

ARTFORUM

Caitlin Lonegan

by David Misteli
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Caitlin Lonegan, *Untitled (Rainbow Painting)*, 2018-2021, 2020.09, 2020, oil, metallic oil, iridescent oil on canvas, 48 x 48".

Standing before *Untitled (Rainbow Painting, 2018-2021, 2020.09)*—a bruised but bright multicolored abstraction created last year by Caitlin Lonegan and the sole painting in her exhibition “4 pm, Fire Light”—I couldn’t help but mark it up as anachronistic. After all, hadn’t sincere gestural painting long ago gone extinct, laid to rest by the more object- and concept-oriented art that emerged in the ‘60s and ‘70s? Lonegan seemed to paint as if it hadn’t. Joan Mitchell’s similarly squarish *Mephisto*, 1958, came to mind, as did Willem de Kooning’s *Untitled XIII*, 1975, a late work painted in the East Hamptons.

After a while, though, Lonegan’s painting wriggled free from my web of reference points. What emerged was the remarkable surface quality of her brushwork, whose layering and refractive aura expose the insufficiency of my hasty comparisons. The painter’s hand, while assuredly present, never dominates the canvas. Rather than indulge

a graphological reading, Lonegan imbues her surface with an iridescence that reveals luminosity as her major concern. That her paintings should be understood as syntheses of ever-changing lighting is also indicated by a series of twenty-nine crayon drawings made around the same time and installed nearby. While the juxtaposition doesn’t necessarily suggest a causal relationship between drawing and painting, it does—by disclosing what might be called the painting’s parergon—extend a deliberate invitation to discover the openness and sincerity of her process.

The painting has been hung in the gallery’s LOGIN space, a shallow room on the ground floor whose two large windows face the street. It is a gallery that is always open, if not quite in the conventional sense. For Lonegan’s canvas, the setting feels perfect: Because the light conditions so central to the painter’s process are in constant flux, the installation beautifully reflects a guiding principle of the work.