

# Los Angeles Times

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## Art review: Annie Lapin at Honor Fraser

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By Leah Ollman



Indefatigable is the first word that comes to mind when looking at Annie Lapin's new paintings at Honor Fraser. These canvases possess an energy so relentless it begins to feel a bit suspect — more affectation, perhaps, than affect. Many of the surfaces are busy in the way everyday, plugged-in life is busy, with an unproductive, self-important freneticism that feeds on itself, regenerating with false urgency. And yet, on plenty of occasions in this show, that urgency does feel real and wondrously integrated: mind, motion and matter in sync.

Lapin earned her master of fine arts degree at UCLA in 2007, and before that studied archaeology as an undergrad, noteworthy in that she takes into account a long history of art-making and her work presents itself as a record encompassing multiple strata of effort. Both the broader history and the individual record are given as unsettled — data, marks and meanings densely layered but ever in suspension. This tumultuous realm has something in common with the loosely narrative, action-packed canvases of Iva Gueorguieva, also L.A.-based. Both painters thrive on subverting resolution, purposefully denying fixed understandings of their imagery to echo the way certainties are denied to us in the larger scheme of experience and perception.

In her earlier work, Lapin often incorporated human figures within the unstable settings. The figures are now gone but the instability remains, a formidable force that proves seductive at times, and at others lapses into a murky, anarchic mess. When Lapin finds the right balance between chaos and coherence, the results are deeply absorbing. “The Frozen Aftervisions of Virtue,” for instance, is all motion and surprise. A luscious, birdlike burst in the center sports painterly plumage in glowing sunset orange, plum, mauve, olive and sienna. Perhaps that's a sky in the distance, perhaps not. There are areas that suggest a cage or a window. In the few spots where they appear, flat opaque streaks of gray insistently cancel out the illusion of receding space.

“The Sky Element Embodied” is another beauty. One of three tondos from the series “Distilled and Abstracted Elements of Idealized Landscape,” it reads as a Constable/Tiepolo mash-up, a diverse assembly of clouds — dark and heavy, light and luminous, smoky, ephemeral, tempestuous. Throughout the new work (all 2011), paint makes its way onto Lapin's canvases in every conceivable way: in long, dry brushy streaks; straight from the spray can; in juicy, pulsing dabs; as deliberate, even cover; in gooey gobs and diluted drips.

One of the smaller paintings, “A Material of Child” (30 by 24 inches), demonstrates that Lapin is also capable of quieting down and filtering out excess noise. The image in the center of the inky black panel seems more of an erasure than a mark, as if she used some



kind of thinner to rub out a patch of scribbly lines going side to side, and more lines streaming downward. The painting has a hushed quality about it, as if the afterimage of a woosh disappearance.

Many of the paintings contain horizontal and vertical lines, interwoven in a grid or the loose semblance of one. These bare hints of structure are overwhelmed by improvisational sweeps and swipes and splotches, geometric order wrestling against — and defeated by — juicy, organic disorder. The tension between containment and the uncontainable also animates a group of canvases in which the linen itself is the main event. Unpainted but saturated by glue, the fabric pieces ripple and scrunch, hardening into place atop a frame. Simple but dynamic riffs on academic drapery studies, the sculpture-painting hybrids are coy attempts at bringing canvas to life.

Like the paintings, Lapin's titles revel in fluidity, referring obliquely to space, land and being. She adheres only loosely to the conventions of grammar, piling on words the way she piles on marks, strokes and colors: "The Vapor and the I/You Make," "The Pure Billow Animate." Lapin is an artist to be reckoned with, one who embodies both the glories and the pitfalls of a super-stimulated existence.

-- Leah Ollman

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