

BROOKLYN RAIL

ArtSeen

Tamara Gonzales: *Amplifiers*

By **Charles Schultz**



Tamara Gonzales, *Tapir*, 2023. Acrylic and pastel on canvas, 54 x 45 inches. Courtesy the artist and Klaus von Nichtssagend Gallery.

If you can't feel the joy in Tamara Gonzales's paintings, call an ambulance. Her newest body of work (twenty-one paintings made in 2023) spreads across four walls, two of which are hung salon style. The effect of being surrounded by Gonzales's colorful paintings is overwhelming. To feel the buoyant and rejuvenating energy of spring on a gray day in mid-winter is a profound gift. But this is what Gonzales's work tends to do, provide uplift, a process wherein the viewer has the chance of elevating to emotional zones that can feel transcendent.

ON VIEW
Klaus Von Nichtssagend
Gallery
Amplifiers
January 12–February 17,
2024
New York



Installation view: *Tamara Gonzales: The Amplifiers*, Klaus von Nichtssagend Gallery, New York, 2023.

Painters know well the gateway possibilities of the colors they select, and Gonzales is no fussy brush-handler. She works with acrylics, often diluting the paint so that it becomes translucent on the canvas. Her palette is without a murky tone. In paintings such as *Clear Blue Sky* and *Light and Space*, the center of the composition is a single color—blue in one, orange in the other—that presents as soft. If it were a voice, it would sing a lullaby. It's not only the thinness of the paint that helps Gonzales achieve this quality; it's the manner in which she applies it—with loose strokes that sometimes fall into a rhythm and never appear rushed or inflexible.

There is a concentric quality to most of the paintings in this show. Gonzales's central rectangle is very often nested within larger rectangles, which extend to the edge of the canvas. It's a simple structure, but the simplicity is what enables the artist to generate such variety. The framing rectangles are further enhanced with pastel lines that loop, curl, curve, and repeat, evoking a sense of process and time. In *Runts*, the outer band is bespeckled with purple patterns that seem sponged into existence, but like many a desert, what was once wet is now dry. In those spongy patterns the puddles of the past are held like so many memories.

The concept of memory is directly invoked in the title of the only painting to be given its own wall: *Clear Blue Sky for JG*. It's a remarkable work, and the only piece in the show wherein the artist employed her familiar method of spray painting through lace to achieve diaphanous patterns. It reinforces the sense of Gonzales's paintings as a kind of gift to her audience, as it opens a second channel of registering experience. I had been thinking of the paintings in terms of seasonal passage, how the artist responds to nature's movement, but this work operates on a different scale. It's *for* someone and that gives the object a kind of agency the other paintings aren't intended to have.

Clear Blue Sky for JG is a material outlier, but it shares compositional features with two other paintings in the show. The unifying aspect of all three paintings is a line that crosses itself four times creating an interior area that Gonzales uses to paint a face. Flowers, shells, webs, stars, and handprints fill out the faces of *Tapir* and *Orange Tabby*, giving each a sense of individual character. The eyes are most prominent and expressive; they are wide open to the world, projecting a sense of awareness and liveliness that is stimulating.



Tamara Gonzales, *Runts*, 2023. Acrylic and pastel on canvas, 60 x 48 inches. Courtesy the artist and Klaus von Nichtssagend Gallery.

KLAUS VON NICHTSSAGEND GALLERY

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In fact, stimulation is central to Gonzales's exhibition, framed as it is by the title *Amplifiers*. The gallery literature connects the word to the discourse of medicine, but the paintings are more visually related to the kind of amplifiers you plug a guitar into. Whether medicinal or electronic, the role of the amplifier is to boost, which is what Gonzales's paintings do. In a quiet room, they turn up the energy.

Contributor

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