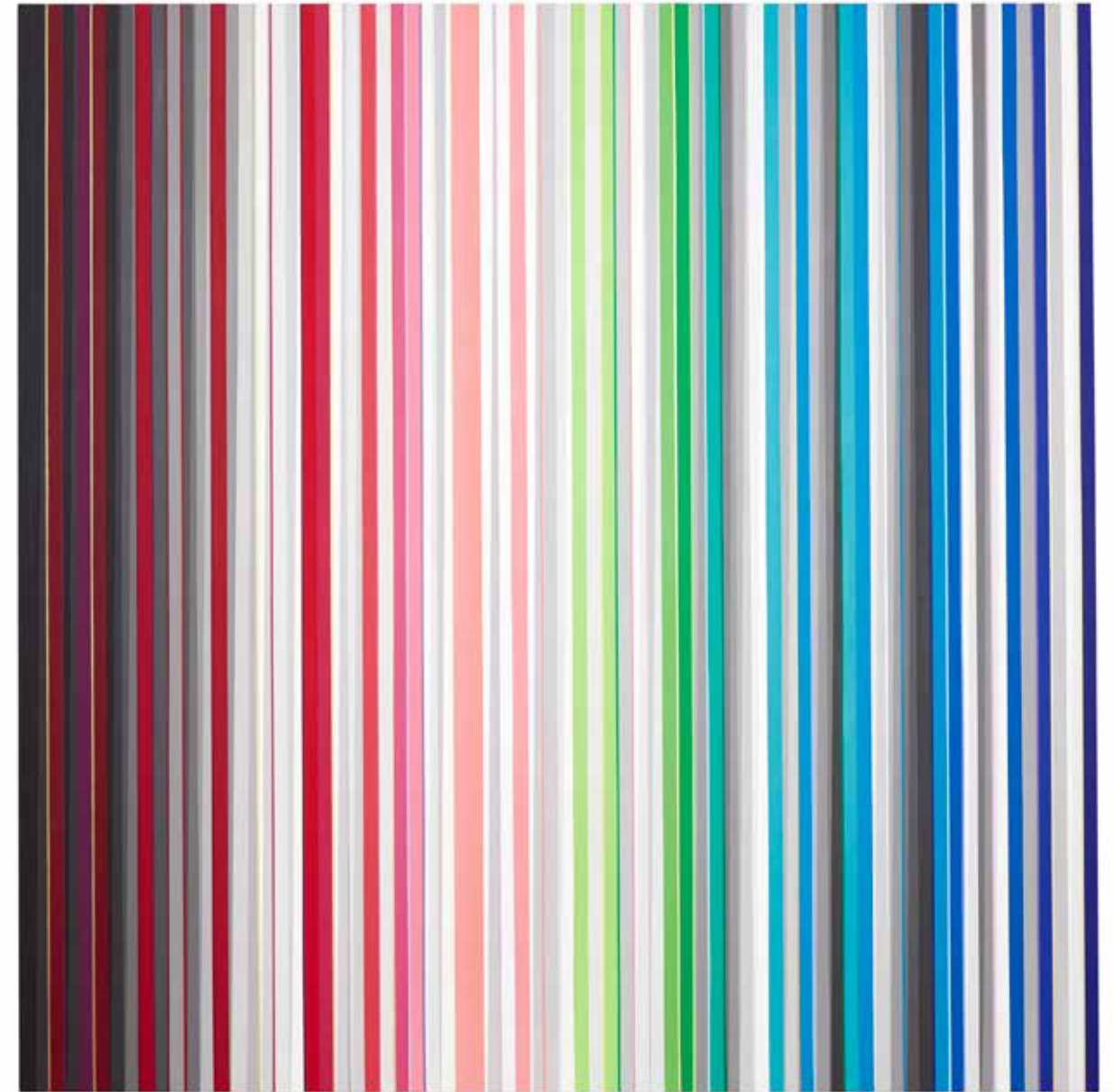
*Another Sun*, 2018, Acrylic on Canvas, 72 × 72 inches (183 × 183 cm)



*End / Begin*, 2018, Acrylic on Canvas, 72 × 72 inches (183 × 183 cm)

