

ARTFORUM

Polly Apfelbaum and Dan Cole **TEMPLE CONTEMPORARY**

Tyler School of Art, Temple University, 2001 North 13th Street
May 13–July 11



View of “Polly Apfelbaum and Dan Cole: For the Love of Gene Davis,” 2014.

Polly Apfelbaum and Dan Cole’s exhibition carries on the legacy of its muse: a monumental expanse of colorful stripes by Gene Davis, painted on a parking lot next to the Philadelphia Museum of Art. A 1972 commission by the museum’s department of urban outreach, Davis’s *Franklin’s Footpath* established the spatialization of painting—or the painting of public space—as a Philadelphia tradition. (The Mural Arts Program was subsequently established in 1984 and, to date, Philadelphia boasts more murals than any city in the United States.)

In Apfelbaum’s tribute to *Footpath*, concrete cedes to carpet. Four custom-woven rugs produced in Oaxaca line the floor with luxurious woolen stripes. Although two yellow lines running down the center of the room directly reference a city street, the carpet is invitingly soft. (Shoes must be removed before entering.) Apfelbaum’s work has often teased viewers’ desire to touch, but this piece gives us permission. Thus, what began in 1990 with *Carpet of Color*, a rug cobbled together with felt and safety pins, has culminated here in the embrace of virtuoso craftsmanship over the DIY aesthetic of her earlier works. The flat sheen of the digitally printed wallpaper which covers Apfelbaum’s gallery serves to reinforce the point.

While walls and floors are familiar territory for Apfelbaum, the combination of outsourcing, direct audience engagement, and collaboration is rarer. Her partnership with Cole, a recent Tyler grad, is the product of a mentoring program at the school. Cole’s work offers a winking nod to the intergenerational pairing. In his gallery, an animated scene from *Harold and Maude* (1971) plays over an expanse of military gravestones juxtaposed with stripes that subtly shift colors over the course of the looped projection.

Cole's arch social commentary pairs well with Apfelbaum's exuberant forms. Together, they give us Gene Davis of a different stripe.

— *Katherine Rochester*