

Stephen Friedman Gallery

Artcritical

Post Hard: Marina Adams at Hionas Gallery

David Cohen

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Marina Adams: Coming Thru Strange at Hionas Gallery Lower East Side



Image: Marina Adams, 40 Watt Moon, 2010. Acrylic on Linen, 38 x 38 inches. Courtesy of Hionas Gallery

In her first solo exhibition at Hionas Gallery, in this Tribeca-based gallery's recently inaugurated second space on the Lower East Side, Marina Adams confirms her position as a player of significance in contemporary abstract painting. A baker's dozen of sassy, sexy, exuberant pictures exude freshness and intelligence in strong and equal measure.

The paintings range in scale from just over six foot square to a diminutive 12 by 12 inches, and in format they bounce around from loosely configured concentric circles to what can be described as close-ups of deflated beach balls.

There are also jigsaws of limb-like forms or of flag-like

forms. Uniting these formats are vibrant color, eccentric geometry, insistently handmade lines, and a kind of good-humored ambivalence between spatial depth and pictorial flatness. Her relationship to shape is strongly redolent of Harriet Korman but her particular stance as a fuser of soft-edged geometry and angst-free art informel entails a distinct set of pleasures and queries.

Adams has a quietly audacious sensibility. Her chirpy palette eschews primaries, generally preferring pastels and nursery hues. While avoiding brash juxtapositions and gently pacing color contrasts across the composition, she enjoys teasing the eye with mild dissonances and skewed tonal shifts. She has a predilection for games with isolated texture: her surface can get brushy or rubbed in one color segment while remaining smooth in a neighbor, as in 40 Watt Moon (2010). The combined effect of these tendencies introduces almost trompe l'oeil intimations of perspectival recession at the very instant of enforcing awareness of the support. In Spin, (2010) for instance, two of the six scarf-like triangulated color segments that meet at a center – the pink and the burgundy – each have two tones within them, suggesting forms folding or bending back upon themselves, thus implying flutter (and with it, spatial depth).

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Image: Marina Adams, *Space Embrace*, 2012. Acrylic on Linen, 48 x 48 inches. Courtesy of Hionas Gallery

At ease and optically generous as these paintings are, they are actually radically cropped because gestalt depends upon something beyond the canvas itself. The edge of the picture, indeed, rarely defines the composition, even less the boundary of an individual shape. This imparts narrative and metaphor to works that would otherwise want to feel present tense and literal.

Adams' target-like compositions, like *Space Embrace*, (2011) are almost programmatic in the way they soften, "feminize" even (her bulls eye is difficult not to read as a breast) that trope of

modernist hard-edge. But even in her more personal and complex compositions there are traces of the hard edge softened. Her use of texture and sgraffito, the way forms are given a shadow, the pentimento-like continuation of an outline beyond the form it describes – in *Coming Through Strange*, (2011) for instance, the title piece of the show, a Robert Mangold-recalling gesture – all point to a tenderizing of emphatic or clean cut geometric abstraction. But rather than suggesting Adams as some kind of soft neo-romantic, these strategies come across more as "post hard," as if her relationships to Mangold, Kenneth Noland (targets) or Ellsworth Kelly are akin to Eva Hesse's to Donald Judd.