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Art In Review

Bianca Beck: 'Body'

By KAREN ROSENBERG

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Bianca Beck attacks her small, mostly abstract paintings and sculptures with ritualistic determination. Torn and burned canvas and incised wood are everywhere in her first solo at Rachel Uffner, which cuts dangerously close to the midcentury Tachisme of Wols and Fautrier.

One canvas has a deep oxblood stain and a gash shaped like a lightning bolt. On another, ashy clouds surround a daub of bright orange that looks like a smoldering ember. Many works have been scratched up enough to resemble old barroom tables.

But when Ms. Beck puts down her weapons and picks up her paintbrush, she has a healing touch — applying poulticelike layers of warming color, or making short, deft strokes that might be stitches. She proves, as the Tachists and many others have, that the surface of a painting will forgive a multitude of sins.

Violent tendencies are also subdued by the works' precious scale: no bigger than 24 by 18 inches, with some as petite as 12 by 9. Ms. Beck may be working small in an effort to hold her influences at arm's length, but the overall impression here is of French postwar painting in miniature.

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