

Two Coats of Paint

Award-winning NYC blogazine with a focus on painting

Robert Janitz: Reverie over reality

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Robert Janitz at Canada, installation view

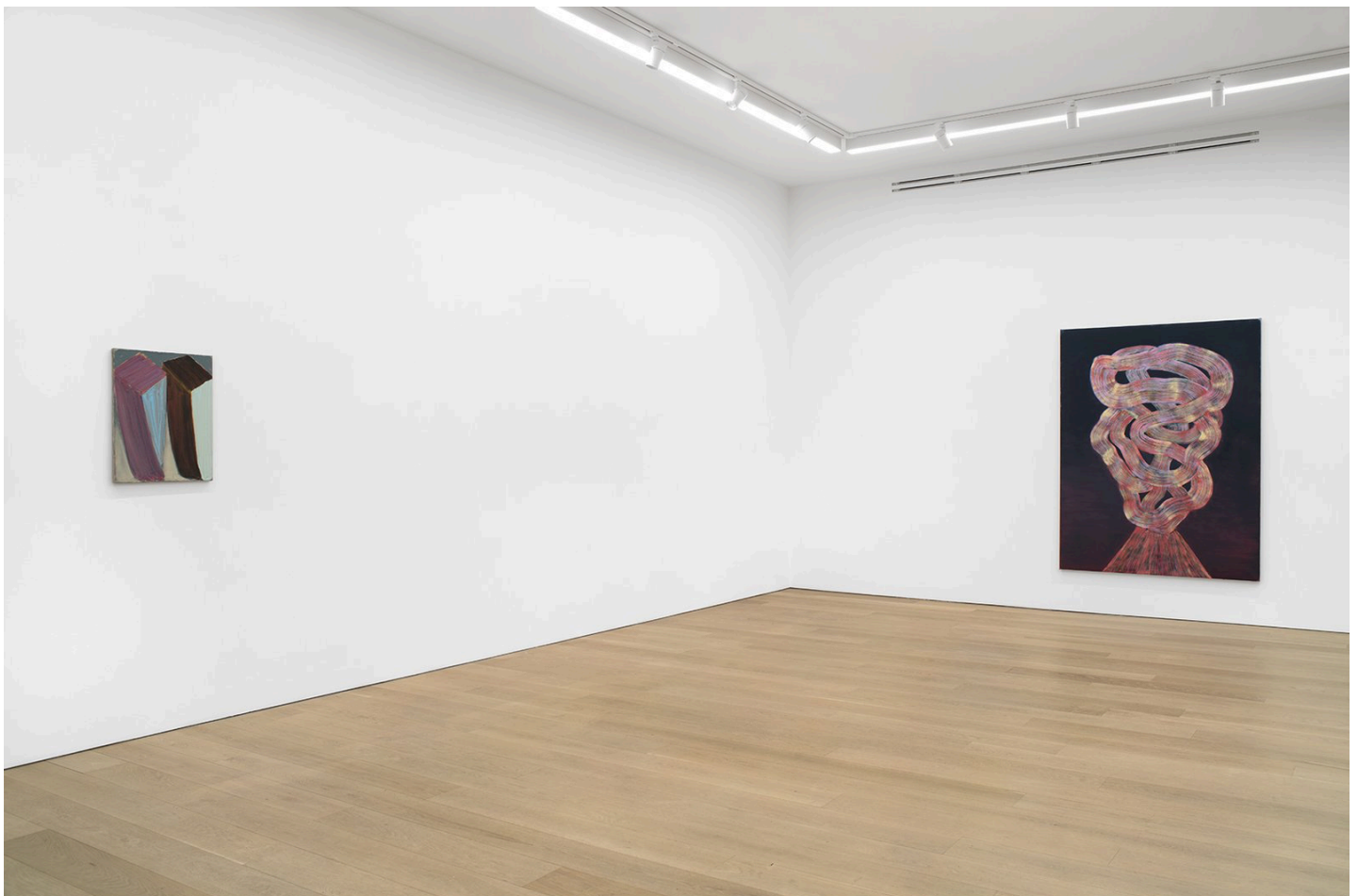
Contributed by Sharon Butler / ♦Library of a Dream,♦ Robert Janitz♦s elegantly installed exhibition, on view at Canada through January 21, is a knockout. Janitz spent years in intense meditation communities, making paintings that seemed [primarily about the physical experience](#) of making the object, reflecting palpable focus and presence. Now he appears compelled to turn his attention gingerly outward and explore a somewhat more playful approach.



The showstopper is *The Umbrellas of Cherbourg 1-5*, referencing the landmark [1964 Jacques Demy musical romance](#) that sublimely combines the mundane with the epic in sweet irony. The series consists of five vertical paintings hung close to the ground and side-by-side so that they look like a long, low-hanging mural. The backgrounds of the canvases are painted in a ROYGBIV vertical rainbow of gradients, suggesting a full range of emotions. Together they recall 1950s cardboard posters for jazz and blues clubs that used split fountain printing techniques to capture several colors in one pass. Each canvas features an elongated shape, resembling a pipe or a large unfolded paper clip, pulled with a squeegee-type tool from top to bottom with carefully turned curves to keep the lines going around the bend. Each pass snakes over the previous one, laden with quirky personality, ending with a shallow black ellipse that gives the meandering but muscular line the illusion of three-dimensionality. Paint drools from the edges of the squeegee's path, amplifying the absence of the paint that has been scraped away.



Robert Janitz, Mauna Loa, 2021, oil, wax, flour on linen, 80 x 60 inches



Robert Jovitz, installation view

The tool-dragging continues in *Mauna Loa*, named for the volcano on the Big Island in Hawaii that still spews burning lava and is in fact the largest active volcano in the world. In purely visual terms, the piece harks back to Janitz's previous work, which depicts the backs of [human heads](#). In this age of rage, it's fitting that Janitz's relatively stable imagery, which he developed by observing riders on the elevated subway lines in New York and lifting stills from cinema, has morphed into something new. To kindred effect, a painting centered on the adjacent wall features two twisted rectangles from a bird's-eye view. Janitz has called the forms, iterated in other paintings, "sushi," but the image here, smaller than the others in the show, might remind New Yorkers of the Twin Towers. Janitz reuses imagery from year to year, but his ideas and intent seem constantly in flux.



Robert Janitz, The Life of a Bivalve, 2021, oil, wax, flour on linen, 24 x 20 inches



Robert Janitz, Tijuana Moods, 2021, oil, wax, flour on linen, 80 x 60 inches



Robert Janitz, The Umbrellas of Cherbourg, 2021, oil, wax, flour on linen, 86 x 66 inches



Robert Janitz, The Umbrellas of Cherbourg 2, 2021, oil, wax, flour on linen, 86 x 66 inches



Robert Janitz, The Umbrellas of Cherbourg 3, 2021, oil, wax, flour on linen, 86 x 66 inches



Robert Janitz, The Umbrellas of Cherbourg 4, 2021, oil, wax, flour on linen, 86 x 66 inches



Robert Janitz, The Umbrellas of Cherbourg 5, 2021, oil, wax, flour on linen, 86 x 66 inches



Robert Janitz, Fantasy is my Travel Agent, 2021, oil, wax, flour on linen, 80 x 66 inches

◆ [Robert Janitz, Library of a Dream](#), ◆ Canada, 60 Lispenard Street, New York, NY. Through January 21, 2022.