

Surface Tension: A Group Exhibition presented by Garis & Hahn

Group Exhibition

Garis & Hahn

263 Bowery, New York, NY 10002

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This Is Not a Digital Artwork: Four Artists Whose Works Trick the Eye
by Andrea Zlotowitz

We live in a digitally manipulated world where Photoshop and Instagram filters are essential everyday tools in public image making. In movies, CGI tricks the audience into believing the impossible by making it visually plausible. In art, we're used to seeing similar qualities: digital tools and graphic design resources have leaked into other creative mediums, achieving through aesthetics what the naked eye fails to see. Yet there are artists who embrace the digital realm, paradoxically, by avoiding it altogether.



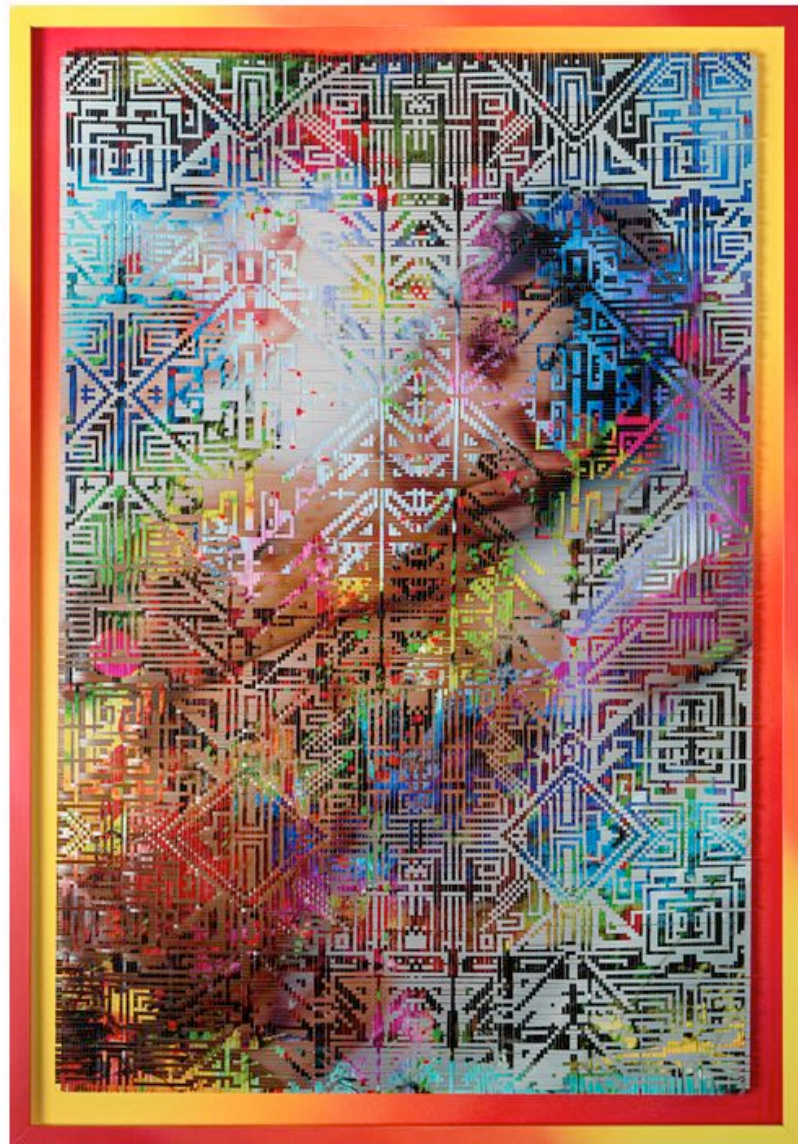
*Frank Stella, "Zeltweg (V), 4.75X" (1982), mixed media on etched magnesium, 114 x 128 x 20 inches.
Private collection (all photos by the author for Hyperallergic) (click to enlarge)*

Four artists are currently exhibiting their manipulative powers in *Surface Tension* at Garis & Hahn. Jamie Powell, Lala Abaddon, Sarah Sieradzki, and Rachael Wren break through the concept of medium within their respective practices, in order to examine surface and dimension in their own unique ways—without the use of digitally manipulated programs. Each demonstrates her own way of controlling color, pattern, and material such that the group presentation as a whole seems to embrace an alternate reality within a variety of non-computer-generated mediums. It's a paradigmatic shift that breaks away from the hackneyed idea of digital art both aesthetically and conceptually: these women redefine the genre, with their own interpretation of their mediums.



Jamie Powell, 2015, *Twist and Shout*

Jamie Powell's mixed media works shyly protrude from the wall. In works that resemble pocketbooks, Powell dyes her frames and hangs painted canvas strips off them in a loose, organic manner. The shadows from the light that illuminates her piece dance along the wall, revealing movement with materials that typically remain still. Her work purposefully—and very materially—taunts the practice of a rigid idea of a digital work. Powell's other works are all asymmetrical or angled, their off-kilter frames of dyed canvas dangling off into space. Her sculptures play with recognizable forms, but those forms are deconstructed, and hang uncomfortably in space, removed from their usual use.



