



Steven Cushner, *Repairman*, 2005, acrylic on canvas, 86" x 86".  
Hemphill Fine Arts.

## Reviews: National

### Steven Cushner

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Washington, D.C.

It is tempting to tag Steven Cushner as a younger affiliate of the Washington Color School, a 1960s movement associated with Morris Louis, Kenneth Noland, and Sam Gilliam, under whom Cushner studied at the University of Maryland. Born in 1954, the D.C.-based painter uses the same vivid palette and drips-and-washes technique in his abstractions. But Cushner has a much deeper attraction to forms as subject matter than his Color School predecessors. In his best work, his arrangements of shapes and symbols create both tension and vitality.

Cushner's interest in carpentry and construction is reflected in titles like *Renovation #3* (2005) and *Jigsaw* (2005), with some canvases resembling diagrams and others containing tool shapes. *Road to Nowhere #2* (2006) could be seen as an abstract series of gray squares or as a succession of power-drill heads. *Repairman* (2005) likewise resembles both a geometric composition and a ring of carpentry rulers. Cushner's handling of the acrylic paint is at once muscular and delicate, and even his small watercolors have a surprising heft. The rust-colored *Hinge* (2005), for example, takes the basic shape of interlocking teeth and turns it into a strangely memorable repetition.

Sometimes one wishes Cushner had a freer hand, that he let the drops drip a little longer, let them blend more with one another. But even when they seem a bit studied, Cushner's paintings have a compelling presence. —Roger Atwood