

New American Paintings

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FOUR SHOWS: NYC

Aggro Crag
BOSI Contemporary
48 Orchard Street, New York, NY 10002

Painter Jason Stopa has put together a talented group of painter-painters, the majority of whom are recent or soon-to-be MFA graduates. It hits on a certain doodley poetry and fresh-paint quality which has become a language of choice in many emerging painting shows.

Immediately in the entryway, many will recognize Joyce Pensato's *Punk Homer* from her solo show "Batman Returns" last year at Friedrich Petzel. It stands out here as a black-and-white behemoth, but it loses context as one in a series of iterations of pop culture characters. Knowing that, though, I'm still glad to see it.

Likewise, many of the other works here would benefit from the context of solo shows for greater impact. At the moment, they read as experiments in visual language. Katherine Bradford's "New Men" on the opposite wall, for example, looks like a close-up of a white table top with the words "NEW MEN" painted near the center of the canvas. If the painting were flipped upside down, the words would read the same. The visual word game feels similar to the kind of economy that's common to Jack Strange and Dave Shrigley.

Titles are similarly playful, often used to enhance clunk, as in Polly Shindler's "Dang Darn" and Austin Eddy's "Freaky Deaky." I imagine that Eddy's paintings of primitive heads with corrugated cardboard mouths and eyes could use the Nicole Eisenman treatment of a few full walls.

Style is used as language, much like the way Mary Heilmann uses it; in fact, a few paintings seem to nod to her simple-to-make paring down of cultural iconography. Russell Tyler's "lo-fi", for instance, is comprised of a black rectangle of chunky paint layered over a grey grid. It does look lo-fi, and familiar, but you can't place it. It's not a TV, a microwave, or a really old Mac, but the shapes make you run down that list.

Trudy Benson's big, beautiful "Monolith" magnetically drew people to the back of the gallery at the show opening. By now, its fresh mixture of neon accents on chromatic grey and strategic accents of spray paint is a familiar look for MFA shows. Sometimes it's so pretty, you don't care.

Many of the works, though, feel like "NEW MEN"—a phrase without the context to provide the punchline. I look forward to seeing what this group can do on their own.