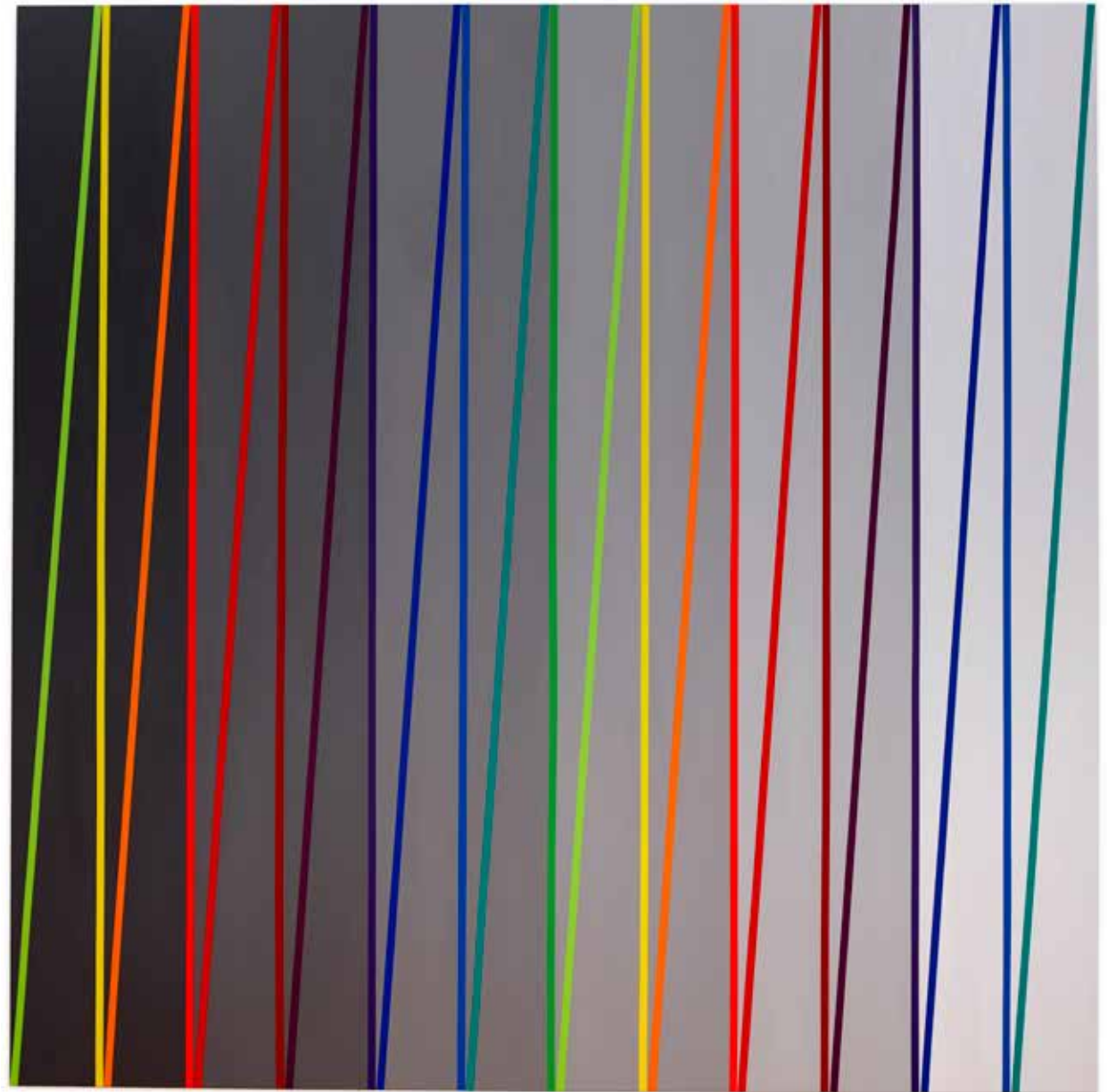


*Exaltation, GOV, 2019, Acrylic on Canvas, 72 × 72 inches (183 × 183 cm)*

