

MITCHELL-INNES & NASH

The New York Times

5 Art Gallery Shows to See Right Now

Rowan Renee's new installation; Darrel Ellis's self-portraits; Lu Yang's digital world; Kunle Martins's charcoal portraits; and Keltie Ferris's exuberant abstractions.

May 20, 2021, 10:00 a.m. ET

Keltie Ferris

Through May 29. Mitchell-Innes & Nash, 534 West 26th Street, Manhattan; 212-744-7400, miandn.com.



Keltie Ferris's "s=t=r=e=a=m=s" (2020-21), oil and vinyl paint on canvas in the artist's frame. Credit...Keltie Ferris

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Each of the 12 large-scale paintings in Keltie Ferris's exhibition "FEEEEELING" is set within a handmade frame, and all of them were made in the past year. Considered together, the paintings act as an inventory of the innovative techniques the artist has used over the past decade. A series of looping monochrome compositions made with graphite give way to compact geometric assemblages, which are interspersed with multilayered paintings made by imprinting canvas onto canvas. This is Ferris's trip down memory lane, but the works still feel fresh. Drawn directly onto the Sheetrock that spans the gallery's back wall is a new site-specific drawing, "Xstatic Being Xstatic" (2021). Read this as an index to Ferris's entire practice. Made with graphite, its dense conglomerations of curves and straight lines are replete with smudges, clues that prove that learning the artist's process is integral to appreciating the final product.

Ferris's paean to the transportive possibilities offered by drawing — what Paul Klee called "taking a line for a walk" — showcases how a sense of movement can be conveyed through artistic restraint. Rejecting a hard-disciplinary line between drawing and painting, Ferris revels in that more exhilarating space that emerges between mediums, which allows instinct and intuition to take the lead. "S=t=r=e=a=m=s" (2020-21) highlights the thrill of this intermediate zone, its lurid combination of electric blue and bright red paint layered with sculptural thickness and an array of brush strokes that alternate hard-edge geometric forms against a gridded background. Variations of these gestural abstractions crop up across the exhibition, each painting bearing a loose but decisive inheritance to post-1980s German and American abstraction, which still excites because it did away with abstraction's stodgiest rules. Ferris's ingeniousness, however, is more of a self-critical expansion of his own techniques than a gaze back at the canon, making his style resolutely one of a kind. TAUSIF NOOR