

ARTnews

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Lisa Corinne Davis

June Kelly

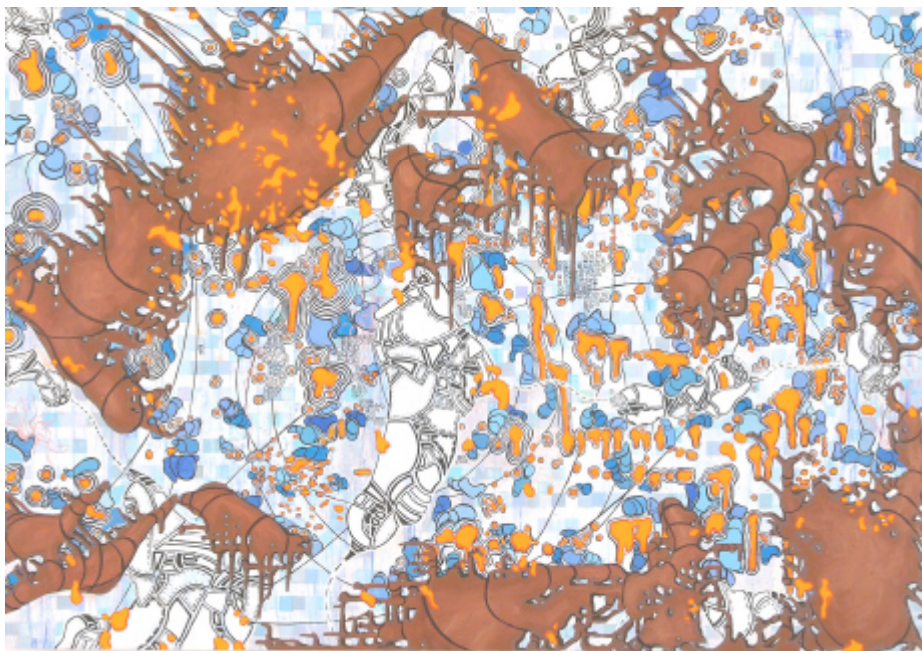
These richly layered works, all from 2006-7, explore categorization and, in the end, defy it. Davis's self-portraits from the 1980s and 90s confound distinctions between self and other; her crowd scenes from around 2000 blur the line between individual and group identity. The eight images here use the visual language of maps to zoom out to a fictitious stratosphere where identity politics nonetheless plays a central role.

In these works, flat forms resembling landmasses drift against backgrounds of blue, white, and green squares. Skeins of latitude and longitude lines curl along the surfaces. Hovering above this inventive geography are the most powerfully suggestive features: cartoonish, exoskeletal forms, which—depending on their size, shape, and color—evoke plant tendrils and insect larvae, or free-falling Day-Glo pellets that look like Nerds, the candy popular in the 1980s.

With action-packed imagery, a bright palette, and titles like *Trippy Tabulation* and *Willfully Whimsical* (both 2007), a cheerful attention-deficit mood prevailed. It was tempting to keep the encounter casual, but there were unsettling undercurrents. While traditional maps provide geographical or topographical information about a specific region, Davis's are too crowded to be legible, with their menacing, fleshy protuberances obscuring the landmasses below. In *Regulatory Plasma* (2007), lethargic blobs clot the surface, suggesting toxic sludge or an architectural plan consumed by fire, and in *Accidental Record* (2007), a chain of bright red cloisonné forms twists about like dancers made of flame.

These paintings seemed to depart from Davis's earlier visual language, yet they make sense in her trajectory, achieving a strong and distinctive position in the space between abstraction and figuration.

—Johanna Ruth Epstein



Lisa Corinne Davis, *Regulatory Plasma*, 2007, oil on wood panel, 25" x 36".

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