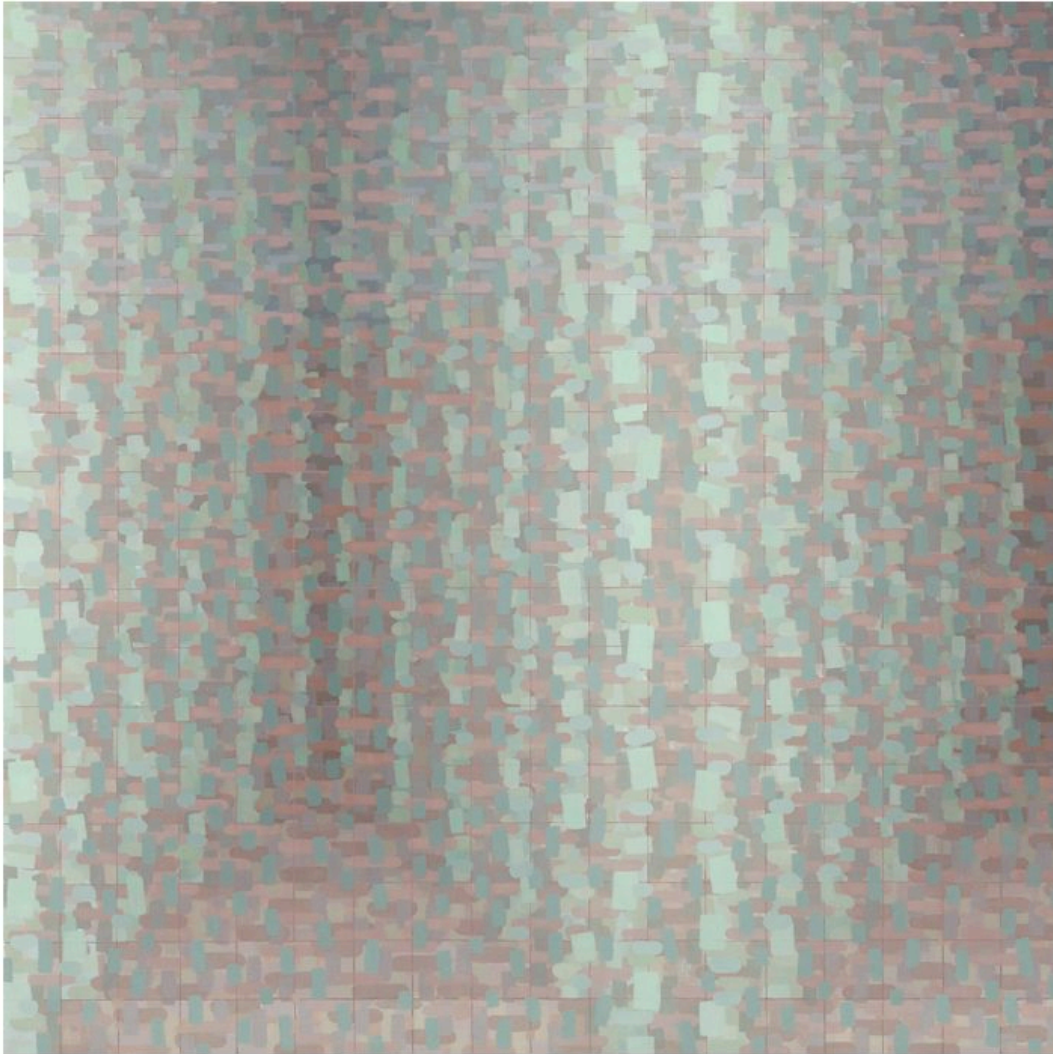
Lala Abaddon, 2014, *You Can't Steal My Soul*

Lala Abaddon's **meta-weaves** also play with ideas of dimensions and space; the artist hand weaves together hundreds of photographic strips to create a complex pattern. There is a constant dichotomy between chaos and rhythm throughout her work: depending on the viewer's perspective, they either emanate hypnotic order or the result of visual overload.



