

# MagMag

EXHIBITION REVIEWS

## Paul Pagk

by Bill Clarke

Paul Pagk  
33 Orchard New York  
January 15 – March 8, 2015

British-born Paul Pagk remains something of a cult figure among New York painters even though he has been living and producing work in the city for over 25 years. His paintings consist of geometric (bordering on diagrammatic) forms, and manage to feel casual and spontaneous, and yet, at the same time, considered and complex. Pagk does not seem concerned with producing bodies of work that are visually consistent, but his paintings are often comprised of compositional elements — shapes, gestures or colours — that allow viewers to make connections among them if they spend the time.

This terrific show at this Lower East Side gallery featured over 60 works on 15 x 11-inch paper titled *November Drawings*, all produced during that month last year. Like his paintings, the drawings — tacked to the gallery walls and not titled individually — presented a wide range of abstract forms rendered in combinations of graphite, pen, watercolour, pastels and gouache. Pagk worked rapidly in the creation of these drawings, producing anywhere from three to 20 a day. The final selection on display were bursting with energy and full of movement, and strongly conveyed a sense of tactility and their maker's hand. Picking standouts from among the works is difficult because there were so many. Some, like a horizontally elongated indigo triangle set atop a magenta square, or a loosely stacked arrangement of small rectangles in alternating shades of chartreuse and pink, catch the eye with their vivid colour palettes. Others challenged the eye with their intricate networks of lines, while the rhythmic patterning of others brought to mind the work of artists associated with the Neo-Concrete movement like Hélio Oiticica and Lygia Clark. The early abstract expressionist work of Alfred Leslie, another long-time New York-based painter who deserves wider recognition, also came to mind, so wide-ranging was Pagk's approach to mark-making.

These works on paper provided a playful look behind the artist's painting process, coming across like a stream-of-conscious inventory of his practice. Pagk's drawings were hung alongside a suite of colourful paintings on paper by the Florida-based artist Mamie Holst, whose work was equally fine, if more contained formally. Overall, this show, which was simply titled *On Paper*, illustrated that contemporary abstraction can be dynamic and thought-provoking in the hands of the right artists.

**Bill Clarke** was the Executive Editor of *Magenta Magazine Online* from its inception in September 2009 until May 2017. His writing has been published in *Modern Painters*, *Art Review*, *Canadian Art*, *Artnews* and several other publications. In January 2017, he assumed the position of associate director at Angell Gallery in Toronto.

<https://www.magentafoundation.org/magazine/paul-pagk/>

