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Published June 2, 2014

ABSTRACT AMERICA TODAY

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You can just picture the meeting at the Saatchi Gallery when this idea was pitched. 'Right, hear me out guys... how about if the first room you enter, in this show of new abstract American art, is filled with art that – wait for it – isn't abstract at all...' Cue the sound of curatorial minds being blown, and everyone patting themselves on the back for being ever so clever.

But really, walking in expecting to find abstract art and then finding the opposite – Lisa Anne Auerbach's silly, humorous and totally not abstract knitted pieces, filled with allusions to Britney Spears and heavy metal, is just an irritating distraction. It detracts from the art, and that's a real shame because a lot of it, including Auerbach's work, is really awesome.

The artists here are all using outmoded or old-fashioned ways of making art to create interesting, often very pretty and undeniably 'now' work. There's collage in Cullen Washington Jr's chopped up, misshapen canvases that scream references to Robert Rauschenberg and Sigmar Polke. There's pointillism in Keltie Ferris's paintings, shaped canvases reminiscent of Robert Mangold or Ellsworth Kelly in Wyatt Kahn's monochrome geometric constructions, and garish neon expressionism in Jackie Saccoccio's big drippy paintings.

These artists are looting the past, dipping into art history to steal and reconstruct. Sure, painting might be dead, but none of this really feels like it's about painting – it's about reimagining the art that has come before in a way that our multi-tab-browsing, 140-character, seven-second-video brains can grasp.