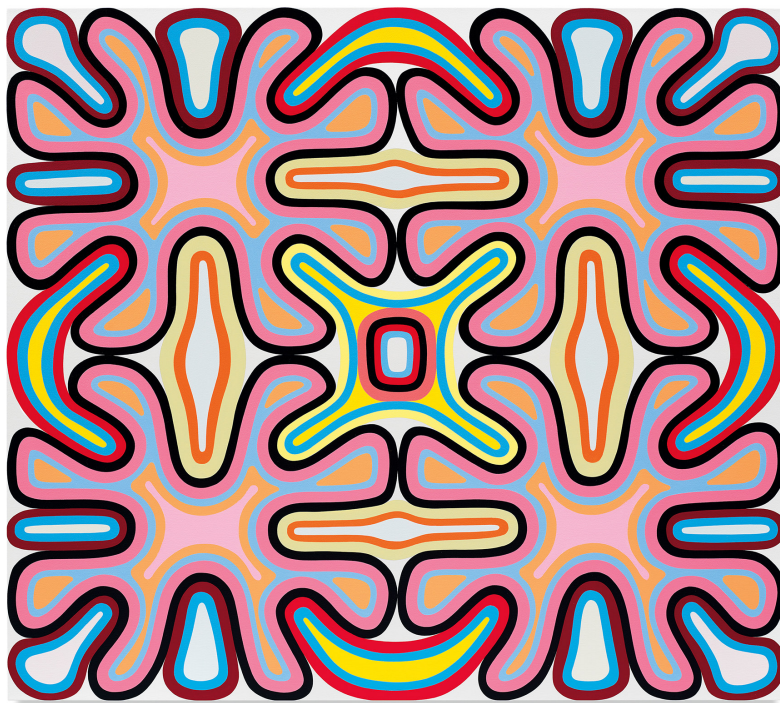


Art & Object

GALLERY | AUGUST 14, 2020 | PAUL LASTER

Figurative and Abstract Paintings Brighten NY Galleries



Warren Isensee, *LOL*, 2020, Oil on canvas, 40 x 45 inches, 101.6 x 114.3 cm

After being idled for several months during the initial outbreak of the pandemic in New York, the city's galleries, which are usually closed or merely offering group shows in the month of August, have a fine selection of one-person presentations taking place. With the dwindling likelihood of art fairs coming back to the Big Apple anytime too soon and the city's museums still under lockdown, its galleries offer the best place to physically see art.

In this round-up of five standout solo shows, we discover three young female figurative painters—Grace Weaver, Rute Merk, and Sojourner Truth Parsons—that every art lover should have on their radar and two seasoned abstractionists—KATSU and Warren Isensee—working in solely original styles.



Warren Isensee, *Pillow Talk*, 2018, Oil on canvas,
40 x 52 inches, 101.6 x 132.1 cm



Warren Isensee, *Black Magic*, 2020, Oil on canvas,
50 x 50 inches, 127 x 127 cm

WARREN ISENSEE

Miles McEnergy Gallery

July 16 - August 28, 2020

Widely recognized for his dynamic geometric abstractions painted and drawn by hand, without the aid of tape or other devices to achieve a precise, hard-edged effect, Warren Isensee presents a surprising shift in his overall body of work with a new series of paintings and drawings exploring blobby, humorous, undulating forms.

According to the accompanying catalogue text, in which critic Ken Johnson amusingly interviews himself about Isensee's new work, this change in approach was somewhat influenced by the Devo song *Wiggly World*, that the artist was repeatedly playing as he worked in the studio. Created over a two-year period, the twenty-five paintings and drawings on view construct a cartoonish, visionary realm that pulsates with Op art energy.

Pillow Talk looks like a group of minimal, designer pillows or a bunch of border-edged shipping labels squeezed into a rectangle too small to hold all of the shapes, while *Interstellar Overdrive* resembles a set of gears grinding gooey, designer-colored confections from Willy Wonka's Chocolate Factory. At other times the motifs suggest tribal masks, as in the painting *Black Magic*, and facial features from indigenous Northwest Coast totem poles, as seen in the repeated smiles in the loopy, colorful canvas *LOL*.

Whereas the petite, precise colored pencil drawings on view in a back gallery reveal the point-of-departure doodles for many of the artist's lusciously rendered paintings (bringing to mind quilts, fabric designs, and psychedelic poster graphics), the illusionistic canvases convey a vivacious spiritual optimism that's equally cheerful and comforting to behold.