

vessels, though to a less memorable effect. His methods, too, marry the deliberate and indeterminate. He mixes debris into oil to complicate his painted and scraped surfaces, and also welcomes gravity as an interrupting force, manipulating it to yield stripes that sag and waver. Each panel measures a consistent 40 by 30 inches, and given their standardized, medium format they read like specimen slides or samples of contrived phenomena—records as much as representations. Materiality and process drive both artists, providing a loose logic for the pairing, yet Marsh's work, shown in greater depth and variety, commands more sustained attention.

Marsh's new sculptures relate less directly to the natural world than those from his long-running *Crucible* and *Moonjar* series. The *Spill and Catch* pieces have glossy coats that feel more a product of the studio—they conjure the ornamental more than the elemental. Here, Marsh breaks his pattern of working with stable, upright forms, instead shaping vessels that slouch, bulge, and flaunt their clumsiness. The walls of the *Spill and Catch* sculptures are pushed, punched, dented, tabbed, and warty, torn in places to the point of ragged perforation. Their lips are swollen and lopsided. Glazes of persimmon, cherry, teal, violet, sapphire, white, black, lavender, and forest green cascade down the sides of most of them in soupy stripes, marbling but not mixing. The palette and painterly ebullience broadcast cheer; these works don't have skins but rather festive costumes. It's not as though Marsh's

earlier work was short of sensuality, but its seductive materiality happened within more controlled parameters. These feel uncommonly disinhibited, like wet sloppy kisses to imperfection, and to possibility itself.

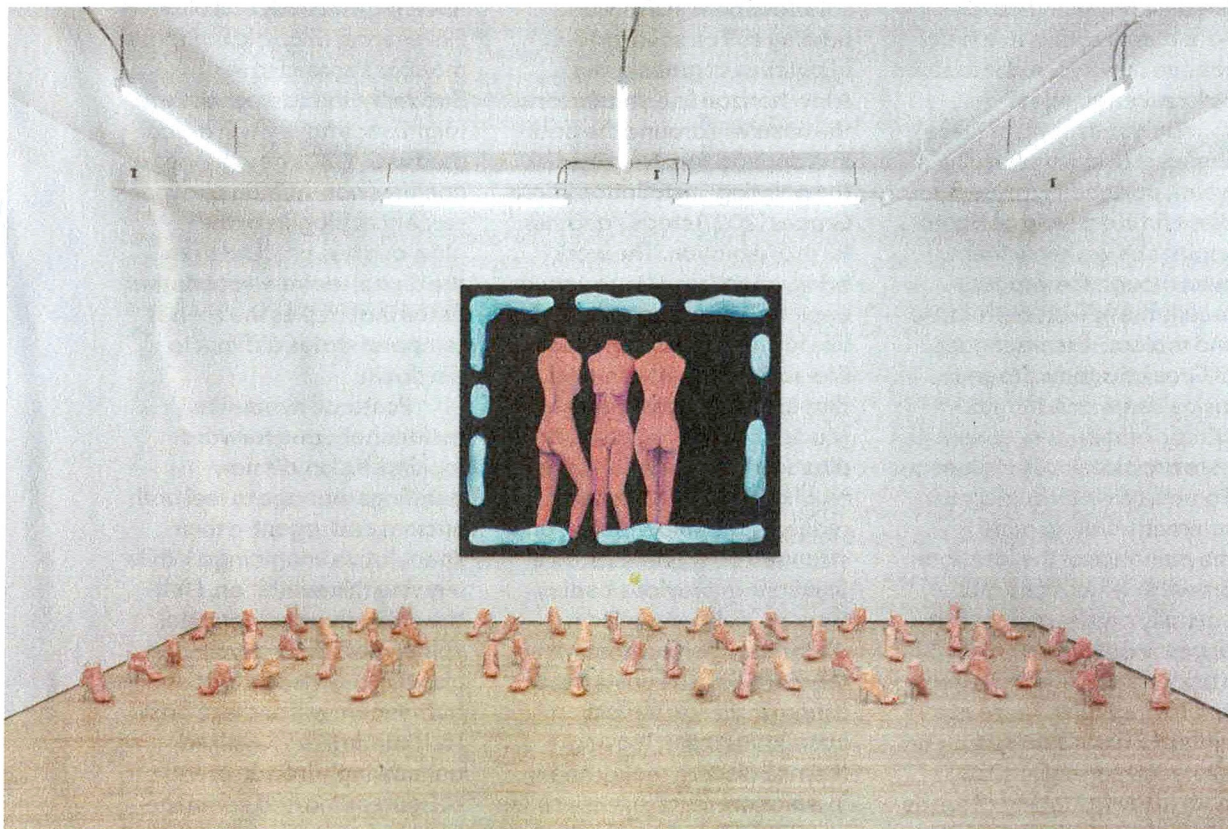
A few of the *Spill and Catch* works seem transitional, hybrids of restraint and permission. One, a tall, slim cylinder in quiet tones of umber and ash, sprouts growths up and down its exterior, small round ledges glazed vivid aqua. It's an entrancing sculpture, suggesting at once a sheath of lichen, a distant waterfall, and a congregation of open-mouthed organisms. The messier, brighter pieces in the new series are less viscerally stirring, but their marriage of the lavish and homely yields a good deal of charm. Their buoyancy serves as a useful foil, or maybe even an act of resistance, to the grimness of 2020. The year required so much paring down and contraction, so much forced interiority. Marsh's response: defiantly playful, performative works—vessels that spill over. In a time of deprivation, he has been conducting experiments in unabashed excess. The preliminary results testify to a heartening tenacity not just to survive, but to thrive.

