

Reviews



RAHA RAISSNIA

MIGUEL ABREU GALLERY

Oil on canvas is one of the oldest technologies of representation; at times it can seem downright archaic that artists still smear blobs of colored pigment around on bolts of stretched linen. Yet in painting there survives a potential to represent spaces and scenarios that don't have an indexical connection or procedural relation to the current culture of instantaneity. For painters such as Raha Raissnia, painting's condition of fantastical or utopian invention is always in tension with newer mechanical and digital technologies.

In Raissnia's recent suite of abstract paintings, she applies white paint to black gesso in gridded formations of complex and dense structure. These improbable architectures of merging vectors and skewed intersections convey both vertigo-inducing velocity and the blur of a chaotic instant hastily arrested. The unusual technique of applying stark white paint to a dark ground lends a harsh, *Alphaville*-esque quality to the work, as though even blinding fluorescent light struggles to blanch a pervasive gloom. The comparison to cinema is not far-fetched; also shown is a film of hand-painted slides in which painting is collaged with found 16 and 35 mm footage in a palimpsest of 20th-century visual culture.

Experiencing Raissnia's work is like witnessing a parallax view: new technologies seen through older and possibly wiser ones. In today's omnipresent language of technological connectivity—networks and matrices—often the effects of such semiotic constructions overshadow the material reality of their impossibly vast structures (of massive server farms in remote corners of India, for example), or their elaborately minute forms (recent innovations in nearly invisible silicon nanocircuits). Raissnia's richly constructed works give material existence to those ineffable intricacies. —EVA DÍAZ