

VAN DOREN WAXTER



More Inspiration Than Comfort, A Review of Jackie Saccoccio at Rhona Hoffman Gallery

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Jackie Saccoccio, "Spectral Hole," 2017, Oil and mica on linen, 96 x 108 inches

This exhibit of recent painting is a departure from Jackie Saccoccio's more troubling work shown at Corbett vs. Dempsey in 2015. Any visual resemblance to the human head is long gone from her "Portraits," and her "Places" no longer feel ominous. Despite the negativity suggested by titles like "Spectral Hole," "Widower" and "Hysteria," this is a perfectly cheery show. We appear to be taking an aerial view of a vibrant, growing, creative city. There seems to be a grid of streets and

blocks, occasionally interrupted by parks, lakes, highways and clouds. Many abstract painters also seem to reference urban sprawl—Ben Tinsley and Tomory Dodge, who showed at Expo this year, would be two examples. But with Saccoccio there's not even a whiff of dismay or exhaustion. Her pieces are all about the explosive thrill of creativity with energy that expands beyond the edges of the canvas to fill the entire room. I would love to wake up every morning in such a room, if only the paintings had allowed me to fall asleep the night before.



Jackie Saccoccio, "Portrait(Widower)," 2017, Oil and mica on linen, 79 x 90 inches

Thousands of discrete marks invite endless investigation and there is a balance of open and cluttered spaces. The happenstance of dripping paint has magically been transformed into reasonable patterns. Groups of colorful dots and lines have been successively layered but not consistently enough to suggest a regular procedure. So it's just like urban growth. In the end, all the city neighborhoods fit together, but not as the result of any initial, overall plan. Overhead one might recognize that recent feature of urban life: the great cloud of cyber connectivity. She imagines it in cheerful hues of aqua, pink or yellow. Equal effort seems to have been put into every area, large and small, and the longer you look, the less random and more carefully placed every dot and dab feels.



Jackie Saccoccio, "Portrait(Blue Poles)," 2017, Oil and mica on linen, 79 x 90 inches

Perhaps Saccoccio's original interest in architecture has encouraged her to make art with no apparent connection to personal, philosophical or social anxiety. Or perhaps the artist is especially enjoying life in her mid-fifties. For whatever reason, she is currently making some of the most fun and stimulating paintings of our time. These pieces have the upbeat mood of a child's birthday party. If you want something more challenging and profound, you will have to look elsewhere, unless you recognize that Saccoccio's work is far more intense and exciting than merely decorative art. Like the best of woven or printed fabric, it offers more inspiration than comfort. And actually, that is quite a challenge: for both the artist to achieve and the viewer to live up to.

Jackie Saccoccio's "Spectral Hole" shows through January 27 at Rhona Hoffman Gallery, 118 North Peoria.