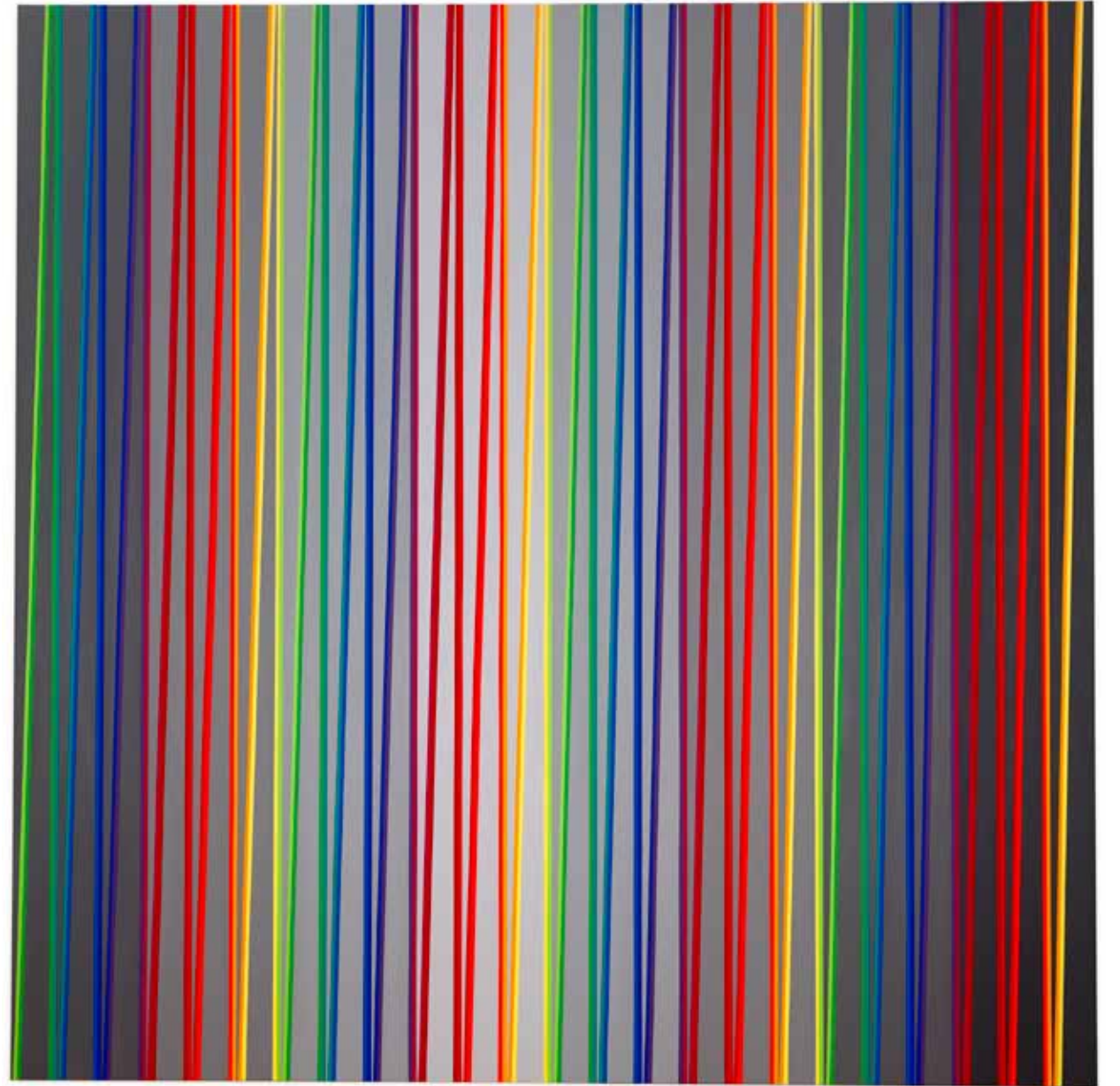


*The Friendship of Colors (Alberti)*, 2018, Acrylic on Canvas, 72 × 72 inches (183 × 183 cm)

