

rachel uffner

ARTINFO

Hilary Harnischfeger in New York

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NEW YORK—Hilary Harnischfeger combines hand-dyed paper with plaster and minerals such as chalcedony, mica, calcite, and quartz to create densely layered artworks that blur the lines between drawing, painting, and sculpture. Made through a process of addition and subtraction, the final pieces contain references to abstracted landscapes, rock striations, and excavated fossil remains, and the combination of her unique process with meticulous attention to detail produces artworks that themselves stand out like the gems used in their construction.

Harnischfeger's sparsely installed, self-titled show at Rachel Uffner Gallery, her first at the Lower East Side space, on view through June 21, consists of just six hanging works and three standing sculptures. All of the works were created in 2009, and many were inspired by a backpacking trip that she took through Colorado last summer.

Electric Pass is titled after a pass in Colorado that contains a build-up of static electricity — when hikers journey through it, their hair stands on end. The work mimics this experience with layers of built-up paper that roll and arch like an electrical current. One of the largest pieces in the show, it shows the artist's process through broad curves that extend forward, exposing the layered paper and plaster underneath.

Another Colorado-inspired work, *El Jebel*, is named after a network of towns built over a convergence of tunnels and underground rivers that fill to the brim with water every year in late spring and early summer. The piece is a darkly colored piece, perhaps a reference to storm clouds, and the top portion displays a knotty relief inlaid with glass shards that looks like a network of tunnels. The bottom contains a white triangular shape with a small vertical slit. As Harnischfeger constructed the piece she would push wet plaster through previously dried holes in the work, an act that she says reminded her of driving through the town's tunnels and thinking of the water that would soon be filling them.

Another darkly colored piece bears the name of the artist's favorite layer of the earth, *Mantle*. The piece consists of ridges of paper that slide over and under one another like tectonic plates sitting on fault lines. The center of the piece is lighter than its edges and shows subtle gestural brush marks from the ink applied to its surface.

The standing sculptures' painted surfaces look like the glazes found in Japanese Kenzan earthenware, and the minimal display of the three pieces on a long table-shaped pedestal continues the Japanese aesthetic. The piece at the east end of the pedestal, *Lucy* (named after the seminal Australopithecus discovered in 1974), stands tall, with a cylindrical plaster base holding what appears to be an abstracted face or skull.

All of the artworks in the show are very material-conscious, reminiscent of the work of American sculptor Eva Hesse. From a distance they look like rocks because of their use of plaster, but upon closer inspection they reveal delicate transitions in hue and crevasses carefully filled with layered paper and minerals — details which add to the feeling that the objects are recently unearthed fossils or relics.

Here, the artist suggests what else to see in New York this weekend:

1. Unica Zürn: Dark Spring at the Drawing Center, through July 23

“I had only seen reproductions of Zürn’s work until this show. It is strange how different the few paintings in the show feel from the drawings.”

2. Mimmo Rotella: American Icons and Early Work at Knoedler & Company, through July 31

“Rotella’s ‘decollages’ of lacerated posters are amazing. My favorite works in this show are the earlier ‘retro d’affiches.’ The panels, made by tearing and rearranging the backs of posters, feel like fragments of abstracted frescoes — simultaneously ancient and modern. The later decollages are also amazing, in a faster, more direct way. The lighter halos of ripped-away ink that form on the edges of the red, yellow, and black pieces of poster skip and drag across the canvas.”

3. Alice Neel at David Zwirner and Zwirner & Wirth, through June 20

“At the David Zwirner show, I was most struck by the Cindy painting. The gestural quality of the figure and her very specific, almost adult-like presence in the body of a child is uncanny. The abstract expressionistic background in that painting is strange and dreamlike. At Zwirner & Wirth, the small watercolors seem to glow.”

4. Lara Schnitger at Anton Kern, though June 20

“I liked the transparent layering of fabrics and the dying/bleaching techniques in the paintings here. And this is the best use of eyelet fabric I have ever seen.”

5. Carrie Moyer: Arcana at Canada, through June 7

“Here I loved the stained-glass-like portals tunneling through dark voids to create a bizarre mirage of characters. I especially liked the smaller paintings.”

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