

ARTFORUM

“The Painter of Modern Life”

ANTON KERN GALLERY

532 West 20th Street

March 5, 2015–April 11, 2015

A forceful, magnetic tension fuels the infectious energy of this show, conjured by curator Bob Nickas. The diverse works by twenty-one artists gravitate toward opposing poles, the obsessive and the spontaneous. You can feel them attract and repel one another from across the room.

Intricate, labor-intensive pieces by Xylor Jane, Richard Tinkler, and Chip Hughes buzz with complex grids and patterns. Thousands of small dashes densely scratched into wet purple paint form Hughes's labyrinthine *I tried to hide the heart from the head*, 2014. Currents of James Siena, his Op art forebears and trippy twangs of 1960s psychedelia course through these compulsive works, the best of which operate as mandalas, their visual complexity sucking the viewer into unexpected meditations. Balancing the neurotically detailed efforts are more subdued abstractions. One can linger quietly with Lisa Beck's *You Are Here*, 2014, comprising a small painted mirror and block of wood, subtly stained by wiped-away enamel.

The misses are few. Eric Lindman's large red canvas punctuated by navy jags doesn't teach us anything that Clyfford Still didn't reveal with more rigor. Staunchly rooted at the slacker end of the spectrum are Nihilis Planck's untitled drawings featuring violet scribbles. They recall the evidence of people testing pens in stationery stores. Taken all together, though, these works provide an exhilarating tour of formal concerns. They eschew social and political questions (David Ratcliff's paintings of stars trailing smoke, which evoke American warfare, are an exception). Instead, they offer us a vicarious joy. They enable us to enter the artists' minds and join them in reveling in media, color, line, and in the variety of roads—from deer trails to superhighways—by which one can arrive at a compelling image.



Xylor Jane, *Untitled*, 2015, oil on panel, 47 x 53".

— Zoë Lescaze