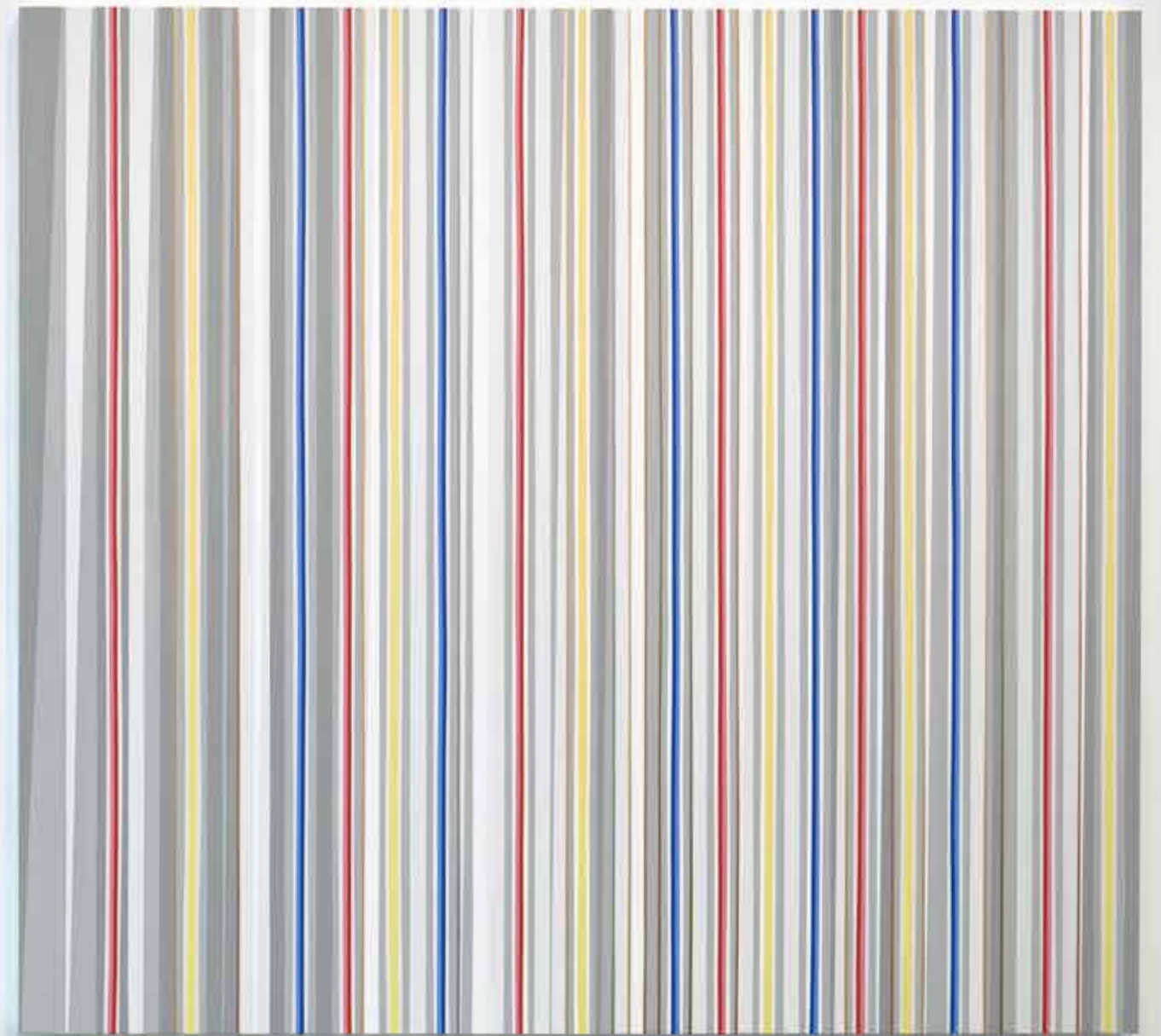




*Antidote*, 2019, Acrylic on Canvas, 72 × 72 inches (183 × 183 cm)



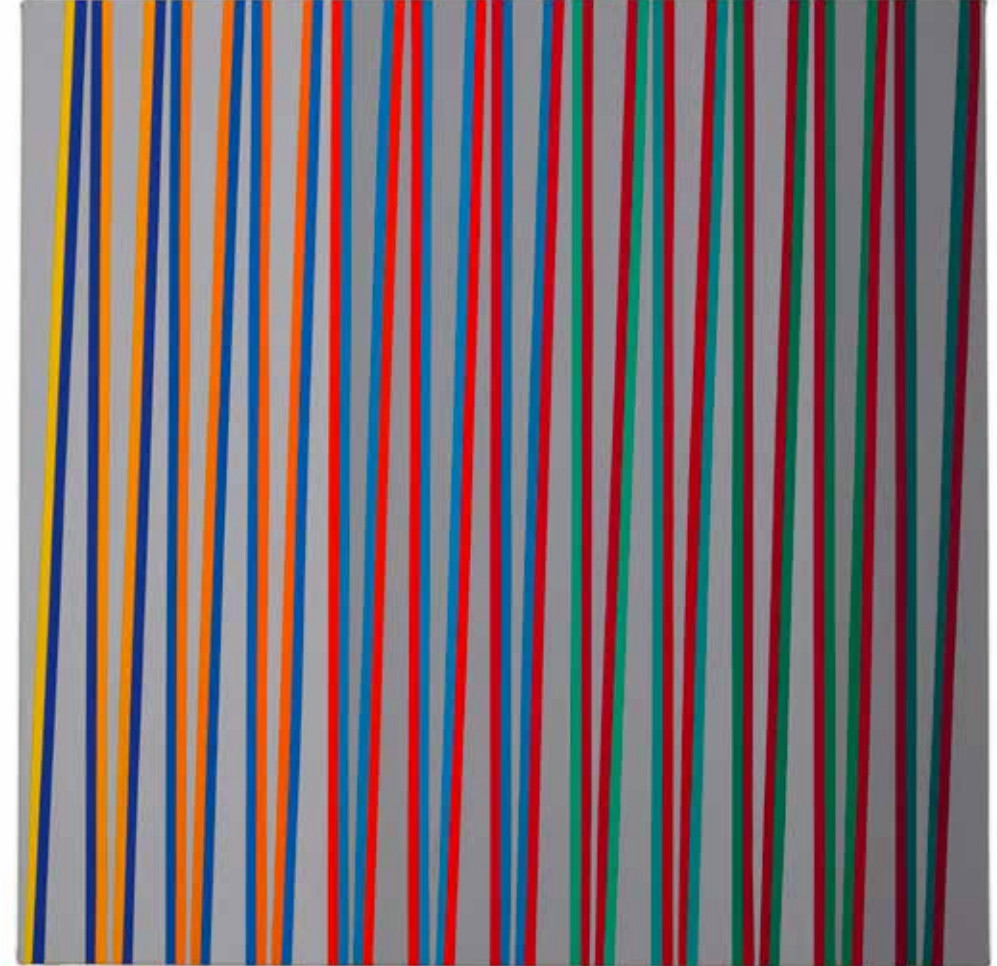
*Antidote Spectrum*, 2019, Acrylic on Canvas, 72 × 72 inches (183 × 183 cm)







