

CRITICS' PICKS

## New York

**Alice Tippit**

**NICELLE BEAUCHENE GALLERY**

327 Broome Street

June 30–August 12

Alice Tippit's boldly graphic, hard-edge paintings are refined and puzzle-like. In these sketchbook-scale works, she offsets a cool, formal harmony with a wry and cryptic language of symbols, arabesques, and geometry. Irregular vases, decontextualized fruit, elongated hands, and weird animals populate her spare compositions, evoking vintage textile design and antique sign painting as well as art history. In *Iris* (all works 2016), a Victorian crescent moon hangs facing down—like a happy, Cyclopean eyelid—in a velvety-black sky. A canary-yellow banana under it makes a big clownish smile. *Flat* is the profile of a forest-green boob with an inverted nipple, set against a coral-flesh background. Or is the nipple-dip not negative space but a protruding part of a concave object in green space instead? Tippit's paintings ask us to toggle between myriad readings. And hues of sepia, peach, and terra-cotta pop up in most of the works on view, so we seek out the body everywhere.

Up close, you see the paintings are carefully, subtly constructed, containing rich areas of barely-there color gradients and cross-fades. *Part* might be the most detailed piece. Rendered in a vaguely familiar illustrational style, a sullen face with precise features emerges from a field of beige. The “part”—a midpoint of the subject's striking hairstyle—doubles as a butt crack. It's hard not to notice that the dark, wavy shoulder-length hair looks like the silhouette of a person from the back, bent over. Pointed toes and shapely calves raise an ass into the air. Such genial lasciviousness along with painterly lushness lends the artist's unsolvable riddles rare appeal.



Alice Tippit, *Part*, 2016, oil on canvas, 24 x 20"

— Johanna Fateman