Zak Prekop

First reaction-such fun! These paintings look like big blow-ups of those small Robert Motherwell collages one sees hawked at every art fair, a kind of playful and visually engrossing meander through the possibilities of gestural abstraction, if one restricts those possibilities to being puckishly amiable and clever. Prekop's are big vertical paintings, all nine (excepting one relegated to the gallery office) either 84by-57 or 96-by-64 inches, standardizing format as a way to control it as a factor. There's a blue one and a yellow one, a loopy one and a bifurcated one, a patterned one and a layered one, all achieving a lovely hum of resolution, elements smoothly dovetailing into inoffensive but mesmerizing equanimity. Sometimes paint is slathered a bit, sometimes it creates large fields of soaked chroma, and at other moments it is applied so slavishly and minutely as to suggest a mapmaker recording every rock in an archipelago. Prekop succeeds in his practice of chasing confection rather than conviction, and this circumscribed journey toward creating the equivalents of a number of the tropes of 20th-century abstraction provides a delightful romp; I couldn't avert my eyes from this juggling act.

Take, for example, Three Patterns (White), (2015). It's just drop dead lovely, an 8-foot tall painting that reads as if it's 8 or 18 inches tall instead. It has, duh, three patterns inscribed on (and sometimes through, Prekop often paints from the Ôback' of the canvas) its muslin surface, a taut grid of smallish white balls, all the same size, all perfectly circular, and two much looser and more lumpish arrays of pink and black roundish shapes scattered more (seemingly) arbitrarily across the surface. The black shapes are on "top," as they can overlap both the pink and the white shapes, and then come the more pink ones, which can overlap the white shapes. It's so much like Prekop's work-an arbitrary system played out to see where it might go, and it always goes somewhere dreamy. Sliding Doors, (2016), (the blue one) has a bolder composition; an all-over blue field (framed by two thin vertical slats of lighter blue paint) has brown, white, and green slashing and seemingly arbitrary (though actually contrived) areas of paint, with much of the brown areas rendered in that micro-specificity that belies their seemingly aggressive shapes. It's all a bit like that gesture a chef performs when he, she or they makes a slashing vertical gesture with some unctuous sauce on the bottom of a plate; so arbitrary, but so tasty!