

ART NEW ENGLAND

CONTEMPORARY ART AND CULTURE

REVIEW: MAINE

Henri Paul Broyard: Piebald

Grant Wahlquist Gallery, Portland, ME • grantwahlquist.com • Through December 2, 2023

In nine new paintings from 2022–2023, the L.A.-born, Brooklyn-based artist Henri Paul Broyard continues his explorations of interiors. Using chiefly acrylic, with flashe, graphite, and spray paint additions, Broyard invites us into slightly skewed rooms that feature a singular mix of décor.

The space in *BU* looks like a living room—a sofa, a fireplace, a low table with books stacked on it. In place of the traditional painting over the mantelpiece Broyard provides a bold orange crisscross pattern that might have been spray-painted by a graffitist. The fireplace is a black square with what appears to be smoke drifting upward. The striped sofa adds a dash of domestic flair to the ensemble.

Who lives here? What era have we entered? These are some of the questions prompted by each painting. In *TPX*, a black-and-white Op Art-esque striped shape, maybe a pillow or a chair seat, stands out from its rather drab surroundings. Its startling presence recalls those patches of ornate cloth found in Old Master paintings that sometimes seem collaged on.



***FTZ*, 2023, acrylic on canvas, 36 by 36".
Courtesy of the artist.**

That optical element recurs in miniature in *AON* by way of a pinwheel set on a yellow table. The wallpaper consists of a checkerboard design that partially obscures flesh-like drapery. The top of what looks like a wide-mouthed metal bin near the middle of the canvas extends the enigma of this space.

The show's title is well chosen. The first definition of "piebald" as provided in the exhibition catalogue is "composed of incongruous parts." In addition to the choice of elements, that incongruity pertains to Broyard's mix of textures and styles. In *FTZ*, there's color field, geometric and organic abstraction, and, once again, a bit of Op Art and graffiti—a beguiling patchwork.

With its two arms and various attachments, the odd lamp-like apparatus on the table in *FTZ* recalls some of Francis Picabia's surreal contraptions. The painting underscores Broyard's ability to create objects and spaces that might appear in a fever dream. As critic Jenna Crowder put it in a 2018 review, "The absence of clear answers in these paintings is exactly what keeps us looking." — *Carl Little*