

previews/reviews

Mara Held @ Christiane Neinaber Gallery
Oct. 29 - Nov. 30

Laid down on the printed paper of dress patterns, using pencil and egg-based gouache, these paintings have the distinct effect of floating ephemera. The forms of the intended garment pieces - sleeves, collars, cuffs - proliferate across the surface, lapping against each other, layering, interpenetrating, or piling up in stacks. The paint strokes follow a variety of directions and rhythms - at times tracing or reinforcing the directionality of the pattern's printed lines, at other times resisting or even disrupting them. The resultant imagery often involves a running, wave-like configuration with frequent allusions to the zoned spaces of maps and blueprints or, conversely, a centralized, icon-like figure against similar, surrounding elements that become the ground. Other formal variations include drips and script and linear strips with dangling spirals. There is often great attention to contour, with clean references to the body and even some suggestion of optical illusion. With classical Italianate colors and tonal counterpoint, Held's work presents a sense of time-lapsed metamorphosis as she re-evaluates the concept of intentionality and the circumstances under which patterning takes on a life of its own.

Deborah Everett



Mara Held, *Arabesque*, 1999