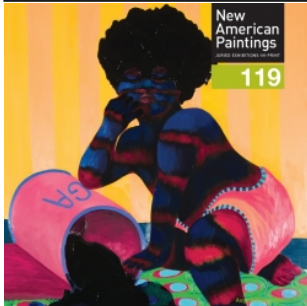


New American Paintings

JURIED EXHIBITIONS-IN-PRINT



ABOUT THE SHAPE OF IT: MAGALIE GUÉRIN AT CORBETT VS DEMPSEY

God, let's just start with a list, right?, and if it seems a bit daunting, just imagine poor fucking Linnaeus, setting forth to categorize sundry and all living things, whereas this is but a brief run-down and accounting for of some of the shapes—a sampling of the vast geographic ecosystem-of Magalie Guérin's (NAP #119) worlds, shapes anatomical/biological-flesh-colored trash bags, barred teeth, raw nails, conch snail shells-shapes mechanical-vintage car grills and taillights and doors and bench seats, mid-century modern chairs, shafts of lamp light from a noir gumshoe's desk, perfume bottles, awl handles, backsplash tiles, famished walls with studs showing, the glowing jukebox flanks of a sci-fi set, the curled remnants of a high school art class pastel set's cover paper, the ribs of rent cardboard—all nestled up amongst each other in the cool colors of pallid death or the never-living, enamel and sclera and cream and subcutaneous fat, contractor wall color and brutalist concrete and refrigerator light ... and the paintings are none of those things, not really; well, they are all of those things, but only to me, on a Sunday morning in February, aided/impeded by time, distance, memory, an exercise in form until the very end ...

- B. David Zarley, *Chicago Contributor*

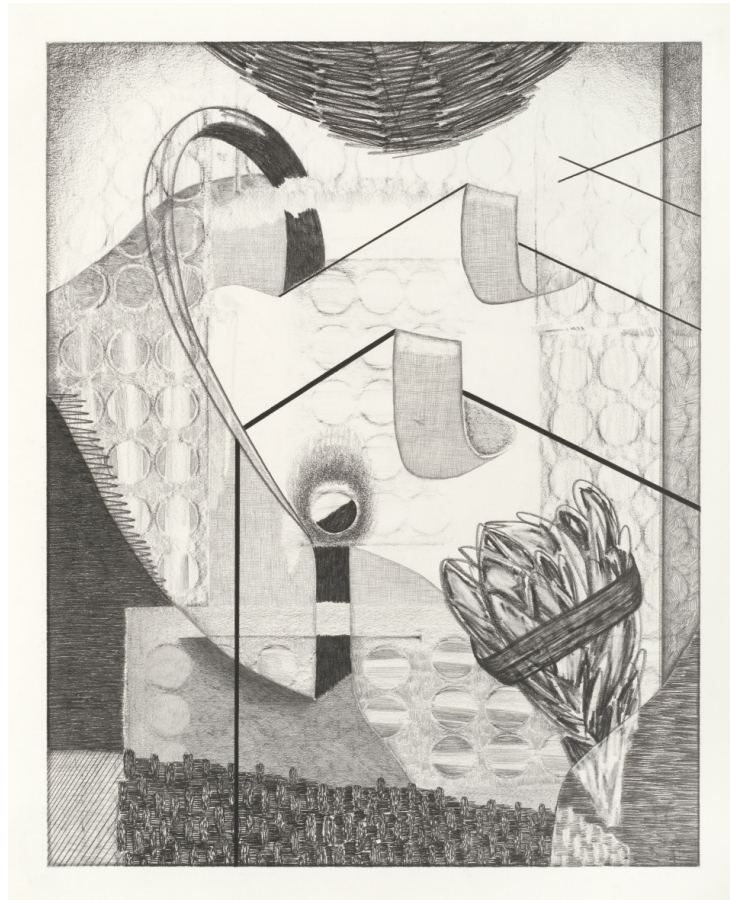


Magalie Guérin | *Untitled*, 2017. Oil on canvas on panel. 20 x 16 inches. Image courtesy of the artist and Corbett vs Dempsey, Chicago.

Look, to be brutally honest, there's layers to this show, right?, layers of medium and intention and engagement, so that the whole experience of the thing comes down close to being molecular, art and painting and abstract painting atomized down into tiny bits and then being reconstituted in Magalie Guérin's mind, then hand, then reassembled into something we can all see in a whole, set in paint or graphite, making Guérin kind of like our electron microscopes or compact muon solenoid or something-the point is, Guérin is attempting to make visible, via knowledge and skill, what we cannot as accurately see or perhaps even think of-and enjoyable both inscrutably and knowledgeably.

Like the best abstract painters, Guérin's [Corbett vs. Dempsey](#) solo show, bunker, can be enjoyed purely off of its aesthetic elements; the soft, unassuming color palette, which is inviting but never distracts from the real arresting element, the glorious mastery of shape, the seamless and unsettling-uncanny, maybe, is best?-amalgamation of forms both biological and mechanical which causes one to hang up, untangle, explore. Even the broad evocations that the shapes draw out-the entire list above was the majority of my notes on the show; I wandered in a fugue, cataloging shapes as if sea creatures-demonstrate something essential and primal about art.

Seeing cars or furniture or body parts in the subtle changes between a hard angle and a curve reveals the deep hardwiring between sight and thought, the brain's ambition to tease from chaos or oddity something, anything, resembling what it knows, and thus achieving some form of control (no help from titles here! It's all untitled, so best get to pareidolia if you wish to discuss with one another!). It is perhaps in the monochromatic graphite drawings on display that one finds this power expressed in its truest form, the graphite layered so intricately as to resemble collage, as if she opened the paper up like an Operation table, shape now essentially creating space.



Magalie Guérin | Untitled (D1620-2017-10), 2017. Graphite on paper. 22 x 18 inches. Image courtesy of the artists and Corbett vs Dempsey, Chicago.

This is carried over in a more subtle way to the paintings themselves, pocked as they are with striations, grooves, ridges, "actual relief" as the gallery materials call them, and let's play that one for a joke, right?, an actual relief that is physically, actually realized, and an actual relief because, by breaking up the flat plane on which her shapes thrive, Guérin has given us channels in which to run, scaffolding on which to hang, skeletons on which to apply viscera.



Magalie Guérin | Untitle, 2017. Oil on canvas on panel. 20 x 16 inches. Image courtesy of the artist and Corbett vs Dempsey, Chicago.

It is the shape of things which makes bunker successful; the inherent joy always to be found in ascribing our own comforting order on shapes untethered from official mimetic intent, unfettered by reality or resemblance and instead exhibiting the sheer kind of odd joy and beauty one finds in higher math or simple pain, an experiential enjoyment of art hewn to one of its defining elements, done in a definitive way.

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