

ARTFORUM

CRITICS' PICKS

NEW YORK

Erika Raneë

KLAUS VON NICHTSSAGEND GALLERY

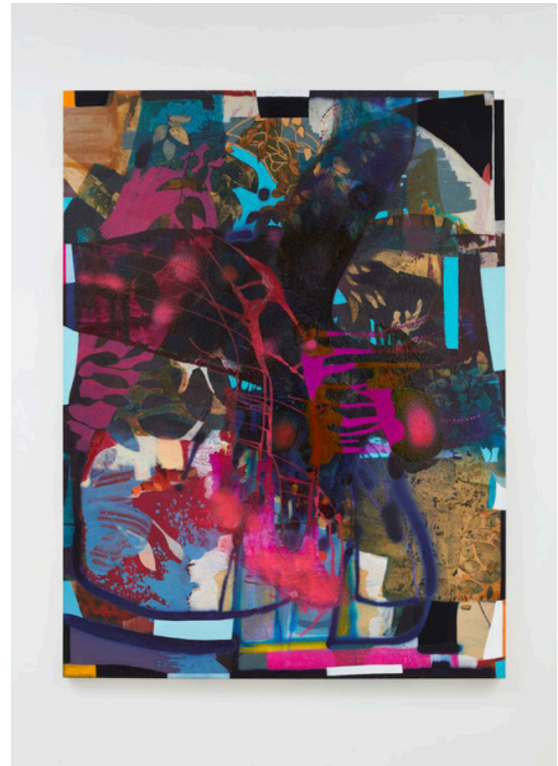
87 Franklin Street

February 17–March 25, 2023

“All Natural,” Erika Raneë’s first solo exhibition with this gallery, presents seven abstract paintings that address the artist’s life between two types of environments: New York City, where she currently lives and works, and rural Western Massachusetts, where she grew up and frequently returns. Her art—collaged, shellacked, sprayed, and smeared—obliquely documents various facets of her day-to-day existence: from family (some pieces feature drawings of her niece’s braided hair extensions) to the intimate goings-on inside her head, home, and studio. As a child, Raneë aspired to become an ornithologist, which is apropos given her works’ woven nest-like accumulations of layered marks that record the history of their own process.

Rarely painted upright, Raneë’s work employs a wide formal vocabulary, yet her skeins of fluid pours and pearls of sprayed paint remain some of her most recognizable moves. For example, in *How Many Times Do I Have to Tell You How Much You Love Me* (all works 2023), an ultramarine pool ascends and rakes to the center of the composition, but is entangled with the chorus of adjoining marks that surround it—a moment that exemplifies what the artist calls her “intuitive visual freestyle.” Although she takes inspiration from the wild-style graffiti of the 1980s and Jean Dubuffet’s raw surfaces, among other sources, Raneë’s art possesses a singular freshness and grit in its synthesis of influences.

Over the past twenty-seven years, Raneë has shifted



Erika Raneë, *Nacre*, 2023, acrylic, shellac, spray paint, and paper collage on canvas, 72 x 54".

from using explicit imagery that examines racist Black stereotypes to something more CoBrA-esque and suggestive. Narrative, however, is still retained, as it anchors the work’s more prosaic or recognizable elements, such as the cannabis leaves in *The Giving Tree* and the cut-paper philodendron plants in *Nacre*. These paintings dispute a prevalent essentializing position that an artist’s identity must be communicated literally through their subject matter. Raneë’s show gorgeously confounds our expectations with a type of abstraction that is lush, generous, and utterly hard-won.

— Greg Lindquist