

# VAN DOREN WAXTER

**11R BROOKLYN RAIL**  
CRITICAL PERSPECTIVES ON ARTS, POLITICS, AND CULTURE

JACKIE SACCOCCIO *Degree of Tilt*

by Melinda Lang, October 5, 2015

11R Eleven Rivington | September 9 – October 18, 2015

Van Doren Waxter | September 9 – October 23, 2015

Jackie Saccoccio's painterly abstractions emerge from a highly agile process. Lifting one canvas onto another, the artist transfers paint across two surfaces, creating a labyrinth of scrapes and drips that intersect with radiant expanses of color. The trails of paint are multiplied further by a succession of rotations and anglings of the canvas that in aggregate produce the work's tightly packed compositional strata. While exploring the dual functionality of painting as both a site and tool for image making, Saccoccio expands on an ongoing series of "portraits" and "profiles" in her current exhibition, *Degree of Tilt*—a two-venue presentation at 11R Eleven Rivington and Van Doren Waxter. The title is a fitting description of the artist's working method. Her interest in the physical procedure of painting, combined with a spontaneous yet measured approach, often elicits connections to postwar mark making. This is well-charted territory, indeed. Yet Saccoccio's approach has less to do with creating an original gesture than mimicking it.



Jackie Saccoccio, *Profile (Pineapple, Cop 223)*, 2015. Oil and mica on linen, 79 × 152 inches. Courtesy 11R Eleven Rivington, New York, and Van Doren Waxter, New York.

Rather than reproduce motifs through digital means like many of her contemporaries, Saccoccio relies on studied movements to recreate pours, splatters, and other gestural marks in her work. And she does so to ostensibly figurative ends. Bulbous shapes burst from the center of these paintings, gently hinting at the outlines of human heads. Still, the works just as closely suggest geographical formations and celestial bodies; sometimes they evoke dark, heavy sediment deposits, and elsewhere they appear luminous and ethereal. In fact, the works are nearly impossible to discuss without describing them in terms that relate to the physical world. In paintings such

as *Profile (Orb)* (2015), a hazy sphere floats at the visual center of the canvas. Illuminated by a cheerful yellow that peeks out from under and around, the orb looks like it could rupture or become eclipsed at any moment. Looking closely at the surface, the eye falls on silty blemishes that produce an effect of weathering, eliciting more earthbound connections. These references are made real through Saccoccio's incorporation of mica, a mineral known for its seductive glimmer.

*Profile (Pineapple, Cop 223)* (2015) and *Fleeting Profiles (Cop 663 / Faye)* (2015) are the only mural-sized paintings in the exhibition. While surrounded by five vertical paintings at 11R, their landscape orientation appears conspicuously at odds with conventional ideas of portraiture. In these enveloping, large-scale works, the round, nebulous forms are doubled so that the two shapes nearly span the width of the canvas. A lattice of dark vein-like drips define their shaky contours against the sweeping collisions of color. Murky greens and yellows predominate in *Profile (Pineapple, Cop 223)*, while airy swaths of pink and purple come to the fore in *Fleeting Profiles (Cop 663 / Faye)*. In both works, the twined forms and their erratic paint spilled surfaces evoke Rorschach ink blots. Similar to a Rorschach test, Saccoccio's images are almost frustratingly ambiguous and the referents—including landscapes and portraits—are endless.

As revealed in the titles of these paintings, Saccoccio's influences range from Mondrian to Lisa Yuskavage, and her source material is equally diverse. Borrowing from other artists' distinct color palettes, she picks up hues that resonate with her own feelings about their work. Likewise, the subject matter is inspired by themes that have a firm hold on the artist. In this latest body of work, Saccoccio reimagines characters from Wong Kar-wai's film *Chungking Express*, a doomed love story based on the myth of Echo and Narcissus. Although the allusions to her subjects are not apparent in the work, she uses variations in color, form, and scale to stir up moods and emotions that stand in place of the figure. Pushing the traditional limitations of portraiture, the artist focuses instead on how the genre can be redefined today.

It is easy to get lost in Saccoccio's paintings—the eye gradually wanders across drips of paint, attempting to follow its patterns, but inevitably fails to see where one trail begins and another ends. With its vibrant, spiraling forms and disorienting compression of illusionistic space, the paintings can sometimes be difficult to take in. However, much is gained by looking closely at Saccoccio's ancillary yet often overlooked details. Organized in a loose grid around the work's edges, bright colored tiles create a welcomed respite from the composition's dense and free-flowing energy. While their mosaic-like effect recalls Klimt more than the Modernist grid, we know that there are many sources, including the artist's own previous works, from which these painterly marks could have been translated. It is difficult to ultimately interpret any one of these works, a quality that Saccoccio seems to heartily embrace. Each work unifies traces of disparate sources and influences, continually opening the work up to be seen in new light.