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Art in Review

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Carrie Moyer

'Arcana'

Canada

55 Chrystie Street, near Hester Street, Lower East Side

Through June 7

Carrie Moyer's abstract paintings are getting stronger and, as the title of her third solo show at this gallery suggests, more mysterious. Combinations of opaque and translucent layers tease the eye, as do forms that recall the famous vase-profile illusion.

In the front gallery a group of canvases explores stacked, tripartite figures that bring to mind a game of exquisite corpse. The one in "Rebus" has a harp for a torso and a pair of breasts where the head should be.

Dada and Surrealist associations become more explicit in "Ballet Mécanique," titled after the percussive 1924 performance conceived by the painter Fernand Léger and the composer George Antheil. (Oddly, it looks more like the collages of Hans Arp than anything by Léger.)

Larger canvases in the back room approach abstraction from all angles and nationalities and from both sexes, associating freely with the artists in Alfred Stieglitz's circle, W.P.A.-era murals and midcentury Color Field painting. Feminist art of the 1970s is part of the mix, though less prominent here than in Ms. Moyer's earlier works.

The "arcane" element has less to do with the origins of these forms than with how they are veiled and masked. Prismatic glazes, mixed with glitter and sometimes poured or swirled together, can be glimpsed through openings in a field of dark purplish-brown. And red strings pass between the various levels of the painting, inviting Kabbalistic study.

KAREN ROSENBERG