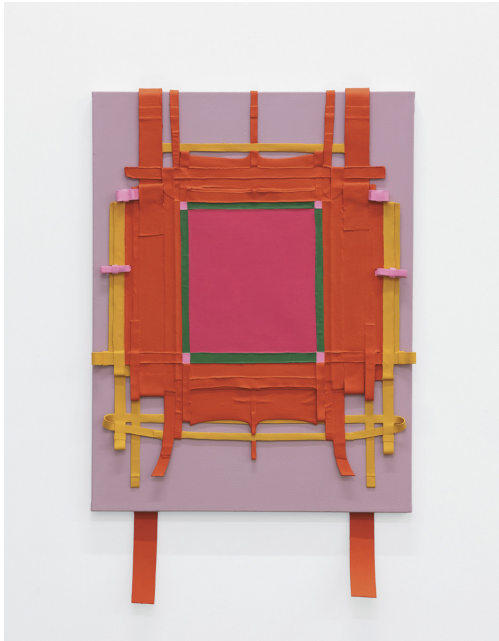


ARTFORUM



Annabeth Marks, *Talisman*, 2021, acrylic on canvas, 28 × 22”.

As arguments for analog experience, Annabeth Marks’s abstract pictures are utterly convincing. Meticulously made with hand-mixed pigments and a devotion to detail, each is an intricate investigation of color and pattern. Often resistant to photographic documentation, they bear many signs of a labor-intensive struggle to locate that perfect compositional cocktail. While rooted in modernist soil, Marks’s collage-based aesthetic eschews pretty historical pastiche for something stranger, richer. She offers outlets for slow speculation, avoiding our culture of accelerated time that is increasingly lacking in substance and civilization.

A range of objects on view at Franz Kaka reflected several distinct processes. Take *Talisman* (all works 2021), comprising a stretched canvas rendered in mauve that serves as a ground upon which severed canvas strips of various lengths and widths are placed vertically and horizontally, resulting in a semi-symmetrical structure of yellow, orange, and green framing a central pink panel. These individual lengths of canvas have been subjected to elaborate and repetitive rituals of folding, looping, layering, creasing, hanging, painting, and repainting. Marks undoes the rigid and rationalized grid, creating a more sensual and eccentric space. *Shielding*, a work from the same group, features a stretched support coated thoroughly in lemon, with similar vibrant networks of adhered linear bands. On the periphery of the picture, some strips dangle below or protrude into space, while others wrap around the work’s edges, as though the painting is trying to protect itself. Indeed, Marks clads her compositions incrementally and in a seemingly measured, ritualistic fashion—perhaps to ensure the invocation of a higher power. While her project has a relatively sculptural slant, Marks’s brightly hued grids recall Mary Heilmann’s early-1970s works that refer to weavings and textiles, which may be read similarly, in terms of a gender-based critique of hard-edged, primary-color abstraction.

Rendered in a striking, synthetic blue, *Each Day Is a Whole Year* is even more detailed in terms of its latticelike layering: Thick and thin strands of canvas are coated so that they seem akin to smooth and supple leather. While the monochrome recalls the daily, multicoating regimen of On Kawara’s date paintings, 1966–2013, it offers a level of intricacy and intimacy that sets it apart from the relatively reductivist languages of Minimalism. Bordered by a series of canvas loops—their presence implying that the picture could be suspended like a banner—Marks’s works have a playfully fetishistic and erotic quality associated with

Dan Adler, “Reviews: Annabeth Marks at Franz Kaka.” *Artforum* (May 2022), accessed online.

recurring activities of bending and protruding, fastening and tying. As such, they are reminiscent of Eva Hesse's mid-1960s painted reliefs, which stray from the chilly seriousness of pieces by her (mostly male) Minimalist colleagues.

Two works from another group, *All Along Here and Chorus*, disfigure the grid even further. In these pieces, Marks is even more explicit about using scraps—here registering as residues, runoffs, or remnants—that are roughly cut and placed at varied angles with a range of textures, colors, contours, and thicknesses of *matière*. Rougher edges, akin to those of cardboard, often reveal the weave beneath slapdash washes of pigment. Coming across as more precarious, these pictures, which call to mind board games, nonetheless maintain a sense of containment and control. Seen as a group, Marks's paintings may inspire the beholder to consider “playing” a version of themselves on their own terms. How many protective layers do we need? How many colors and textures, and in which combinations, are necessary? Which parts now require a fresh coat or a minute adjustment? Marks's painted discourse dwells within a domain where the joy and urgency of invention and reinvention are avowed.

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