

3-Sentence Reviews: Keltie Ferris, for Starters

By Jerry Saltz September 23, 2015



Jackie Saccoccio at 11 Rivington. Photo: Charles Benton/11 Rivington

Alicia McCarthy
Jack Hanley Gallery
327 Broome St., through Oct. 11

Alicia McCarthy's rattletrap wobbly painted grids of high-keyed colored bars that weave over and pop under one another in patterns that form in the mind then disappear make for paintings that seem simultaneously convex, concave, caving in, and breathing. Making geometry personal and systems subjective, she creates taxonomies of colored bars that mount like would-be periodic charts of we don't know what, but know we feel a need to know about this kind of organization — as if it were an algorithm for a retinal pheromone. Like a lot of painters these days, many of them women, McCarthy is painting abstract, yes, but elbowing out Zombie Formalist fussiness and rule-bound almost-monochrome and instead lets painting reassume the multitudinous way that it lays claim on us.

Jackie Saccoccio: "Degree of Tilt"
11 Rivington
Through Oct. 18

Van Doren Waxter
Through through Oct. 23

Jackie Saccoccio goes semi-Barbarian — well within current abstraction but wilder — tipping over the scaffolding from most boring formalism and process painting, letting painterly genies and lotus rhizomes rise from her alchemical canvases that teem with color, smudges, drips, stains, multi-tailed lines that move in unison like mold spores that then change direction as if under the influence of unseen forces. You sense she must be using brushes somewhere on these acrid and candy-colored paintings but mostly you feel the presence of the artist pouring different viscosities of liquid, picking up, turning the canvas, changing surface topographies, making Pollock's dance more elaborate, multilayered, with sheets of planktonlike paint mingling with drips. What makes many of these paintings feel whole is that while there are thousands of visual incidents and effervescent shimmerings — that could collapse in microbial miasmas of pretty painterly nothingness — somehow an image emerges, often the shape of a huge protuberance that allows us to grapple with the feeling that something this mysteriously simple is simultaneously revealing systems as secret as color, structure, and Kabbalah.

Keltie Ferris: "Paintings and Body Prints"
Mitchell-Innes & Nash
Through Oct. 17

About eight years ago Keltie Ferris burst onto the New York painting scene like a bat out of hell, that is, if you define hell as the Yale M.F.A. painting program; back then, her large Day-Glo-colored canvases were perfect crosses between hazy 1970s Color Field painting, pixilated digital space breaking up and reforming in odd-shaped plates, and painterly abstraction at the same time totally avoiding any derivative overlap with artists like Kelly Walker or Gerhard Richter. A lot of people took notice; but then she seemed to plateau a little, get a bit predictable, following the digital implications of her work in directions that seemed too logical, illustrative, resulting in pictures that were contrived and overly self-conscious. That temporary stall is behind her; Ferris is her own artist now, really simmering-to-boil in this new show that mixes images that look like traditional weaving, fizzling idiosyncratic patterns, digital imprints left by unknown ghosts, painterly reflexes that are as instinctive as an animal alert to where to move and what to do in a limited field, and how to survive, and kill.

Betty Tompkins: "Real Ersatz"
FUG
Through Oct. 18

Way back in the 1960s at the exact same moment that Chuck Close was doing it with the faces, Betty Tompkins was making enormous black-and-white photorealist paintings — not of faces — but graphically pornographic images (still un-reproducible in these pages), ripped from straight male porn magazines (yes, kids — people used to masturbate to still black-and-white pics back in the day; not color videos like all of you); beautiful paintings of blow jobs, female fingerings, spread-eagle women doing anything you might imagine. I remember seeing images of this work back then and thinking, *Wow! I like these way more than Chuck Close; this is someone really going for it in scale, technique, and holding nothing back about image.* Sadly and undeservedly — and probably because it was too scary for a woman to be handling in-your-face imagery and scale like this — Tompkins was dealt out of a little history before storming back in about 15 years ago; she's one of the strongest artists out there now, always sparing nothing, using contemporary porn (all-shaved, of course, and bigger dicks, not sure why), in a show that is a must-see for the legions of curators who are always beating the bushes to "rediscover" other "older women artists."