

ARTFORUM

Critics' Picks NEW YORK

Kate Mosher Hall

Miguel Abreu Gallery | Eldridge Street
88 Eldridge Street 4th Floor
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By Mariana Fernández ☞
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Kate Mosher Hall, *Dove songs*, 2023, acrylic and charcoal on canvas, 55 x 65".

Big View (all works 2023), the eponymous painting of Kate Mosher Hall's exhibition here, might be a depiction of a planet from the window of a spaceship, or a rendering of a disco ball from behind a perforated curtain. Move closer, however, and suddenly you're trapped in a manhole gazing up at the world outside. And even nearer, the loose grid-like arrangement of spheres shatters into billions of unstable parts, like bacteria under a microscope. John Berger said that looking at a painting is an active choice: seeing produces recognition, which in turn produces words. Yet it's a sort of physiological short-circuit when the order of events is interrupted by multiple images hitting your brain at different moments—when sight and perception flit back and forth, attempting to capture something both obvious and elusive.

Mosher Hall deftly choreographs the movement of one's eyes across accretive layers of hand-painted and mesh-like, silk-screened imagery; she creates veils that hide but never fully conceal. Take *Dove songs*, a grisaille canvas in which what might be a bridge—we can sort of distinguish its arches and light posts—is distorted into a loose topography of swirls resembling spilled paint or spectral movement. Other works employ a hidden-in-plain-sight effect: The figure in the tiny *Zig* morphs from a dog in motion to a screaming child, a ghoul, or simply a battalion of particles caught up in a passing wind, depending on how you orient yourself before the picture. In *Flipper*—the most defiantly bizarre painting in this show—a negative space of silk-screened halftone patterns produces the appearance of spirits coursing and flashing at the center of a danse macabre, or on the spotlighted stage of a nightclub. Rather than being about an existential crisis of looking, the thirteen paintings here exploit the tenuous relationship between what we see and what we know, performing a collective wink at our tendency to dismiss ambiguity, or the supernatural.

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