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Review: Tamuna Sirbiladze Combines Art and Decoration at Half Gallery

By ROBERTA SMITH AUG. 20, 2015



Installation from Tamuna Sirbiladze's New York solo debut, "Take It Easy," at Half Gallery. CreditHalf Gallery

TAMUNA SIRBILADZE

'Take It Easy'

Half Gallery

43 East 78th Street, Manhattan

Through Sept. 3

The seductive New York gallery solo debut of Tamuna Sirbiladze fulfills its title's imperative to "Take It Easy." It does too little with what seems to be a fair amount of talent, combining art and decoration in a way that manages to be stylish and admirably assured but also blasé and familiar. Ms. Sirbiladze, who is Georgian and lives in Vienna, studied at the Tbilisi State Academy of Arts in Georgia; the Academy of Arts, Vienna; and the Slade School of Fine Art in London.

Her show consists primarily of works in two to four shades of oil-stick applied in big, casual scrawls to raw, unstretched canvas. Splitting the difference between painting and drawing, these works are pinned to walls in the gallery's two small, formerly domestic spaces, one of which is loosely painted with wide, drippy brush strokes of jungle green. Given the presence of the gallery's fireplace, the result is a little like a Parisian salon around 1913, but one where works by budding Modernists have greatly expanded, baring canvas and stretching the paint to the breaking point.

The tie to Modernist still life in these semiabstract motifs is hard to miss, with titles like "Pipe," "Spades" and especially "M Vase," whose scribbles of red, black, blue black and brown suggest a Matisse fishbowl. There's also a sailboat. A larger work from 2011 titled "Picasso's Pigeons" indicates that Ms. Sirbiladze's graphic panache has increased, with beneficial results. Perhaps her next New York show, planned for the James Fuentes Gallery on the Lower East Side in October, will demonstrate additional gains.