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ART IN REVIEW: 'SELF-REFERENTIAL NONOBJECTIVE'

By Ken Johnson

Feature Inc.
131 Allen Street, Lower East Side

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In his brief introduction to this buoyant show of abstract paintings, Feature's director, the single-named Hudson, writes that he finds an essential magic in "how the artist leaks the personal into the formal."

The personal is mainly evident in a sensuous care for material and craft. In Cary Smith's updates of Mondrian's "Boogie Woogie" paintings, it is as much in the velvety smooth matte finishes as it is in the eye-buzzing patterns of multicolored striped bands framing and separating Granny Smith-green squares. With one of Richard Rezac's eccentric, painting-sculpture hybrids, it is in the perfect joinery of four cherrywood planks with staggered rows of diamond cutouts along the seams, and in the seductive gloss of the peach-colored paint covering the surface.

Douglas Melini appears to take inordinate pleasure in painting masking-taped lines. On two canvases he has layered countless stripes of varying widths and shades of green into symmetrically centered, wonderfully complex and intricate compositions. Ann Pibal's paintings of fine lines, also made using masking tape, are Minimalist by comparison, but there is a subtly strange, futuristic vibe about them.

Not all are neatniks. Nancy Shaver's compact grids of wooden blocks painted or wrapped in patterned fabric are loosely hedonistic. Todd Chilton's argyle pattern made of cake-frosting-thick horizontal lines resembles something by the mystic polymath Alfred Jensen. And in his punchy choreography of brightly colored, irregular shapes on white fields, Andrew Masullo stays in touch with an elemental spirit of comedic play.