

ARTFORUM

“Hand’s Tide”

REGINA REX

1717 Troutman #329

September 11–October 17

If indeed, as Robert Storr put it recently in the *New York Times*, “The middle of the art world is now in Brooklyn,” one might then venture the rejoinder: And the center of Brooklyn is now Chicago. Supporting this counterintuitive thesis is the recently formed artist-run space Regina Rex, a Brooklyn-based project that counts a number of former denizens of Chicago as its constituents. Having resisted the convention of exhibiting its members, the gallery operates with a keen curatorial eye, as evinced by this eight-person group show. It confidently (if implicitly) wades into the perennial debate that revolves around the question, What is to be done with abstract painting? The answer put forth by the exhibition is: Not much. Which is to say, where others have found antinomy, the artists here find fertile ground for free aesthetic play. At once improvisational and exacting, Sue Havens’s *Untitled (paper construction)*, 2002, is a small three-dimensional painting that subtly, and with spry humor, refigures an everyday form; the work calls to mind a priority mail envelope come exquisitely unloosed. Approaching the problem from the opposite direction, Elizabeth Ferry’s contribution defamiliarizes material from the everyday—in this case, bookbinding cloth.

Other works, such as Carrie Gundersdorf’s paintings, torque abstraction in a way that convincingly synthesizes high modernism with a lo-fi cut-paper sensibility reminiscent of Montessori schooling. As the title of the exhibition intimates, wordplay and image play, while not the same, both utilize an economy of means that yields a surprise, pushing us to think faster and farther. Herein lies one of the achievements of the exhibition.



Sue Havens, *Untitled (paper construction)*, 2002, acrylic, paper, glue, 8 x 4 x 2”.

— Zachary Cahill

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