

MODERN PAINTERS

Reviews: Keltie Ferris at SUNDAY

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By Joseph Wolin



Reviews

NEW YORK

KELTIE FERRIS

SUNDAY GALLERY

Armed with a palette knife and a spray gun, Keltie Ferris grapples with the idiom of gestural abstraction in her first New York solo show, "Dear Sir or Madam." In *Ragnarök*, she trowels aluminum-hued paint over a black ground so that the surface looks practically carved. Geometric areas left within the silver field evoke both a glowering jack-o'-lantern's face (abstracted masks have been a leitmotif of her paintings) and the aggressive perpendicularities of Carroll Dunham's top-hatted cartoon figures. Dots sprayed in pale yellow cling to the forms like spores and highlight their spatial ambiguity.

Sincerely Yours finds liquid silver paint atomized atop purple and black to create an all-over shimmering curtain, into which lemony threads interweave themselves. Two almond-shaped regions were masked, painted, peeled off, then painted over again, leaving eyelike scars under the painting's skin. Ferris's use of the spray gun gives her canvases a whiff of graffiti art, but also results in a soft-focus effect, like that of Ugo Rondinone's blurry targets. While a large segment of the artworld mines high modernism for fun and profit, Ferris filters Abstract Expressionism (modern art's acme in the United States) through several generations of painters who came after, recouping a usable past from a shop-worn legacy. —JOSEPH R. WOLIN

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