

ARTFORUM

Keltie Ferris
MITCHELL-INNES & NASH
534 West 26th Street
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By Nathaniel Lee

The most noticeable, and therefore notable, features of Keltie Ferris's well-lavished paintings are their two most immediate strata: Ferris finishes off her large-scale abstractions with arrays of spray-painted dots and dashes and then returns with a brush loaded with a higher-intensity, contrasting color to lay down short, chunky strokes tightly packed in vertical, parallel arrangements around the previous layer. It is a winning combination that has made the artist something of a standout in a scene of young painters searching for novel ways to think about abstraction.

Ferris is beginning to reap rewards from this unique stature, as evidenced by this solo exhibition, her first at Mitchell-Innes & Nash. Additionally, her formal maneuvers win in the sense that Ferris is able to replicate the appearance of video transmissions—albeit transmissions plagued by the pixelating effects of unwelcome signal distortion—while making her pictures, as a whole, look like the organic result of an inborn ability. Consider *Turn Turn Step Step*, (all works 2012), where Ferris adopts Franz Kline's transverse lines as a general compositional strategy, only to atomize Kline's stark strokes into a colorful, techno-futurist dreamscape bursting with attendant fluorescent energy.



Keltie Ferris, *Turn Turn Step Step*, 2012, oil and acrylic on canvas, 90 x 80”.

MITCHELL-INNES & NASH

Beneath the surface of works like *Turn Turn*, Ferris has piled on more modes of paint application than the compositions would seem to require, creating a jungly underpainting without apparent beginning or end. Writing about one of Ferris's exhibition in late 2010, Roberta Smith compared the effect of this tableau of styles to viewing a brightly lit city behind a veil of clouds. One does well in assuming that city is New York, Ferris's adopted home. Reviewing the same show, Carol Diehl noted that Ferris takes inspiration in part from the buildup of graffiti found in her urban habitat. Her paintings meld equal parts of both associations like the dense morass that is Gotham. The electric glow of innumerable points of light sits atop a backdrop of multiple, vestigial human ecologies, embodying all aspects of the city—from East River horizon to the bathroom wall at CBGB—in one big totality.