

# ARTnews

reviews: new york

## Kathy Butterly and Jen Mazza

### Tibor de Nagy

Kathy Butterly's 17 glazed-clay sculptures looked like antidotes to the bulging vessels of Ken Price: suctioned and cinched, jagged with angles where curves should be. Joining the sculptures were two works on paper featuring reproduced images of the sculptures over which Butterly collaged nail-polish paintings, similarly distorting the shapes' contours, but here in two dimensions. Shown on three long, white tables, the sculptures made a case for the power of the small.

None of the objects could be fully appreciated from one or even two angles. Instead, viewers were drawn in by the vessels' distortions. In *Color Hoard-r* (2013), a pedestal form is imbued with Fabergé-style precision, propped up by delicate feet with golden trim. Any sense of preciousity in the work was quickly dispelled; *Color Hoard-r* is crunched in at the middle like a paper bag.

The fact that these objects were so meticulously crafted made their unusual manipulations so fascinating. Despite their diminutive size, the sculptures never seemed trivial, since every wrinkle and fold appeared dramatic. *Chatter* (2013), for example, is folded like an origami object, but its original form hints more at Deco decadence. And the rococo *Carnivorous* (2013), with its green-hatted cake-icing brim, sucks itself in hard at its mid-section. Butterly seems to suggest that these stylish, useful vessels have much more to say when rendered useless.

Jen Mazza's series of oil paintings, in an adjoining show at the gallery, was similarly constructed around variations on a tight theme, using textbook reproductions of abstract paintings which were then overlaid with Mazza's own insertions, such as a black band over a Mondrian painting, which called to mind Julian Schnabel's "Girl with No Eyes" series. Here the send-ups of Mondrian, Picasso, and Miró initiated some thoughtful conversations within the history of art. —**Ali Pechman**



Kathy Butterly, *Carnivorous*, 2013, clay and glaze, 5½" x 3¾" x 4¾". Tibor de Nagy.

## Helen Frankenthaler

### Bernard Jacobson

Helen Frankenthaler is often positioned as a connecting factor between Abstract Expressionism and Color Field painting—the postwar “bridge between Pollock and what was possible,” according to her contemporary Morris Louis. This show demonstrated, however, that her art can

also stand firmly on its own. Though eclectic at first glance—nine works over a range of mediums—this small exhibition drew focus from Frankenthaler's investigations of technique, form, color, and materials.

The five canvases on display recorded different manipulations and translucencies of acrylic paint, creating evocative and rich landscapes that were half real and half imagined; process and result seamlessly converged. In *Bella Donna* (1987), the largest canvas at eight feet tall, perpendicular threads of brown and orange cut through fields of green and gray. The geometric framework acts like a stripe in a vibrant tartan textile. Flecked with bright-yellow impasto dashes, the bleeding and expansive wash of *Quattrocento* (1984) is clearly in dialogue with Pollock, Rothko, and Louis. Yet Frankenthaler's work here was neither grandiose, like Pollock and Rothko's, nor as spare as Louis's, although her technique—thinned mixtures of turpentine and pigment soaked into horizontal canvas—nodded to a shared method.

While the larger canvases were hypnotic, it was Frankenthaler's three small ceramic tiles that stole the show. All titled *Thanksgiving Day*, they are part of a group of 100 made in Upstate New York in 1973. Here, the palette is reduced and, in a different medium, the mark-making more discrete. The tonal contrast was

made sharp and bright through firing. These are quick sketches in color, a fact highlighted by the accompanying *Possibilities 3* (1966)—the earliest work in the show—featuring three primary colors that frame the outside lip of the paper in a bold band, finished by a fourth line of green. Each presented on its own wall shelf, the ceramics stand as three-dimensional Ur-forms for her later works. Frankenthaler's expressive, sculptural, and joyful color reigns supreme, no matter the medium or size of the field.

—**Michelle Millar Fisher**



Helen Frankenthaler, *Quattrocento*, 1984, acrylic on canvas, 56" x 62½". Bernard Jacobson.