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# ARTFORUM

## N. Dash

### CASEY KAPLAN

121 West 27th Street  
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Certain artworks can't help but hint at the affect of the bodily actions that shaped them. Many of the iconic process-based sculptures of the 1960s—those shredded webs, tangled filaments, and crisscrossed threads of "Eccentric Abstraction," for example—suggest a touch of psychic or manual frenzy. Such knotted fibers make an appearance in N. Dash's current solo exhibition, but only in a twice-removed, two-dimensional form, in paintings silk-screened with images of cloth scraps that the artist rubs to the point of disintegration between her fingers, a daily practice that has occupied her since childhood. While Dash literally worries her diminutive textile sculptures



View of "N. Dash," 2016.

to pieces, the majority of these works (all Untitled, 2016)—composed primarily of stacked or beveled arrangements of jute-stretched canvases, quantities of gessoed or hand-painted fabric, and lengths of twine embedded in or hanging from troweled-on adobe grounds—feature tactile surfaces manipulated by the sure hand of composure.

Underscoring the work's poise may imply that it's a bit too well behaved, too withholding, but in fact any perceived surfeit of restraint gives way, on closer inspection, to a distinctly physical avidity. In one, a strip of pink Styrofoam wedged between shaded areas of graphite and a blush-tipped wooden dowel lying within a flap of black canvas evoke intimate flesh secreted within dark cavities. The fields of New Mexican clay are marked by dermal wrinkles and puckers, and expanses of monochrome paint are rippled by broken adhesion, as if two clinging skins have reluctantly been pulled apart. (It's hard to resist the urge to run a finger across these planes to test the feel of that cool earth, those viscid oils.) Against the grain of so much hyperarticulate, studied art, Dash's resolute materiality gently disdains academic prudishness or defensive cleverness. It stays mute, understanding that so much can be said with the mouth firmly shut.

— *Claire Lehmann*