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What to See Right Now in New York Art Galleries

Andra Ursuta's glass sculptures, Brice Marden's latest paintings, portraits from Henry Taylor; Baseera Khan's photo-collage constructions; and Jill Mulleady's Neo-Surrealist works.

Roberta Smith



Brice Marden's "Yellow Painting" (2018-19), in his new show, "It reminds me of something, and I don't know what it is," at Gagosian. Credit...Brice Marden/Artists Rights Society (ARS), New York; via Gagosian

Calling an artist's new work "transitional" is usually a lukewarm compliment, implying a striking out for new territory that remains unlocated. The latest paintings, oil studies and works on paper in Brice Marden's blazing exhibition, "It reminds me of something, and I don't know what it is," amp up "transitional" to mean unstoppable forward motion. The painter, now 81, has found new land on several fronts, leaving us to ponder what he might do next.

The six largest paintings charge ahead by partly circling back, flanking the calligraphic circuitry that Mr. Marden has pursued for three decades — with areas of solid color reminiscent of his early monochrome paintings. In their variety of chroma and brushwork, they vigorously explore different tensions between the flanking planes of color and the tangles of line between them.

In "Elevation," a misty green softens the entire surface, creating a floating atmosphere in which the linear scaffolding is suspended. But in "Yellow Painting," the side color — a bright lemon — darkens at the center, tinted by the red and green lines that career back and forth across it, creating an unpredictable geometry. This same transformation occurs in "Oued," whose pale shade of cantaloupe is deepened toward burnt orange by a network of dark red and gray. In the oil studies, Mr. Marden pares down his surfaces to a light gray with grids of black dots, eccentrically connected by deep blue or red, perhaps signaling his next jumping-off point.