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## In Good Shape

BY MARIO NAVES

Salvatore Federico's recent paintings and drawings, on display in the middle room at the George Billis Gallery, continue to create a bold, balletic tension out of carefully devised, hard-edged forms.

A small drawing, done with pencil on graph paper, reveals the painstaking extent to which Mr. Federico's angular heraldic shapes are proportioned and configured. But knowing the math informing the compositions doesn't illuminate what truly makes them dance: distillation and color.

The more anonymous the surfaces of the paintings are (Mr. Federico doesn't hide his touch; he doesn't *have* one), the more his jutting shapes gain in personality, muscle and grace. The palette, too, is sharp and emphatic. Unafraid of juxtaposing warms, cools and near-complementary colors, Mr. Federico makes the most of minimal means. The actual colors occupying a single canvas are few, yet the presence they establish is remarkably vibrant—especially when yoked theatrically to the spacious and cleansing white of High Modernism.

The white grounds of *Praxedes* (2005) and *T.O.T.C.* (2005) both animate and clear the way for exuberant arrangements of form. Who says art can't be happy?

*Salvatore Federico* is at the George Billis Gallery, 511 West 25th Street, until June 10.

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