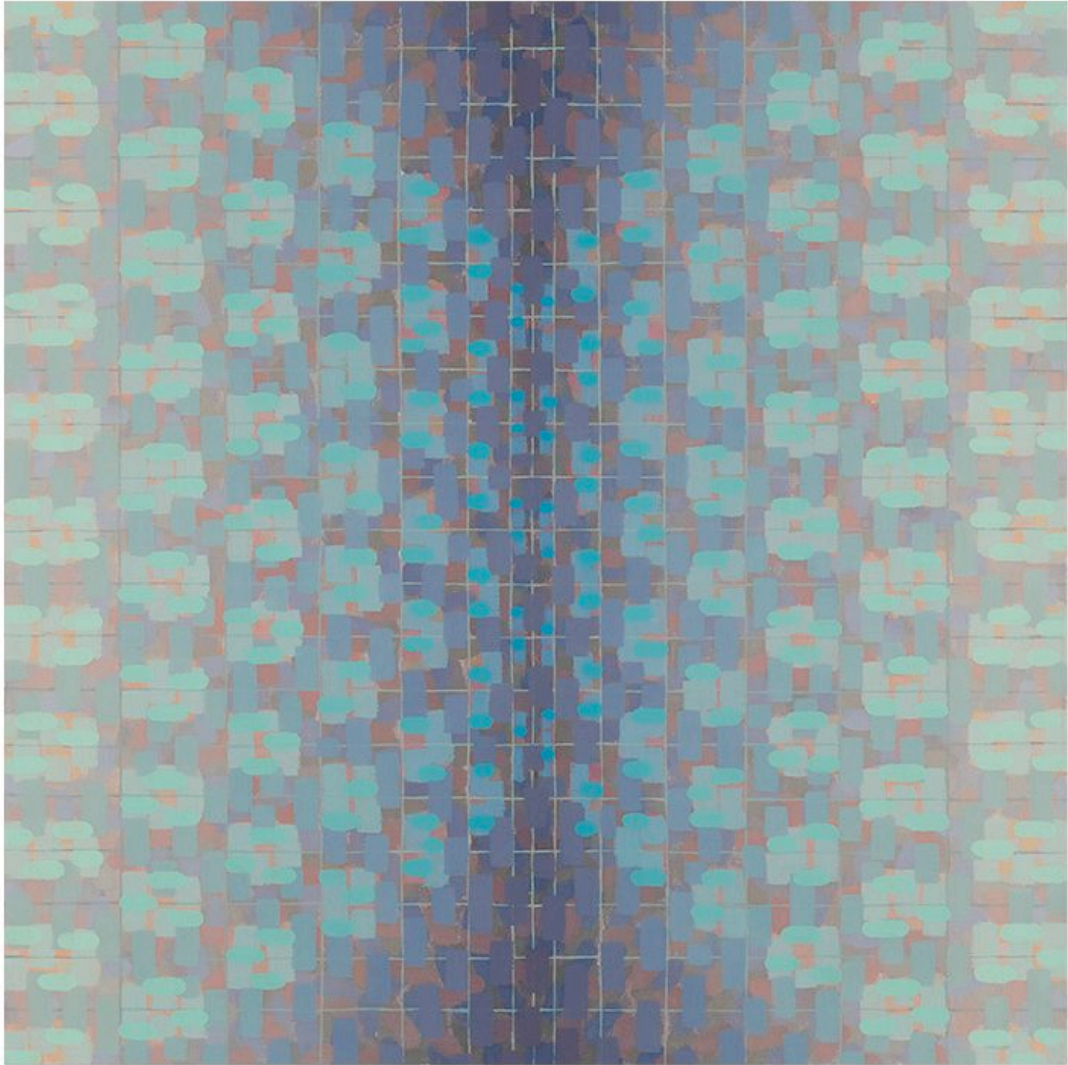
Sarah Sieradzki, Installation view of work in *Surface Tension*, 2015, Garis & Hahn, New York

Sarah Sieradzki transfers digital references into physical forms by means of her own handwork. Her canvas pieces, which look as if they were screen printed, use a marbling technique with acrylic paint; she creates her palette then dips the canvases, resulting in swirling patterns that look printed, yet have a lightness and texturality that handmade works have. Her photographs meanwhile are illusionistic: she creates digital "scenes" using found materials, then photographs the compositions, but presents it with no digital manipulations post-production. It is an impressive play with the form and idea of collage and digital aesthetics.



Rachael Wren, 2013, *Dynamic*, Oil on linen

In terms of the digital paradigm we are faced with today, conceptual understanding meets painting in Rachael Wren's paintings. Painted on linen in oil, Wren paints infinite dots and lines to create an alternate vision of a digitized realm, using soft colors and gradients. Her work explores dimensionality using geometry and pointillism; these are colorful landscapes where there are no defined borders, but rather an intersection of background and foreground. Up close, the details in her paintings are dizzying; from several steps away, they take over the space in the same way a Rothko canvas might. It's this atmospheric impression in her works that draws you in to explore the idea of space in a different, dynamic way.



Rachael Wren, 2013, *Blue Yonder*, Oil on linen

Through the subtle hues of their palettes and the artworks' illusory textures, a cohesive vision emerges, connecting the four distinct bodies of work in this show. Offering a counter-vision to a computer-generated dependence, *Surface Tension* partakes in a growing dialogue about digital aesthetics, reality versus illusion, and hands-on approaches to the paradigm of digital art as we currently understand it. The transformative works glowing in the gallery are beyond digital or analogue; they simply show the incredible things artists can do when they aren't limited by medium or movement.

—Andrea Zlotowitz

(Image at top: Lala Abaddon, "∞†∞†∞†∞†", 2015, Two hand cut and hand woven archival inkjet prints. All images courtesy of the artists and Garis & Hahn, New York)