

At the Galleries

by Karen Wilkin



Janice Nowinski, *Nude in Front of Mirror*, 2021. Oil on canvas, 14 x 11 in. Courtesy of the artist and Thomas Erben Gallery.

At first acquaintance, Nowinski’s figures seem to have been dashed off with minimal effort, using the fewest possible strokes to suggest a pose, with figures looming against schematic backgrounds, in a subdued range of hues. The artist’s colleague and admirer, Katherine Bradford (a brilliant painter herself), recently observed that Nowinski “makes the rest of us look like we’re trying too hard.” Despite this appearance of effortless, these moody, quirky works soon reveal how potently Nowinski suggests postures, body types, weight, and poise with seemingly accidental inflections and shifts in brushmarks. The most recent paintings at Erben were often the strongest: *Nude in Front of Mirror* (2021), her back toward us, canted forward, with a flying blue drape, upper right, or *Nude with a Dog #1* (2021), one with folded limbs, one with outstretched paws, both boldly facing us and called up with broad strokes of black and white. The longer we spent with each work, the more nuance and sheer painterly intelligence we discovered.