*ZigZag Series, From Violet to Yellow over Red, 2019, Acrylic on Canvas, 24 x 24 inches (61 cm x 61 cm)*



*ZigZag Series, From Yellow to Red over Bluegreen, 2019, Acrylic on Canvas, 24 x 24 inches (61 x 61 cm)*

## Gabriele Evertz in Conversation by Matthew Deleget

*"In the depth of winter,  
I finally learned that within me  
There lay an invincible summer."*

*"Men must live and create."*

*"Live to the point of tears."*

*"Life is the sum of all your choices."*

*"Freedom is nothing but a chance  
To be better."*

*"The absurd is the essential concept  
And the first truth."*

—Albert Camus

Selected quotes from *Return from Tipasa*, in *Lyrical and Critical Essays* (1968)  
and from the *Notebooks* (1942-1951)

**Matthew Deleget:** It's such a personal pleasure for me to spend time with you discussing your painting practice, which I've watched very closely over the past twenty years. The title of your new solo exhibition opening here at the gallery in January 2020 is *Exaltation*, which is a quality I've very much needed in light of our current, relentlessly exhausting political and social climate. How did you arrive at this title and what does it specifically mean to you?

**Gabriele Evertz:** It is exhausting to continually fight lies and negativity, I agree, but I cannot let it dominate my work. I like to remember that Western aesthetic already began on a negative note with Plato's attempt to restrict the role of the artist. And so you begin to look critically at established truths, and engage in the lives of past artists and how they dealt with all manner of adversities.

My understanding of Barnett Newman's recognition of the dangers of Piet Mondrian's striving for perfection, for example, was a revelation when he said about Mondrian that "*the geometry (perfection) swallowed up his metaphysics (his exaltation)*." You can differ with his interpretation, but it was his long struggle with the idea of perfection that moved me and the recognition that the Greeks erred in their quest for perfection. I recognize that a sense of exaltation has always been my *modus operandi* in the studio and how I try to live my life. In the absence of truth, there is only art.

**MD:** You expressed a fascinating dialectic here positing geometry and the strive for perfection in opposition to the metaphysical and a state of exaltation. I believe the works of many painters using hard-edged geometric shapes are often perceived by the public as simply mechanical exercises, but yours are anything but. Although meticulously painted, I never hear you speak about your geometric shapes in terms of striving for perfection. Your geometry is intuited and you paint your vertical stripes from the left side of the canvas to the right in a kind of call and response way. Tell me about your use of form in your new paintings.

**GE:** When you encounter color samples, they usually take the shape of little square chips. This makes perfect sense in terms of having four sides that offer comparisons with other colors. It seems to me that the square served as the best suited building block to create structures. When I decided to make color my subject matter in painting, I began by empirically examining single colors and their relation-

ships to other colors. The grid was my orientation and the scale was determined by the smallest unit that, when multiplied and repeated several times, yielded the final size of the painting. This system is applied in architecture, much like the modular units in housing projects by Le Corbusier and many other modernist architects.

