

***Reaping the Whirlwind*, by David Baird**

art selection and comment by [Aaron Rosen](#) in the [May 20, 2020](#) issue



David Baird's artistic practice is intimately entwined with his work as an architect. He begins each day by painting, experimenting with countless geometric variations. In a recent series, he overlays biblical texts with columnar forms which migrate across collaged pages. Even when he is not working directly with scripture, an exegetical impulse runs through much of Baird's work, especially the wooden constructions he produced for his show at Wesley Theological Seminary, entitled *Between the Lines: Biblical Speculations*. One might expect an architect to render Noah's ark or the tower of Babel as recognizable, even functional forms. Yet Baird's interest lies in puzzling out the logic of the text itself, assessing how narratives are fashioned into complex, incongruous, even self-defeating structures. The work above represents a bold new direction for Baird, in which he has begun to scale up these constructions and place them in local Nevada landscapes, not unlike those of biblical lands. Here, his twisting forms feel like wind-worn rock formations, recalling Hosea's warning that those who "sow the wind . . . shall reap the whirlwind" (8:7). Yet his sculpture also seems to keep watch from the margins, standing austere and inscrutable like a prophet.