

Thomas Erben Gallery

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Harriet Korman

“Notes on Painting: 1969-2019,” as this cerebral mini-survey at the Thomas Erben gallery is titled, presents an invigorating motley crew of abstract works, united primarily by Korman’s disciplined refusal of art-world trends. The artist’s staunchly playful formalism ranges from loosey-goosey grids (such as one, from 1971, scraped into snowy gesso to reveal crayon lines underneath) to crisply shattered geometries (including an earthy piece in stained-glass hues, from 2001). As a colorist, Korman is full of surprises, sometimes choosing beauty and sometimes rebuffing it. Her scribbly gestures and marshy expanses can lend her confidently unfussy compositions a strange depth, but pictorial illusion is never Korman’s objective. Her show has an appropriately nonlinear feel—it charts a five-decade career that has not so much evolved as propelled itself forward with a series of boldly fresh starts.—*Johanna Fateman (thomaserben.com)*