Around 1998 I realized that only two sides suffice to compare or contrast a color. The view outside my studio had changed and looking at tree trunks gave me the idea. From the beginning, I augmented the vertical line with diagonals. Occasionally I revisit this decision. The question arises why we generally consider an amorphous line more beautiful than a straight line. Of course, the straight line is an abstract shape and it seems a logical choice for non-objective work.

Some time ago, you and I had a conversation about origins and taking a glance back in history. I believe we agreed with the idea that human imagination begins with what we would now designate as abstract patterns and not with shapes actually seen in nature. It is fascinating to trace the beginning of how humankind's creative faculties are set in motion and how, in our time, the first abstract painters conceived the line as an outline or border for color fields.

Mondrian suggested that if form is expressed through line, then the most tense line will give color its greatest determination. Line, like color, was essentially seen as an entity in its own right, an agent of expression. For him, it was the most perfect expression of the absolute. Seen historically, it was the final stage of achievement. In contrast, for Kandinsky, the straight line was also the original line, but it was at the very origin of the unfolding form. He saw the original straight line branching out into various shaped lines, which thereby indicate directions. For him, perhaps the fanned outline can be seen as a symbol of liberation.

I was very much taken with the line when I came across an illustration of a Native American woman using sign language by holding her hand and her other arm in a 90-degree angle to each other, which signified the concept of beauty. This gesture, expressing it in words as "*man walking upright on earth*," gave me an alternative to the art historical references. But the line, or band, is not meant symbolically in my work. Rather I see it as a possibility and reflection of the viewer observing my painting. It becomes a dialog with myself. Formally, the straight line echoes the two sides of the canvas, confirming the parallel limits of the work and making it an object.

Incidentally, I once heard Sean Scully ask “*who owns the stripe?*” He volunteered the answer by saying “*no one ‘owns’ the stripe.*” Taken together, I regard my idiosyncratic references to allow for a kind of risk and total freedom to interpret each painting in a nuanced manner. Making my paintings requires a long time. In the process, I enjoy mulling over some of these questions and historical connections in my mind. It keeps anxieties at bay.

If the line makes the location of the viewer in space evident, a conversation is possible. Recently, I have combined the straight line and the diagonal into a zigzag formation. It still locates the viewer but for me, this shape evokes a heightened energy, a complex intensity, perhaps even fury, that seems best suited to express what I am currently interested in sharing.

**MD:** I really appreciate the breadth and depth of your response here and the variety of sources you cited. Yes, I do remember our conversation many years ago about humankind’s ancient urge to simply make marks on surfaces. The most natural one to create mechanically, in my opinion, is a short line using just one’s forearm, from the hand up to the elbow. Several lines made in proximity to each other, of course, begin to form a pattern and we’ve made everything imaginable with them, from petroglyphs to Op Art. As a species we’ve been doing this for tens of thousands of years and in every culture all over the globe. It’s something inherent in us and one of the many reasons I respond so strongly to your work. Vertical lines, whether straight or tapered, are your essential structure, but you infuse them with captivating color situations, which can range from tranquil to electric, sometimes even within the same painting. How have your ideas about color evolved over the past decade? How are you thinking about color in this new body of work?

**GE:** Thank you, Matthew. As you know, I studied with the best and some have remained friends to this day. I’ve been very lucky to find a supporting environment that allowed me to thrive despite it not being a favorable time for color theory. And painting was generally denigrated, as Rosalind Krauss reminds us. Nevertheless, I pursued my path. Over the years I have developed a frame of reference and set of beliefs that allowed me to persevere.

First, painting addresses the wonder of sight and color is a psychological and physiological effect. We see color with our mind. Its practice obliges us to engage with so many other areas of

human experience, i.e. biology, chemistry, optics, philosophy, physics and history. For example, color in painting involves the investigation of pigments, as well as aesthetic and neurological processes involved in memory and perception. It is imperative to study the art history of painting as it is inextricably linked to color as presented in a kind of codified significance beyond the visible. But the momentous break came with abstraction and, consequently, the autonomous use of color.

Looking is habitual, but seeing takes a certain kind of mindfulness or concentrated consciousness, especially when it comes to perceiving color behavior in painting. I plan my paintings with an attentive viewer in mind and aim for their participation. When observing my work what do I hope for them to perceive?

In the early nineties, I made the decision to make color my subject matter. My entry point is the order of color as expressed on the color circle. I began by studying the history and theory of color, the twelve colors and their relationship to each other. I worked with the intense, clear colors of the visible spectrum and my first canvasses held a brilliant light that became more insistent with size. Of that time, the painting *Greenport* is a typical example of presenting all twelve colors to achieve a balance and an overall light that seems to hover in front of the work, meaning, in the space of the viewer. These color combinations seemed best suited to express my feelings of uncontainable joy over the fact that I could finally devote myself to painting after having removed some considerable obstacles.

