

Review

Sadie Benning: 'Patterns'

Sadie Benning continues to explore the possibilities of her eye-catching, distinctively physical relief-like paintings, heightening the optical pop of her latest efforts with a wall-to-wall Kelly green carpet. As before, every part of each work is a separate entity, cut from and then fit back onto a larger sheet of composition board, after each has been covered with resin and color and sanded down. The effect seems firm yet also slightly upholstered, finished yet full of odd irregularities — and these tensions draw the eye.

Ms. Benning fuzzes the distinction between abstraction and representation in “Rain Signal,” “Holes” and “Gun Blanket,” which suggests a pattern made of handguns being fired. In “Bathroom People,” she tackles figuration with pairs of red-on-white restroom-door silhouettes that stand, sit or do a little of both.

Elsewhere, she expands her format. In “Cig One” and “Cig Two,” small bits of fabric serve as the logos for very boxy cigarette boxes. In “Oil Spill” and “Mask,” existing photographs enter the picture, adding levels of meaning and reality.

In “Julie’s Rug,” the show’s largest work, the entire surface is cut into small rectangles and reassembled into a grid of red, white, black and ocher that has the vagaries of a hand-woven textile. In this manner, with more colors than usual, Ms. Benning abandons her usual figure-ground dynamic to create a more complex instance of the geometry of everyday life. Like all of Ms. Benning’s best efforts, “Julie’s Rug,” is a marvelous thing in itself that also accommodates all sorts of pictorial energy.

The bright green carpet is another form of energy. It adds a note of fun and follows the current fashion for environmental presentations of paintings. But it also interferes, making the show feel like a hedged bet whose individual components have not been fully experienced.

SADIE BENNING

'Patterns'

Callicoon Fine Arts
49 Delancey Street, near Eldridge Street, Lower East Side
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