(L.A. in N.Y.) Becky Kolsrud at JTT

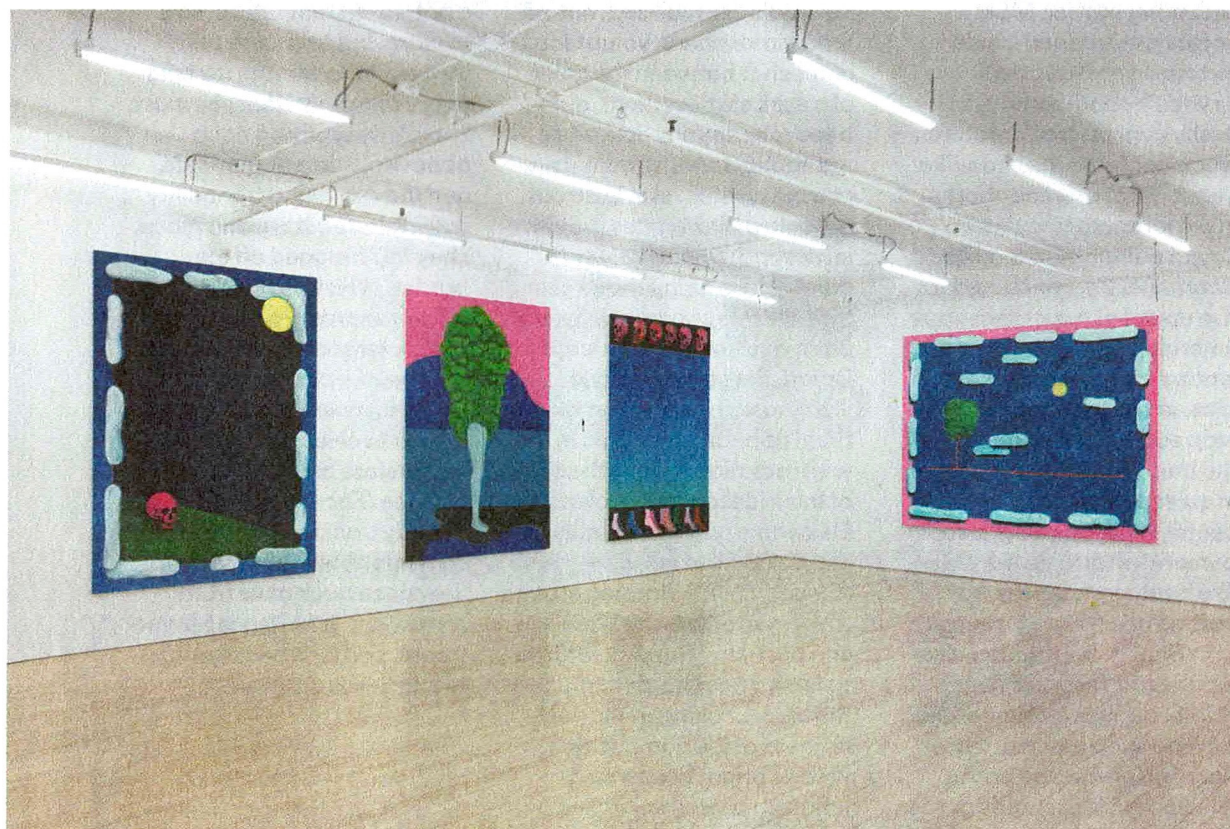
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Nearly all of the flat, predominantly female figures in *Elegies*, Becky Kolsrud's recent painting exhibition at JTT, are missing something vital—feet, heads, faces, torsos. In *Inscape (Three Graces)* (2021), a trio of androgynous forms with few contours, save for general outlines, stand quietly atop flattened layers of sky, greenery, and blue-black checkered ground. The figures have no facial features, other than one disproportionately large, cycloptic eye each. Part of a graphic triad of generalized eyes, nostrils, and mouths that hover over the rest of the scene, the eyes are not quite theirs. The similarly generalized features of *Inscape (Face/Figures)* (2021) levitate atop three blue human forms emerging from water. Two of the bodies turn their heads to look back at the viewer as they move toward the luminescent horizon. Temporally, it's hard to locate where they are or where they are from; all three appear both classical (in their formal simplicity) and alien (in their iridescent blue skin). This painting in particular calls to mind sci-fi book covers from the 1970s and '80s in which worlds are lit by the soft afterglow of post-apocalyptic visions. Are they time travelers from an ancient past or do they hail from a near future?