When I changed from the square to the line, I noticed a pronounced movement across the canvas. In *Dazzle* or *Restless*, for example, I discovered that in certain areas the colors appear in their additive mixture. That is, a red, yellow, and blue painting, gives off a fleeting and unphotographable green, orange, and violet light. When I included the neutrals, the color-space became more pronounced and the very slim vertical and diagonal shapes yielded an out of focus reading, especially in the central area, when seen horizontally across the painting.

I thought about cinematography at the time and worked mainly with six to nine tones of gray. The next logical move seemed to call for combined hues and values to instigate a greater sense of aliveness for the grays. The painting, *Grays and the Spectrum*, presents the same gray sequences next to red, yellow, and blues in their respective responses. Paintings that addressed hues and grays in changing relationships followed. They offered a lyr-

ical respite, lingering in the color or gray passages, gently moving or flowing outward with undulating motion. *I Dream of Spring* would be a typical example. This series led to investigations of pure light in painting that had increasingly unnamable colors, such as *Clearing* and *White Light*.

When color is mixed it becomes increasingly darker, but when light is mixed it is considered additive, meaning several colored lights yield a pure, white light. One of the first artists to recognize this phenomenon was J.M.W. Turner, the painter of light. He owned an annotated copy of the English translation of Goethe’s *Theory of Colours*. Goethe wrote about warm and cold colors, and the various ways they could influence the viewer because of their hues. He distinguished them as having a plus side and a minus side. Plus side colors are yellow, red-dish yellow (orange), and yellow red (vermillion, cinabar). Turner was interested in Goethe’s emotional understanding of colors and his use of a decidedly plus palette was presumably intended to invoke joyful feelings.

Most recently, I brought back the intense, pure colors of the sun spectrum as seen against a changing field of variously increasing or decreasing light. It seems, in this work, color has now merged indivisibly with shape, a zigzag formation. This is my most resolute work – *entschlossen*, as Heidegger would say – and I believe, my most ecstatic series of paintings. Resoluteness is seen here as an impersonal force that can open up new insights for painter and viewer alike.

**MD:** I definitely feel those intense visual qualities and emotions in your new paintings, which is supplemented by the contemplative titles you gave them, including *Antidote*, *Dream and Song*, *To Know*, and *Before Quiet*. For me, all of this points to an overwhelming feeling of optimism in your work – for painting, color investigation, and our role in it as viewers. You speak about the “*the wonder of sight*”, the “*pure colors of the sun spectrum*”, and your “*most ecstatic series of paintings*.” You also mention the importance of art historical precedents to you, but your works are made in the now and confidently point to the future. What is your hope for color, abstraction, and painting twenty years from now? And what will be our role in that as viewers and participants?

**GE:** Wow, twenty years? Let me just say, I believe you and Rossana are focusing the current exhibition season on several solo shows by living women art-

ists and that’s truly commendable. I am also especially looking forward to an exhibition by a group of international women, all abstract color painters, scheduled during the summer months.

Talking about history, since painting has a long memory, there exists the danger of denigration, even total dissolve. Mimicking the outside world is no longer an option. Despite the want to expand the field, it is always an existential struggle, and in the end, painting needs to stay true to itself. What is exciting to me now is the return to knowledge and understanding after the hybrids.

Being swept along is not enough, Rainer Maria Rilke tells us. Research and experimentation continue. When we acknowledge some of the new findings in neuroscience, optical color phenomena and the psychology of perception in our painting practice, it opens up not only new probabilities but – what is more – it brings us closer to each other and our common humanity. The visual and physical events in the painting give rise to new emotional resonances. It seems, science has filled a void, but it cannot demand exclusivity. Recently, Bridget Riley has opened up the discussion by admitting the “*unaccountable*” into her explorations. Indeed, no matter how objectively paintings are planned, I find, the world seems to have a way to insinuate itself into the work.

Finally, perceptual abstraction is within reach of a global platform when it can activate the perceptual powers of the viewer. Viewing a painting in distance and duration, or space and time, is seeing with your inner self. You can read the painting in your own way, according to your cultural history. For one thing, sudden discoveries can reveal, say, the inability of the eye to focus green and red at the same time, causing long-held assumptions to be revised. Most of what we know is experienced through our own perceptual system first, and when we are giving ourselves over to the experience of color, it enables a self-discovery of new realities like the self-assurance of ourselves in contemplation. What we bring to the activities of looking deeply and consciously then can affirm our shared sensations and by extension, our own luminous universe. My paintings are experiential. They address the viewer as full partner who completes the purpose and the meaning of the work. My desire is to unlock the potential for others to see and engage passionately in untold visual discoveries.

