

ARTFORUM

Magalie Guérin

CORBETT VS. DEMPSEY

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Back in 2006, wealthy magnate Steve Wynn accidentally elbowed Pablo Picasso's *Le Rêve*, tearing a hole through the painting. The rambunctious manner in which Magalie Guérin sets abstract body parts swinging around the compositions of her modestly scaled paintings could recall such a gaff. In *Untitled (Hat—Ham)*, 2012–14, for instance, engorged lavender and lemon appendages jab beyond the rectilinear framing devices the artist has deeply incised into the canvas's surface.

Guérin parodies pictorial devices from painting's history and employs clunky color schemes in choice moments as if engaging them in goofy games of dress up—a comedic affront to any supposed endgame for her cherished medium. A shape resembling a three-leaf clover is debossed in the middle of some of the eight paintings on view. This consistent repetition amid a chatter of loudly contrasting formal modeling shows a keenly attentive methodology, which sets the tempo for her wilder explorations. In sweetly puzzling works, she inches her abstractions as close as she can toward recognizable imagery, as with the carnivalesque bicorn in *Untitled (Hat—House)*, 2013–14. From canvas to canvas, she tests the assumptions that divide authenticity and appropriation. Moreover, she squeezes her wonky shapes into a playful zone between the looming presence of her abstract-painter forebears on one side and depictions of the material world on the other. Even the comically exaggerated facial features in *Untitled (Hat—Ears)*, 2013, would seem to propose that contemporary painting is a shared costume closet chock-full of positions, profound impersonations, and sly subterfuge that may be layered in endless variations.



Magalie Guérin, *Untitled (Hat—Ears)*, 2013, oil on canvas, 16 x 20".

— Matt Morris