

Tanya Leighton

ARTFORUM

“Fleeting Impressions and Abundance of Detail”

TIF SIGFRIDS



View of “Fleeting Impressions and Abundance of Detail,” 2017.

In 2013, Tif Sigfrids opened her idiosyncratic gallery in Los Angeles with a solo show occurring exclusively in her right ear. During the opening hours of her otherwise empty space, visitors could ask to see Joe Sola’s micro-paintings, executed with acupuncture needles, hanging in a tiny white cube that had been custom-fitted to Sigfrids’s ear (and is now in the collection of the Hammer Museum in Los Angeles, a gift of Ed Ruscha). A subsequent Sola show so filled Sigfrids’s space gallery with perilously balanced wooden chairs as to make it impenetrable. More recently, when Los Angeles philosopher Karl Schafer gave a lecture on Leibniz’s metaphysics in German artist Frances Scholz’s exhibition at the gallery, his notes, drawings, and diagrams were left on the gallery walls until the end of the show. In short, many of Sigfrids’s exhibitions question the conventions of displaying art and prompt the question: Why do galleries look and act like they do? Why not give works a more thought-provoking arrangement, as in the room of nineteenth-century paintings titled “Fleeting Impressions and Abundance of Detail” in Oslo’s National Gallery, from which Sigfrids’s summer group show took its inspiration and its name?

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Like the room in Norway, Sigfrids's show gave a serene blue backdrop to the works on display. Here, however, all the works were hung closely in a single corner. Many appeared to comment on others: The arrangement highlighted connections and oblique symmetries among the works. The blue of a lake in three portraits of women by Becky Kolsrud on the right-hand wall was counterbalanced on the left by the vivid pink backdrops of three portraits, also of women, by Mari Eastman. Ulrich Wulff's untitled portal seemed to lead out of the anarchic spaces of Alexander Nolan's paintings. Mimi Lauter's *Bird in and on a Mountain*, 2016, with its Paul Klee-like infolding of bird space and bird sound, set off the casual grace of Adrienne Rubenstein's *Untitled Broccoli*, 2017. Gracie DeVito's three painted palettes seemed to try and soothe the four paintings by Nolan, each a beautifully bizarre world unto itself. The most joyous of these was *Spanking Serenade*, 2017, a surreal nocturne for trumpet, piano, and spanking. *Tuscan Landscape*, 2017, meanwhile, is an allegory of aesthetic action, as a painter paints not the Italian countryside in front of him, complete with perfectly placed chapel, nor the more immediate enticements of a naked woman wildly embracing a tree, nor even any of the other strangely delighted characters his activity has attracted, focused as he is on a single strange squirrel.

The place where the Nordic blue and the curious grouping worked to greatest effect was at the extremity of the right-hand wall, where the cool impersonality of Lisa Williamson's untitled abstractions were set alongside Kolsrud's three *Untitled Study* works (each with a parenthetical description, all 2017). *Untitled Study (Bather)* is the most playful of these, for while *(Looking Back)* looks back and the gaze in *(Downward Gaze)* is downward, *(Bather)* shows a woman who is at once bather and lake, as though she, as in the painting by JP Munro above her, were a giantess, or as though two different ways of seeing were vying with one another on the canvas. *(Bather)* might, in this respect, serve as an emblem for Sigfrids's show itself. For one way of experiencing it was through the detail of its individual works, while another was through the unusually arranged whole. One way as bather, one as lake.

—Leland de la Durantaye