



Too Much Art

Writings on Visual Culture by Mario Naves

Jill Nathanson at Messineo Art Projects and Wyman Contemporary



Jill Nathanson, Squeaky Wheel (2010), polymer resin and pigment on panel, 20" x 20"; courtesy Messineo Art Projects and Wyman Contemporary

Courting chaos in pursuit of clarity, [Jill Nathanson](#) marries roughhewn, free-floating geometry to silky planes of color. Monumental in impact, if not always in size, Nathanson's shapes float, teeter and unfurl within abruptly stated compositions that nonetheless achieve a tremulous quietude. Imagine if Morris Louis had traded elegance for grit and then honed in on Kazimir Malevich's turf, cropping its parameters in the process. The results are variously bumptious, tender and grave, and given to solitary moments of hard-nosed rigor.

With No Blue Without Yellow as the overriding conceit and Red In The Time of Aqua a key exemplar, you'd think Nathanson was defined primarily by color and it's true: the work would be nothing if it didn't yoke the chromatic tangents resulting from, say, a shard of copper-orange overlapping a milky run of mint green. But surface is key: Rarely have acrylics being endowed with such fleshy tactility. Not a few observers have remarked upon Nathanson's way with oils. Quite a compliment for someone using plastic paint.

Writing in The Brooklyn Rail, Joan Waltemath points to how Nathanson's "apparent casualness . . . stands in contrast to [her] penetrating content", keying into "existential questions" explored in a concurrent exhibition of assemblages at [The Derfner Judaica Museum](#). Having not seen the Derfner exhibition, I can't comment on how thoroughly Nathanson melds specific spiritual yearnings with abstract form. But as seen in godless Chelsea, Nathanson's art gives body to sweeping, unkempt beauty.

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