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Richard Wilson Rises to the Occasion

Richard Wilson's six new paintings at the [Carl Berg Gallery](#) are as close to perfect as anything on Earth can be. Each three-panel acrylic on canvas combines exceptional precision with inexplicable mystery, making for approachable, even friendly works that puzzle the mind, delight the senses and are a joy to behold.

There's nothing fancy about Wilson's paintings, which he calls "Rises." Each consists of three horizontal rectangles abutted to one another so that they form column-like compositions that are roughly the size of doorways.

The tops, middles and bottoms are stretched over bars of various widths, creating panels of different thicknesses. Wilson complements this planar irregularity by positioning each panel slightly off center in relation to its neighbors, aligning his eccentric triptychs in a manner that recalls the ways children stack building blocks: wobbly and never the same way twice.

The face of each panel has been painted a single, indescribably delicious color so warm and saturated that it's easy to get lost in its simple resplendence. Wilson's palette is organic, with patiently mixed olive greens ranging from tangy near-yellows to strange almost-grays and rusty reds running the gamut from zippy cinnamon to luscious pumpkin. Loamy browns and midnight blacks betray hints of eggplant and burgundy.

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Richard Wilson, *Be On Time*, 2008,
Acrylic on canvas 109 x 36 inches

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The best stuff happens when your eye glides, jumps and bumps from one colored panel to another. That's when you see that Wilson is a fantastically talented colorist, a dyed-in-the-wool lover of what is possible with color, the infinite range of its combinations and the density and impact of its physicality.

To complicate things just a bit, he has painted a rectangular patch of color on one side edge of each panel. From head on, these additions are not visible, and this is the position from which Wilson's sing. From either side, the patches of color can be seen, and they function like appetizers, preparing you for the visual shifts that take place when you stand face-to-face with the Northern Californian's quietly fascinating paintings.

-- David Pagel