

ARTFORUM

Critic's Pick: "New Skin" at Monica King Contemporary

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"New Skin," curated by Jason Stopa, is a five-part ensemble featuring a dozen paintings by Clare Grill, Juan Logan, Michael Berryhill, Shirley Kaneda, and Stopa himself—most of whom have been showing in New York for more than ten years. The press release reinforces the division between representation and abstraction, and insinuates that artists trafficking in the latter are somehow more radical. However, these works eschew such pat categories to instead celebrate what Albert C. Barnes called "the qualities which *all* particular objects share, such as color, extensity, solidity, movement, rhythm."

Upon entering Monica King's recently opened gallery in TriBeCa, I was greeted by Grill's *Lot*, 2016, a verdant patchwork of diminutive forms that alludes to a forest's mossy carpets as well as the nap of woven fabric. On an opposite wall hangs Stopa's *Interior Pleasures*, 2019. Adapted from a small study, its opaque ground is populated with descending vertical lines and calligraphic shapes that recall early Jonathan Lasker, though mixed with Patricia Treib's one-shot gestures and Bernard Piffaretti's sloppy precariousness.

Three of Kaneda's pieces glisten nearby. *Hectic Emptiness*, 2018, depicts a Tetris-like formation of polygons tightly bracketed by undulating gradients that stand before a lavender background. Another, *Summer Cold*, 2019, positions a pair of similar gradients to the left of horizontal stripes one might find emblazoned across swatches of wrapping paper, or decorative throw pillows. While Kaneda's canvases are the obvious standouts for their imposing scale, boisterous hues, and graphic flatness, I spent the most time with the exhibition's outlier: Grill's *Snail*, 2018. Located to the right of a large oil by Berryhill (*Author*, 2019), the painting's brooding blacks, umbers, and sordid pinks offer an intriguing counterpoint. I felt like Alice peering through the looking glass, drawn into its indeterminate pictorial world of soft objects encircling an abyss; color, solidity, and movement reach a crescendo.