

The New York Times

What to See in New York Art Galleries This Week

JULY 14, 2016



Alice Tippit's "Vane."

Courtesy of the artist and Nicelle
Beauchene Gallery, NY

Alice Tippit

'Ess Envy'

Nicelle Beauchene
327 Broome Street
Lower East Side
Through Aug. 12

In her magnetic small paintings at Nicelle Beauchene, the Chicago artist Alice Tippit slyly juggles dualities of figure and ground, and abstraction and representation. Painted in mostly flat planes of suavely muted colors, these works are metaphorically piquant, subtly funny and often erotically suggestive. In "Vane," an off-white triangle pointing downward on a tan background reads

like an abstracted bikini bottom thanks to a red fingernail-tipped digit overlapping its upper edge. The finger's placement seems a pointed, possibly sexual gesture but remains teasingly enigmatic. Like Ms. Tippit's other works, "Vane" recalls Modernist graphic design of the 1950s — that of Paul Rand, for example — while projecting its own personally resonant visual poetry.

The red-nailed finger turns up again in "Token," as the tail of a winding, pale snake on a dark background. A rotund blue vase shape in the upper-right corner might read like a female counterpart — vagina, womb — to the phallic serpent. There are mythic overtones to that image, as there are in "Iris," in which a bright-yellow banana oriented like a smile rhymes with a small white dome shape above that's like a clipped moon in the night sky. It's a sweet haiku of a picture.

KEN JOHNSON