

# ARTFORUM

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## Beverly Fishman

KAVI GUPTA GALLERY | ELIZABETH STREET

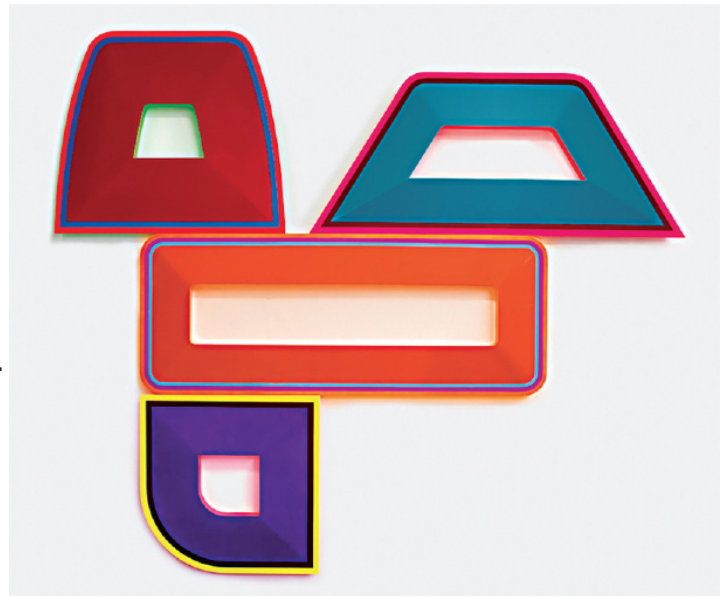
“CHEMICAL SUBLIME” opened with a brutally colored, hard-edge abstraction, *Untitled (Sleepiness, Antipsychotic, Pain)*, 2017. The work was one of nine shallow relief paintings on wood that punctuated the walls of the sizable main gallery and a smaller annex space. Extreme and confrontational in their color combinations, the

compositions are derived from simple three-dimensional geometric forms, many with rounded edges, which are compressed to depths of two inches. The faces of the paintings are exquisitely constructed from machine-cut raised panels and negative cutaways, their side profiles exposing carefully painted versos with sharp contours that angled toward the plane of wall. This allowed for the brightly colored edges to appear to bleed onto the supporting walls, creating a fluorescent halo effect.

Those dizzying fluorescents add complexity to the works’ concrete physical forms. For example, *Untitled (Asthma and Heartburn)*, 2018, is a two-part vertical composition that stacks a baby-blue trapezoid on top of a yellow pentagon. The centers of both shapes are cut out to reveal the gallery wall behind the relief. The inner edges lining the negative space of the pentagon are painted with fluorescent yellow, which cast a glowing hue onto the white wall, while the pentagon’s outer edge is contoured with abutting, inharmonious pinstripes of red, purple, and bright green. The result is aggressive and anxiety-producing, impairing the stable structural vocabularies of the wooden relief with agitating color tension.

Assigning a physical or mental ailment to each shape in her titles, Fishman engages her fascination with the pharmaceutical industry and how its aesthetic choices advance the market. Although the shapes composing the paintings do not take the form of pills, tablets, or capsules, they provide Fishman with a comparable abstract lexicon. *Untitled (Alcoholism, Antipsychotic, Pain, High Blood Pressure)*, 2018, presents a strand of four adjacent shapes, a cocktail of Euclidian wholes that buzz with pigment-induced potency. Two trapezoids, a rectangle, and an octagon are evenly aligned to read like a four-letter word. This painting also reveals another rudimentary element that Fishman exploits in her compositions: surface. Deploying a combination of flat and hyperglossy finishes of urethane paint, she pushes further the paintings’ hostile color palettes and alters the illusions of the works’ physical depths.

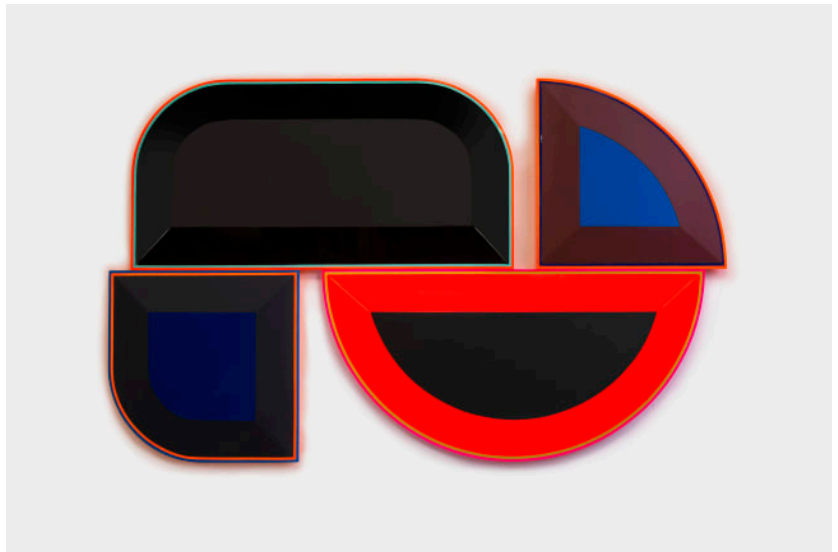
Surprisingly, despite the varied compositions, vibrant hues, and surface treatments, psychedelia is not explicitly represented. Instead, the paintings offer up rational geometric abstraction with a color



Beverly Fishman, *Untitled (Depression, High Blood Pressure, Bipolar Disorder, Opioid Addiction)*, 2018, urethane paint on wood, 91 x 106 x 2 inches

vocabulary that has gone awry. The work's manufactured polish and flawless construction evoke the Finish Fetish objects of John McCracken and Robert Irwin, yet conceptually Fishman's paintings have more in common with the 1980s neo-geo work of Peter Halley, Meyer Vaisman, et al. Consumerism and its audacious marketing tactics undergird the work's severe formal arrangements and fabricated polish. Yet Fishman is not simulating the marketing of luxury goods but instead evoking big pharma and its promise of a chemically induced sublime, with all its attendant side effects. This message is most evident in *Untitled (Depression, High Blood Pressure, Bipolar Disorder, Opioid Addiction)*, 2018, which was one of the most asymmetrically organized works in the show. An anomaly among the nine paintings, it assembles four precariously stacked shapes, suggesting a scattered collection instead of a unifying amalgamation. Reading into the titles as character descriptions or diagnoses, one might have gathered that the latter piece is in the most serious trouble of all, no longer keeping up appearances in the midst of a fabricated addiction.

— Michelle Grabner



Beverly Fishman, *Untitled (Sleepiness, ADHD, Opioid Addiction, Pain)*, 2017, urethane paint on wood, 60 x 97 x 2 inches