*This conversation took place over the course of several weeks during November and December 2019.*

## Exhibition Checklist

1. *ZimZum*, 2019, Acrylic on Canvas, 72 × 72 inches (183 × 183 cm)
2. *Exaltation RYB*, 2019, Acrylic on Canvas, 72 × 72 inches (183 × 183 cm)
3. *Another Sun*, 2018, Acrylic on Canvas, 72 × 72 inches (183 × 183 cm)
4. *End / Begin*, 2018, Acrylic on Canvas, 72 × 72 inches (183 × 183 cm)
5. *Exaltation, GOV*, 2019, Acrylic on Canvas, 72 × 72 inches (183 × 183 cm)
6. *The Friendship of Colors (Alberti)*, 2018, Acrylic on Canvas, 72 × 72 inches (183 × 183 cm)
7. *Antidote*, 2019, Acrylic on Canvas, 72 × 72 inches (183 × 183 cm)
8. *Antidote Spectrum*, 2019, Acrylic on Canvas, 72 × 72 inches (183 × 183 cm)
9. *ZigZag Series, From Violet to Yellow over Red*, 2019, Acrylic on Canvas, 24 × 24 inches (61 cm × 61 cm)
10. *ZigZag Series, From Yellow to Red over Bluegreen*, 2019, Acrylic on Canvas, 24 × 24 inches (61 × 61 cm)

## Biography

Gabriele Evertz (b. 1945 Berlin, Germany) has exhibited her work in solo and group exhibitions internationally, including in Argentina, Australia, Brazil, France, Germany, Greece, Italy, New Zealand, United Kingdom, and the United States. Her recent museum exhibitions include the Columbus Museum (Columbus, OH), Heckscher Museum (Huntington, NY), Hillwood Art Museum (Brookville, NY), Louisiana Art & Science Museum (Baton Rouge, LA), MoMA PS1 (Long Island City, NY), Museo de Art Contemporáneo (Buenos Aires, Argentina), Osthaus Museum Hagen (Hagen, Germany), Patricia & Phillip Frost Art Museum (Miami, FL), and Ulrich Museum (Wichita, KS).

Her work is included in many public collections worldwide, such as the Art in Embassies Program of the U.S. Department of State, British Museum, Brooklyn Museum, Columbus Museum of Art, Ewing Gallery / University of Tennessee Knoxville, Hallmark Collection, Harvard University Art Museum, Metropolitan Museum of Art, Mississippi Museum of Art, Museo de Art Contemporáneo (Buenos Aires), Museum of Fine Arts Boston, Museum of Modern Art / Library Special Collection, Museum Modern Art (Hünfeld), New York Public Library, New Jersey State Museum, Osthaus Museum Hagen, Phillips Collection, Princeton University Library, St. Lawrence University Art Museum, Stiftung für Konstruktive und Konkrete Kunst (Zürich), Whitney Museum of American Art, and Wilhelm Hack Museum, among others.

In addition to her painting practice, Evertz was Professor of Art, Painting in Hunter College's Department of Art & Art History, NYC from 1990-2018. She is a key protagonist in the renowned Hunter Color School, alongside other color painters, including Vincent Longo, Doug Ohlson, Robert Swain, and Sanford Wurmfeld. Over the past fifteen years, Evertz has also curated several critically-acclaimed artist retrospectives and exhibitions, including *Dual Current: Inseparable Elements in Painting and Architecture*; *Visual Sensations: Robert Swain Paintings, 1967-2010*; *Presentational Painting III*; *Seeing Red: An International Exhibition of Nonobjective Painting* (co-curated with Michael Fehr); *Set in Steel: The Sculpture of Antoni Milkowski*; and *Mac Wells: Light into Being* (co-curated with Robert Swain).

This catalogue was printed on the occasion of the exhibition *Gabriele Evertz / Exaltation* at Minus Space in Brooklyn, New York, from January 11 – February 29, 2020.

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I would like to recognize the spirited and stimulating conversations with Mary Birmingham that culminated in her insightful essay; likewise, the interview with Matthew Deleget is part of an ongoing dialog that I have so much enjoyed over the years; thank you to Yao Zu Lu for his superb photography and innovative contributions to all our projects and Joy Scanlon, my assistant, for her kindness and commitment.

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I am most grateful to all.

—G.E.

