

ARTFORUM

Michele Abeles

47 CANAL

291 Grand Street, 2nd Floor

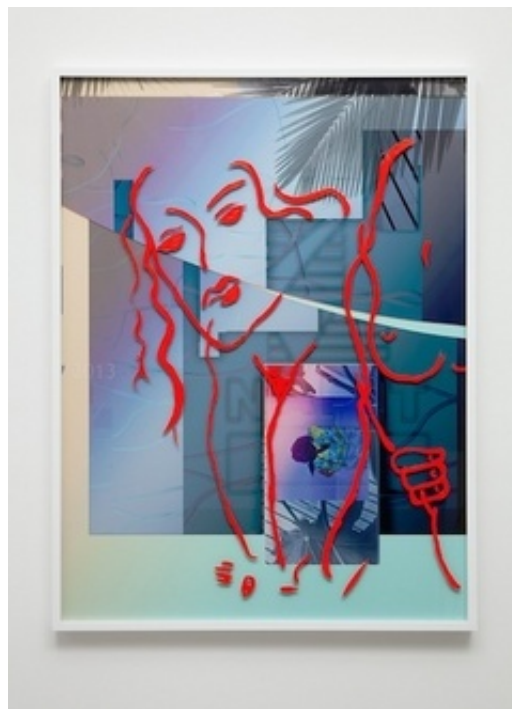
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Michele Abeles's ink-jet prints emerge through twin operations of building up and flattening out. In the nine compositions on view, Abeles permutes a stock vernacular of images—palm fronds, stippled skin, torn newspaper, a box of Abilify—that she photographs digitally and then recycles. Each is arranged in intercalated planes that, rather than recede into the frame, sit strangely atop its surface, creating tableaux whose depth mimes that of a computer screen. Her first show at 47 Canal turned on the allure of passing analog techniques for digital, with ostensibly edited effects arising through an intricate architecture of Perspex, gels, and green screens. This second round, while still beholden to in-studio sculptural setups, collapses the two modes. Photoshop's default, the rectangular "layer," furnishes the photographs' logic, and Abeles deploys many of the program's signature quirks, bounding planes with drop shadows and filling shapes with slow, synthetic fades. If software and-studio-based abstractions are impossible to distinguish, parsing the two, Abeles suggests, is a moot project.

A recumbent cat, rendered so sharply as to appear almost suspended above a patterned rug, anchors the triptych *Coaches*, 2013. The animal, its gaze trained at the camera, appears twice: first in the upmost photograph and again, slightly smaller, in the leftmost iteration. Planks of unvarnished wood rim the carpet, forming a sort of frame within the frame and hedging a spread of lush greenery. In a subtending layer, metal chains and gessoed tiles weave across a creamsicle-to-lime gradient. These elements recur in the bottommost print alongside an incurved cutout of a Monet water lily overlain with stencil-style type.

Literalizing Abeles's theme of repetition, *Transparencies* and *Transparencies II*, both 2013, are an identical pastel-smooth pastiche. Atop the glass pane of the first work, a mangled female nude, lifted from Francis Picabia's own "Transparencies," is outlined in red oil. The two titles prove provocative in light of both the opacity of the prints' facture and the long-held notion of the photograph as an unclouded window into the world. In the compressed, high-def spaces Abeles constructs, transparency only ever affords a view of another plane of pixels.

— Courtney Fiske



Michele Abeles, *Transparencies*, 2013, archival pigment print, oil on glass, 38 5/8 x 29".

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