

NEW YORK


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Dona Nelson

Art, Contemporary art @ Thomas Erben Gallery ([/newyork/art/thomas-erben-gallery](#)), Chelsea

 Until Saturday May 6 2017

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Dona Nelson has an everything-but-the-kitchen-sink approach to painting, having never met a convention she wouldn't happily upend. She uses both sides of her canvases, which are often bolted upright to various structures like freestanding sculptures. She stitches colored string through her compositions, leaving the ends hanging. She builds rough impasto with wads of fabric—in essence, turning the support into the surface.

With all this and more going on in this busy, raucous exhibition, it seems almost like an afterthought to add that she also commingles figuration and abstraction with abandon. A number of the works here feature images of people in various degrees of naturalistic representation—and, seemingly, to varying degrees of success.

Despite the breathtaking boldness of her experimentation, Nelson's more traditional abstractions are the most satisfying. *Lavender Lion* gleefully mashes up several decades of Abstract Expressionist and Color Field painting in its layering of techniques: Poured swirls of glossy color conjure Jackson Pollock as they pool atop a loose grid stained into the canvas by strips of cheesecloth glued to the back of the painting. A slashing linear pattern throughout also appears to be the result of applied fabric painted over before it was ripped off as a kind of primary colors and green, with an overlay of clear gel that, again, has been stripped away to form vertical stripes. The effect gives the impression of dripping water: Someone, it seems, left the Helen Frankenthaler work out in the rain.

BY: JOSEPH R. WOLIN

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