

ART & DESIGN

Review: Squeak Carnwath Speaks With Her Varied Palette

By **ROBERTA SMITH** DEC. 31, 2015

Over the decades, Squeak Carnwath has cultivated a distinctive blend of disparate 1970s art movements, including New Image painting, Conceptual Art and above all Process Art. In her first solo show in New York in over a decade, her paintings fluently speak several languages at once. Areas of flat color are adrift with abstract and representational elements as well as writing — passing thoughts, the news, quips — often partly submerged in the shuffle of erasures and new additions. Everything contributes to the commentary. Tracts of cursive consider the income gap or light pollution, while little blocks of color allude to abstraction and a compass rose conjures cartography and sign painting.

Despite a loose, improvisational appearance, there are secret moments of trompe l'oeil: pencil writing and charcoal scribbles are rendered in paint, as are sheets of lined notebook paper that look like collage. Ms. Carnwath's idea of process is all inclusive: it combines the physical making of the painting with her thoughts, the world at large and also life in the studio.

In a work from 1995, she fills a grid with daubs of different shades of green, contrasting them with a list of the many words associated with the color, written on what could be called institutional green. In her most recent paintings she adds music to the mix, presenting song titles in blocks of color and accompanying each work with an actual CD of the depicted playlist.

Best of all, perhaps, are the nearly all-white paintings whose words reflect the accumulated wisdom of decades of painting. A canvas titled “A Painting” announces with delicious ambiguity: “Painting Is No Ordinary Object.”

Squeak Carnwath

‘What Before Comes After’

Jane Lombard Gallery

518 West 19th Street, Chelsea

Through Tuesday

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