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John Kissick "Dissonant Groove" 2012 Installation view Courtesy Katzman Kamen Gallery

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John Kissick: Pixel My World

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Painting, like a weathervane, catches which way the wind blows. These days, like most everything else, the wind is blowing to a digital horizon. What is fun about [John Kissick's](#) new show "Dissonant Groove" is how smoothly his paintings take us there. Kissick has always had great facility in laying down paint and making it speak to the evolving languages of abstraction. These subdivide into two main types: the heady one that started with cubism, constructivism and Mondrian, and aims at deconstructing perception; and the bodily one that seeped from surrealism, reached its apotheosis with abstract expressionism, and testifies to the never-ending way that we project ourselves and attach our bodies to what we see.

Kissick leans to body language. His paintings tend to have a chunky, clotted presence, yet in them colour works to raise a stairway to a countervailing elegance that is resonant with the chroma memory of historical painting. Classicism burbles in the background of a self-consciously casual pop presentation—a heaven to the hell of the real-time arena of lowered expectations. Watching Kissick's various blobs and gestures jostle within the usually tightly constructed pictorial space of a canvas is to see the paintings play a waiting game for memory to come to the rescue and widen out the prospects of what we see.

In the new work there is a new touch, a layering of spotted patternings which come across not like the Ben-Day dots of mechanical reproduction (see [Roy Lichtenstein](#)) but more like the pixel bitmapping you see on a Photoshop journey to the centre of a JPEG. It is a masterful touch that lets Kissick build pockets of intricate slow time into his paintings. The shapes and gesture circuits now have a layered-on inner life powered by the optical electricity of simultaneous contrast and other such realms of colour-theory expertise. The result is an opening of spaces within spaces, a new density of action and reaction.

By any other name, we call this the digital information age, and with cool, ironic aplomb, Kissick brings painting under its umbrella.

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