

HYPERALLERGIC

Sensitive to Art & its Discontents

Four Artists, Breezing through Materials and Ideas

by Thomas Micchelli on October 4, 2014



Nicole Cherubini, "Brand New Crescent Moon" (2013) earthenware, stoneware, birch, and tung oil, 76 x 23 x 22 inches

The Fitzroy Gallery on the Lower East Side has gathered together four like-minded artists for an [exhibition](#) that appears to stem from a Casualist approach, but a closer look quickly complicates the picture.

The works by the four artists, Samuel T. Adams, Patrick Brennan, Nicole Cherubini and Cassandra MacLeod, range from freewheeling to slapdash, breezing through a host of materials, including silkscreen, carborundum, and clay, as ideas pile one atop the other.

A few pieces, such as Cherubini's all-white vase-like earthenware/stoneware

sculpture, "Brand New Crescent Moon" (2013), or Samuel T. Adams' "Blueprint" (2014), in acrylic and carborundum on two joined canvases, look absolutely classical in the context of the other works in the show, many of which fling themselves into the no-holds-barred anarchy of the creative process.

Cherubini's sculpture, despite its monochrome, is the most anything-goes of the three pieces she has contributed to the exhibition, covered in every manner of lump, clump, loop, fish scale and knot. Above this swirling activity, a wood grained cylinder tops the vase's lid, with swatches of clay erupting out of it like shooting flames; below, two thin, uneven slabs form the sculpture's bottommost quarters, one sitting beneath the vase's base, and the other attached vertically, inexplicably, at the top of the work's pedestal.

The finely crafted pedestal, made from gorgeously laminated wood, is anything but casual, if we think of the term as synonymous with scruffiness and improvisation. In much of the work on display, the loosely configured surfaces often play off a stable, planned element, or — as in the case of the pedestal — some kind of physical structure augments or balances the piece's spontaneity.

Adams, who is also showing three works, made "Blueprint" from a vertical merger of two nearly square canvases. Its exceedingly handsome image, composed of blue-black strokes resembling the floor plan of a cathedral in the upper canvas and a street map below, is a Post-Minimal blend of drawing and painting, punctuated by spots and strokes of seemingly impenetrable black.

A step closer to the surface reveals that those marks are actually holes and rips in the canvas, with a black-painted backing behind them. (The full list of materials reads: acrylic and carborundum on re-stretched canvas, wood structures.)

Adams' literal take on color depth transports his neo-Lucio-Fontana move into an arena that's fully compatible with painting-as-image as well as painting-as-object. The black-backed punctures work just as well with Adams' other two abstractions, "Scaffold" and "Hulk" (both 2014), which are also made up of more than one canvas and painted, respectively, in monochrome salmon and green (naturally).

With nine pieces on display, Cassandra MacLeod has the largest number of works in the show, as well as the most varied, from the whimsically optical to the mushily expressionistic. Eight out of the nine incorporate a silkscreened element

as a main ingredient, predominantly in the shape of knotted ropes, sometimes on striped or patterned fabric.

Handmade marks often infiltrate the printed grounds, easily becoming too chaotic or congested; however, the couple of pieces that are content to leave the silkscreen relatively alone feel especially bold and energetic — there's less to distract the eye and weigh the surface down — especially in the two works, both untitled from 2014, that are inversions of each other, with the rope imagery printed in black on striped fabric on one, and in white, and vertically flipped, on the next.

Patrick Brennan's five canvases are the most abrasive pictures in the show — raw and bristly, they come off as the product of an unfettered imagination that genuinely does not care how far over the top any one piece becomes. A work like "Seneca Street (Night)" (2014) is a total crackup of pattern, shape, texture and color. But with a more attentive look, I began to feel as if the teeming troves of collage and paint that make up the various sections of the composition are analogous to the potential infinities of information lying just beneath the surface of every clickable link, and if their adjacencies rattle the nerves, well, that's life.

I was particularly impressed with the companion piece, "Seneca Street (Day)" (also 2014), which spreads its textured shapes across a field of white. True, it feels more organized in a conventional sense, but what's different about it is that the composition doesn't appear programmed to add up as a whole; rather the six shapes act as pockets or portals crammed with visual buzz. The specific arrangement of shapes doesn't matter, and outside strictures remain outside.

[Samuel T. Adams, Patrick Brennan, Nicole Cherubini & Cassandra](#)

[MacLeod](#) continues at Fitzroy Gallery (195 Chrystie Street, Lower East Side, Manhattan) through October 26.