

# JOURDAN ARPELLE

## ABOUT THE PAINTINGS

**DIVERTIMENTI SERIES**                      **2001 - 2003**

### SIZE

Series size: 22 paintings  
                  5 paintings = Divertimenti #1  
                  9 paintings = Divertimenti #2  
                  8 paintings = Divertimenti #3

Dimensions: Divertimenti #1 & #2 measure 12 in. or 30.5 cm. square  
                  Framed: 13 in. square or 33 cm. square  
                  Divertimenti #3 measure 38 in. or 96.5 cm. square  
                  Framed: 39 in. square or 99 cm. square  
                  Note: All 8 Divertimenti 3 paintings can be coupled together  
                  Horizontally: 39 in. or 99 cm. H x 26 ft. or 7.92 meters W

### DESCRIPTION

The three painting series within the title “Divertimenti” represent an idea pushed toward a more and more complex end. The first part of this series is represented by paintings using the traditional figure-ground in painting. It pushes its roots and its abstract imagery to the beginnings of abstraction, to the year 1911 when the Russian constructivist, Kasimir Malevich abstracted Russian icons to capture the spiritual essence of this traditional, religious form. In Jourdan Arpelle’s paintings, shades of gray form the background. The subject square is more ambiguous through the use of such devices as transparency and overlay, and cropping.

Divertimenti #2 sets the parameters of painting to forego figure-ground. By eliminating the use of black, white and gray as a device to create depth and space, the artist takes risks with color and composition. Essentially, compositions in these first two painting series are closely related. However, the artist sets the bar for challenges at a higher level in this second group of paintings. Weight and volume are defined by color intensity, transparency, and value. Forms rock and shift. Mass is severed by analytical dissections causing the former object, the square, to advance or recede spatially. Physical space is interchanged with the ethereal. Brushstrokes contrast the implied activity of molecular movement with juxtaposed areas of smooth calm. High key colors and veiled passages create mystery and pleasure within these highly structured and strictly defined paintings. Dark passages signal escape hatches to freedom within the disciplined confines of these spare, tight compositions.

Divertimenti #3 leaps to powerful complexity using the structured divisions of the canvas, the rhythms of the red square, and the unity of eight canvases to inspire a choreography of abstract narrative. In this third Divertimenti series, the artist practices a *tour jeter* across eight canvases in a lyrical, but restrained motif. The square, in dominant reds, pronounces the downbeat of the composition. It is a forceful, confident and masculine presence as it imposes itself across the horizontal plane. This narrative, or composition, taking its cue from musical compositions, stays true to the idea of musical structure having a definitive and recognizable beginning, middle and end. The name, Divertimenti, was derived from the idea of Mozart's little compositions, or diversions, from his serious symphonic masterpieces. The first two canvases unite to introduce the "color" of the piece. Red dominates. Pink, yellow-green, orange and even bright blue counter-balance the weighty charcoals and olive greens. These canvases connect with numbers 3 and 4 to form a complex, but pleasing series of ambiguous and clear squares. Transparency plays a role in shifting emphasis and object, a metamorphosis from solid to spatial, or from segment to segment in uniting to form another solid. In numbers 5, 6 and 7, the action and complexity of the plot increase. The key shifts, the chords change, the cacophony can almost be heard with the shattering of the structure. The viewer can note the splintering of the red square here, only to observe its poised, elegant end in the final painting, number 8. The repeat of the high-key yellow-green hues with the overlay of the faceted red square anticipate a happy ending to an abstract tale.