



Gary Stephan, "46" (2019), tape on paper, 18 x 24 inches (courtesy Anders Wahlstedt Fine Art)

Gary Stephan: *Tape on Paper*

A metaphysical disjuncture has long been at the heart of Gary Stephan's pursuits in his geometric paintings, as if to say that no matter how tightly things fit together, something will always be askew. Even when everything is on the surface, what you see is not necessarily what you see. That slippage — and the doubt it invites — is intrinsic to Stephan's meticulous black-and-white tape drawings. The gap between seeing and knowing, perfection and imperfection, infuses the drawings with an emotional register. That vulnerability is rarely encountered in geometric abstraction. This is why Stephan's exhibition *Tape on Paper* is a must-see. In one work, we follow a black band across a white ground, watch it narrow as it descends, like an impeccable fire escape. All kinds of associations rise to the surface — yet none become dominant. By working only with tape, which has no fluidity, and both undermining and underscoring its stiffness in subtle ways, Stephan has created a great body of drawings, something new under the sun. —*John Yau*

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