Anthony Hawley



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Becky Kolsrud, *Elegies* (installation view) (2021).
Image courtesy of the artist and JTT, New York.
Photo: Charles Benton.

Are their physiological distortions due to some violent act or have they evolved into some unforeseen species?

The timestamp of these scenes is also wonderfully weird, portending an eerily silent future devoid of Homo sapiens as we know them, even though the imagery recalls the episodic structure and tableau-like prologues of Greek tragedy. Staged inside some non-human-centric otherworld, the entities here are classically statuesque. Sometimes their humorous solemnity calls to mind the paintings of the late Joan Brown in which the artist casually carries a giant fish or gazes out at us against a backdrop of Egyptian gods and hieroglyphs. There are hints of Brown's quixotic, everyday surrealism, too, both in the flattening of forms and in the fusion of personages with other matter. Most notably, marooned inside this world are Kolsrud's "Dryads"—half-human, half bushy cypress tree creatures—who punctuate the show like members of a Greek chorus. In the largest of the three Dryad paintings, titled *The Chorus* (2021), gray boulders rise up out of a vast seascape, emerging like mounds from waters rendered as thick blue semicircles. Perched atop each rounded mass, the tree-human hybrids loom in quiet observation. In the center of the painting, a supine person drifts inside a coffin-like boat, perhaps the last vestige of a truly human era.

Stuff gets stranded elsewhere, too. *Inscape (Relic)* (2021), depicts a disembodied foot wearing a kind of transparent high-heeled boot. The booted foot stands as the

sole occupant in this work, holding still on solid ground in patches of green grass. A low horizon line underscores the vastness around the poor lost appendage. Nearby, the painting-installation *Three Graces* (2021) stages another form of isolation. The work brings together a large canvas depicting three mannequin-like forms and several dozen life-sized sculptures of feet that also don transparent heels. Made of Hydrocal, paint, and plastic, this smattering of feet highlights the segmented reality of the shipwrecked and stranded beings in Kolsrud's universe. In previous bodies of work, Kolsrud walled characters behind chain-link fences; here, she casts them ashore inside an almost cosmic vastness, leaving them to discern reality anew in isolation.

Color is key to effecting Kolsrud's destabilized, out-of-time atmosphere. Voluptuous blues shift between the color of a dark starless night, a benevolent sunny day, and the lighter-toned gradients of a big western sky. Lustrous day-glow pink ignites the sky in *Inscape (Dryad)* (2021), the painting featuring the largest tree-with-legs figure. In two paintings flanking this large Dryad, the same pink hue illuminates two skulls, making them appear either aglow with radiation or lit by the sun of this iridescent non-place. Elsewhere, pill-like cumulus clouds hover in *Inscape (Clouds)* (2021), floating around a blue rectangle, part-sea and part-sky. The pink returns to form a neat border around the blue. Looking at the odd flatness of the composition, with its bright border and inflated masses encircling a

hovering landscape, is almost like peering at an old computer monitor's screensaver. Suddenly, the same pink that might once have been associated with 1980s neon signage conjures non-human phosphorescent ecologies or the glow of a hue plucked from the digital realm—yet another detail that makes the scenes' temporal states difficult to pin down.

Pastoral, hymn-like, melancholy, and forward-looking, Kolsrud's new paintings manage to feel both ancient and urgent in their speculative imaginings. While viewing this exhibition, I felt the collective and personal solitude of this past year, but also the knowledge that as humans we will come to pass. I felt a little like I'd walked unknowingly into an arena of figures who had come to collect us, having come from a not-so-distant future, not to warn, but to assure us that our time was up. *It's time to go. Take only what you must.* There's a surprising calm about Kolsrud's humanoids, as if they've found tranquility in this altered state and place. They've shrugged off the burden of history, holding onto only its shards—a few aged computer screens, a little bit of Athens—but have ultimately found an unexpected levity in their evolved lifeways. The featureless blue figures in *Inscape (Face/Figures)* have already transformed beyond our simple fleshy condition; they gaze back at us from some near-time, a post-human future, perhaps beckoning us to join them.