

The New York Times

ART & DESIGN

Alexander Tovborg: ‘Eternal Feminine’

DEC. 4, 2014



Art in Review

By ROBERTA SMITH

Alexander Tovborg, a Danish artist born in 1983, is making his New York debut with “Eternal Feminine,” a series of eye-catching paintings. In a striking, slightly precious arrangement, they line one wall of the gallery. They initially look identical. Painted on felt, these works exude a distinct softness and warmth. They seem bent on conjuring relatively modest, low-testosterone art media like woodblock prints, richly woven textiles, collage, children’s-book illustrations and stained glass.

“Eternal Feminine (II)” (2014) is one of a series of felt paintings by Alexander Tovborg, a Danish artist, making his New York gallery debut. Credit/Courtesy of the artist and Nicelle Beauchene gallery

Each features two rainbows — one above the other, a little like film frames — in bright pastel, dotted with sly, reptilian eyes. This jauntily mythic motif suggests

the Norse equivalent of Northwest Coast art while also evoking the primordial modernism of Kandinsky, Klee and Marsden Hartley.

Differences emerge as you study the group: in the arcs and thicknesses of the rainbows and even more in the darker backgrounds of reds, blues and earth tones. Their subdivisions harbor different combinations of a leafy branch à la Matisse, various fruits and maybe vegetables, and spheres of white or magenta. The totality might be a scattered still life overseen by orbiting planets.

The differences are not calculated. It turns out that Mr. Tovborg develops a motif through repeated drawings until it is almost automatic and then makes each painting without referring to the others, from memory.

An introduction with a greater range of pieces might have been more informative, but this one probably brings us closer to the heart of Mr. Tovborg's obsessive sensibility.

Nicelle Beauchene

327 Broome Street, Lower East Side

Through Dec. 21