

ARTFORUM

either actual models or suggestive of design prototypes, and, like the videos, very sleekly fabricated.

In the endlessly looping video *100 Falls*, 2013, a locked-off camera is trained on the bottom end of a ladder within another white-cube setting. One of the artists ascends, disappearing from view. An identically clad dummy flops to the floor. An edit allows for the substitution of live artist for dummy. He picks himself up and climbs again; again, the dummy falls, in a different position—over and over, a hundred times. This piece must have been an utter grind to make, but that's incidental: The point is the viewer's exhaustion, not the artists'. The work's inexorable, absurdist cycle turns the viewer (desirous of affect, variety, resolution) into the key fall guy.

Another barbed offering was the first piece in the show. *A Film about a City*, 2015, belying its title, is a tabletop assembly of (at first glance) charming little architectural models. Here, Wood and Harrison seem to be channeling Étienne-Louis Boullée, Le Corbusier, Giorgio de Chirico, and Aldo Rossi. One structure is a vast blank-walled shed with a tiny door at one end and an even tinier window at the other: a thoroughly dystopian conception. Elsewhere, miniature model citizens crowd the roofs of skyscrapers and vertiginous bleachers and perch on suicidally high ledges. Mass ornamentation, they serve the city, rather than vice versa. The shift to a less friendly, subtly grimmer register may not please fans of Wood and Harrison's earliest works, but the progression's logic is clear, and it will be interesting to see where it leads.

—Rachel Withers

Patricia Treib

KATE MACGARRY

At first glance, the ease with which the eye travels through one of Patricia Treib's paintings belies the complexity she brings to the canvas. The seven large paintings and three smaller works in this New York-based artist's exhibition "Mobile Sleeve" mostly feature forms created from large painterly marks that appear to have been made in a single gesture with very thin oil paint. With their flat, slightly bubbly surfaces, they resemble marks made in watercolor or ink. And yet those fluid gestures—in bright, soft color—often suggest solid volumes: architectural sections or biomorphic shapes. Still, they retain their lightness; sometimes they appear to float airily, while elsewhere they grip together like organs held firm by skin.

For example, *Batignolles* (all works cited, 2015) consists of seven stacked shapes fitting snugly into the rectangle. Along the left side stands an architecture of eight calligraphic touches, which together evoke, in outline, a large bent figure that eclipses or shelters six other forms. Next to this is a three-part pale-green arabesque, joined at top and bottom with a line; painted on its middle curves are a diamond and several drop-like forms that resemble the sound holes in a stringed instrument or a fragment of embroidery. These particular marks are among the few hints at any sort of descriptive detail on each shape. At the visual center of the composition sits a squat, serrated, curvy form of deep, warm blue stacked above a flat green pie shape that, like a plinth, appears to support it. A smooth pale-blue curve at the top-right corner recalls a curtain, suggesting that one corner visually continues beyond the rectangle. The even margin of off-white-painted canvas at the bottom of the picture creates the impression of a ground plane, enhancing the grouping's stacked quality. The work's pale colors evoke a 1950s aesthetic; while its title is the name of a Parisian suburb. Could the shapes be suggesting statuary in a French garden? Or might the work's title be a sly reference to Manet, who lived there, and whose circle of friends was known as the *groupe des Batignolles*?

Though they are not apparent referents in the work, Treib's source material, according to the press release, includes the contours of a camera, the outline of a sleeve from a painting by Piero della Francesca, and a hand from an early-fifteenth-century Russian icon. It is the act of translating these various found motifs into twirling abstract forms, flat shapes, and curvy silhouettes through gesture and color that constitutes the basis of Treib's art. Sometimes she returns to her inspirations; hence, *Delft Icon* is similar to *Batignolles*, although the result feels neither serial nor repetitive. One thinks instead of jazz, with its improvisations on well-known "standards." Changes in color and in the viscosity of paint as well as variations in form and scale result in disparities in both mood and the speed with which one's gaze traverses Treib's works. The pleasure in her paintings resides in what Hubert Damisch describes as the "trickery of the picture"—the play between the painting's physical nature as object and its idea. That is the duplicity with which Treib plays: from slippery paint to suggestive form.

—Sherman Sam



Patricia Treib, *Batignolles*, 2015, oil on canvas, 72 x 54".

Jo Baer

CAMDEN ARTS CENTRE

In 1983, Jo Baer announced she was no longer an abstract painter. Instead, she said, she was committed to working in a mode she dubbed "radical figuration." However, as "In the Land of the Giants," the series of paintings she has been making since 2009, demonstrates, you can't ever really think abstraction without figuration or vice versa. Even as she dedicated the 1960s to patiently exploring and exploiting the parameters of the abstract canvas, her vision from the outset expanded beyond its limits.

By 1962, Baer had stripped back painting to its bare bones. She painted neatly executed ribbons of color around the outer edges of white-painted canvases, layered flush against one another so that the colors appeared to shimmer and move. She would later paint some of the canvases gray rather than white, but the principle remained the same: an emptying-out of visual incident that explored the edges of what painting could contain. Although Baer frequently exhibited alongside her Minimalist peers, including Donald Judd, Robert Morris, and Sol LeWitt—makers of what Judd dubbed "three-dimensional work"—she remained a fierce defender of painting, including in the pages of this magazine, where in 1967 she described Judd's and Morris's views on painting as "objectionable." By 1969, her interest had turned toward scientific theories of perception, light, and color.

In the mid-'70s, Baer moved to the Irish countryside, where she was drawn to the wild expanse of open fields and skies, and in particular to the Neolithic standing stones that scatter the landscape. These became frequent motifs in her painting, circling and studding large, spare canvases whose strange, quasi-surreal imagery hovered somewhere between the geological and cosmological. The strange, holed "hurlstone" features more than once in the current series. Baer was taken by the idea that this apparently natural phenomenon contained at its thick center a perfect hole.