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5 Art Gallery Shows to See Right Now

Thornton Dial's "Flying Tiger," Thomas Eggerer's protest painting, Harriet Korman's brilliant canvases, Sheida Soleimani's portraits of Iranian-U.S. relations, and Etel Adnan's tapestries.

Harriet Korman

Through Dec. 19. Thomas Erben Gallery, 526 West 26th Street, Manhattan. (212) 645-8701; thomaserben.com



Harriet Korman, "Untitled," from 2001, oil on canvas. Harriet Korman and Thomas Erben Gallery

Those who dedicate their lives to making art usually have early, middle and late phases. This show, modestly subtitled "Notes on Painting, 1969-2019," follows Harriet Korman through hers with a dozen canvases accounting for 50 years of forward motion that has not been without struggle.

The works start with Ms. Korman's brilliant, daringly casual Process Art paintings from the late 1960s and early '70s. Covering parallel lines of blue crayon with white acrylic that she partly scraped off, she created loosely gridded tattersall patterns of line, paint and bare canvas that built on the radical ideas of older painters like Frank Stella and Robert Ryman, and made Ms. Korman briefly something of a young art star.

Then starting in the late '70s and through the mid '90s, she regrouped, shifting to oil paint, trying to build on her distinctively casual approach to geometry. Around the turn of this century, she settled into a seemingly conservative geometry of brightly colored shapes and stripes that she gradually made strange and new. Unrelieved by white or any figure-ground push-pull, Ms. Korman's colors are saturated, even slightly dark and structured into intuitive compositions; they press forward with an unusual emotional and optical intensity.

In an untitled painting from 2001, a field of mostly irregular triangles jostle one another for prominence. In a 2016 painting, also untitled, concentric right angles of many colors push in from the corners, forming a quasi-cross or four asymmetrical chevrons. It would be inspiring to see Ms. Korman's 50 years of art-making filled out with more examples of her journey. What is here conveys refreshingly different ideas about originality, discipline and self-awareness. Life is short, art is long. Painting, at least measured by the time often required to develop, may be the longest of all.

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