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‘Robert Janitz: Stick Shift Heaven’ at Team Gallery

BY WILL HEINRICH | 3/12 8:10AM

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Installation view. (Courtesy Team Gallery)

We’re living through an epidemic of protective coloration. There are paintings like tropical lizards that perfectly mimic art from across the room. But that doesn’t mean there isn’t still real work to be done on the surface, and the way that Robert Janitz goes about it, in [his first solo show at Team Gallery](#), is with white or off-white oil paint and a housepainter’s brush.

Cutting the paint with flour, eggs or cold wax medium gives it a sculptural thickness and a cloudy, sexual translucence just on the line between frosting and soap. After covering his canvas in multiple layers of color to arrive at vibrant near-monochromes with glimpses of their construction in unfinished corners, he applies the white or off-white in loose, half-empty, mostly vertical strokes, like a contractor’s assistant obscuring the windows of a store under renovation.

At first sight, the results look interchangeable, and one row of six canvases, each 5-feet-wide by 6-and-a-half-high, is hung edge to edge like successive states of a single etching. But that’s also the best way to highlight subtle variations. In *Private Party*, ridges of warm and creamy white over a color darker and redder than bubblegum add up to an overall impression of industrial pink, and then the frozen brushstrokes, like a cave painting, reveal the rough gestures of their application. Split into individual hairlines, they have a dusty, powdery effect. The pale ochre carwash strokes of *Four of Wands* stand out much more brightly against their deep brown backing, creating a different sense of depth, at once deeper and more crowded. And a transparent layer over the vertical blue staves of *Bucarest* means that what looks cracked and burned from across the room gives you the sensation, when viewed up close, of a kite just catching the wind.