

ARTFORUM

Jon Pestoni

CLEVELAND MUSEUM OF ART
11150 East Boulevard
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Look at any one of Jon Pestoni's funky abstract paintings by itself and you're likely to miss the point. Luckily, this small survey offers thirty-one works that demonstrate the value of repeating oneself and the playful charge between repetition and difference. In *Underbite*, 2014, a brushy rectangular field of royal purple fills the center of the canvas. Obscuring the shapes below it, only brief passages of color show through its veil. At the edges we get snatches of figuration, such as leaf and tooth shapes described by graphic black outlines. To the right of that painting *Accordion*, 2015, features a similarly dark monochrome blind permitting only gasps of the same jubilant palette of pink, teal, and yellow. In both, a gritty kitty-litter surface flattens the illusion of depth suggested by the layers of composition.

In *Inner Tube*, 2015, we see Pestoni's formal binaries side by side, rather than one atop the other, as they often appear. A laterally brushed column of purple stands beside a looping pink, yellow, powder-blue, and white, cartoonish ribbon. The two figures occupy the foreground and announce their difference. The artist's distinct pictorial elements are layered like ingredients in a sandwich. As they stack, the canvas is hardly ever filled edge to edge, leaving frayed suggestions of what lies beneath, like bits of paper escaping from a haphazard file folder. The rehearsal of techniques and motifs continues in the cover-up of *Replica*, 2013, giving one the impression that Pestoni never wants to stop painting, especially when things start looking good.



Jon Pestoni, *Accordion*, 2015, oil and mixed media on canvas, 10' x 90" x 2".

— Grant Johnson