

ART & AUCTION

INSIDE THE ART MARKET

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SIMON SELLS

One of the stars to emerge from the much talked about "Bitstreams" exhibition currently on view at the **Whitney Museum of American Art** in New York (through June 10) is **John F. Simon Jr.** The 38-year-old artist creates his own software to generate meditative geometric computer animations, which can be shown on various types of digital displays. While Simon's works have alternatively been praised as "Mondrians for the new millennium" or dismissed as screensavers, the artist has seen his prices rise exponentially in the past two years, as collectors and museums have snapped up nearly everything he has produced.

The two works in the Whitney show, *CPU 1.5* and *Color Panel v 1.5*, were originally shown in 1999 at the **Sandra Gering Gallery** in New York, which has represented Simon since 1994. Exhibited at the Whitney on oversized plasma screens, the works were originally displayed on screens taken from disassembled Macintosh Powerbooks and mounted on Plexiglas. Priced at \$5,000 and produced in editions of 12, both works sold out.

For his next series, "Complex City" (shown by Gering in April 2000), Simon scaled up to larger LCD screens and again sold out, this time at \$15,000, also in editions of 12. Gering, who relocated her gallery last month from SoHo to West 22nd Street in Chelsea, is currently showing Simon's most recent Powerbook piece, *Window*, shown above. Produced in an edition of 8 and priced at \$20,000, all of these have been claimed as well.

Noting that the **Guggenheim Museum** in New York bought one of the works from the gallery and that the Whitney and **San Francisco Museum of Modern Art** soon followed, Gering remarks that "It is highly unusual for a museum to be an artist's first collector, but that was the case with John." More recently, Intel board member Max Palevski donated one of Simon's works to the **Los Angeles County Museum of Art**. In addition, Simon has been chosen by Guggenheim curator Jon Ippolito to create an Internet-based artwork for the museum's permanent collection.