

Art & Design



A view of a canvas and sculptures by Joanne Greenbaum in her show "New Paintings and Sculptures" at Rachel Uffner. Credit 2016 Joanne Greenbaum/Artists Rights Society (ARS), New York and Rachel Uffner Gallery

Joanne Greenbaum, 'New Paintings and Sculptures'

By ROBERTA SMITH

Joanne Greenbaum is operating at full capacity in her latest show at Rachel Uffner, confirming that she would have been a strong addition to the Museum of Modern Art's recent painting survey. At the same time, she is also settling decisively into threedimensions.

Her latest canvases give new meaning to Harold Rosenberg's characterization of Abstraction Expressionist painting as "an arena in which to act" by infusing it with high-low humor instead of macho angst. Up close, circuitries of exuberant lines and scrawls in pencil, crayon and marker course in and out of precarious edifices of high-wattage color that from a distance provide a semblance of order — but barely. The roles are not fixed. Ms. Greenbaum uses paint in graphic ways, dripping it in parallel lines, in some paintings, for example, creating fringelike areas or bead-curtain backgrounds. And her drawing often builds painterly steam; in the show's largest painting, a big cloud of pink crayon rises amid a network of electric blue shapes that evoke an agitated Matisse cutout.

In the upstairs gallery, Ms. Greenbaum takes her improvisations into actual space with tabletop sculptures in ceramic and cast aluminum that suggest misshapen architectural models or vases. The eight porcelain pieces, unglazed but worked by hand with ink and gouache, are especially strong. Color is smeared, loosely geometric or poured. One standout is a furl of delicate cabbagelike leaves dripped with red and yellow ink after being covered with fine red scribbles. Ms. Greenbaum's sculptures aim high and are nearly on equal footing with her paintings.

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