

## LAWRENCE FODOR

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[LINDA DURHAM](#)

by sarah s. king

**SANTA FE** Santa Fe-based abstract painter Lawrence Fodor has shown his process-oriented work extensively on the West Coast for nearly three decades. His most recent output was the subject of two shows in Santa Fe, one last winter at the Lannan Foundation and another this summer at Linda Durham. Both venues featured Fodor's "Ko\_an Box" series, in which the artist applies layers of oil, wax and alkyd to the surfaces of cigar boxes. At Linda Durham, over 20 of these dazzling objects were interspersed with paintings from his ongoing "Ligature" series. The latter, lyrical works, made of the same materials on canvas, panel or paper, and ranging from 16 to 60 inches to a side, are often composed from graded fields of one or two colors, densely punctuated with wispy, darker calligraphic marks. These compositions often suggest lush vegetation, desert, sky or water perceived from close angles. In *Ligature 12 Green/Blue-Green/Violet* (2009), for instance, a field of undulating emerald green and deep marine blue swaths intertwined with sandy yellows is interrupted by a central luminous passage of turquoise green. The work uncannily conjures a ray of sunlight caught in seaweed off a shallow ocean reef.

In contrast to the serene surfaces of the "Ligatures," the "Ko\_ans" rely on enticing textures as well as reverberating hues. A result of Fodor's process, and in keeping with the nature of the koan—a paradox used as a Buddhist meditation tool—the "Ko\_ans" are the outcome of lengthy execution that is both arbitrary and intentional, intuitive and rational. Fodor aligns the boxes below his canvases, where, in lieu of drop cloths, they become repositories for paint drips and splashes. The artist then layers and scrapes the haphazard accumulations, transforming them into rich forests of viscous strokes and dabs, accentuated by crusts and peaks of gooey paint. Eventually, their surfaces coalesce into one or two radiant dominant colors such as vermilion, cobalt blue or violet. In scumbled areas, shards of contrasting undercoat color flicker between the bark-like impasto, as in *Ko\_an Box Green/Yellow-Green/Orange* (2007-09), where spots of indigo and pale blue and patches of apricot are revealed beneath the overall chartreuse surface. Strategically angled lighting (set up by the artist for both shows) reflects off of the boxes' sides, which are layered with gold leaf, producing a halolike effect. Yet any potentially pious aura is subverted by the ebullient and sensuous messiness of the "Koans."

*Photo: Lawrence Fodor: Ligature 12 Green/Blue-Green/Violet, 2009, oil, wax and alkyd on canvas, 82 by 80 inches; at Linda Durham.*

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