

# Art gallery exhibitions: Donald Martiny; Emily and Will Brown; April Saul

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by **Edith Newhall**, For The Inquirer

Donald Martiny's paintings - lush gestures of paint on aluminum supports - function almost as bas-reliefs formed from paint.

I've seen them in various places over the last few years, but his first solo show at Pentimenti Gallery offered me my first opportunity to see many of them together in person. They're remarkable in many ways, not least for the individuality each work embodies while simultaneously affirming Martiny's signature style. They also look terrific in this gallery, which has done well to turn over the entire space to Martiny and to leave lots of space between these assertive works. They deserve it. Each one is an experience.

Martiny makes his paintings on the floor, using brushes, brooms, and even his hands to push his paint, a viscous mix of pigment and polymer, and his physical interactions are clearly evident in all of his paintings. But as sweeping and physically demanding as Martiny's gestures can seem, they can just as easily suggest a much enlarged gesture from an

expressionistic painting on canvas, a flick of the wrist (and brush) isolated and magnified.

Willem de Kooning's landscape-inspired paintings of the 1960s and '70s strike me as touchstones for several of Martiny's recent works. *Yabaâna* (2016), a thrusting, wavelike shape of white paint thinly streaked with yellow, green, and pink, brings to mind de Kooning's vigorous brushwork and color palette, as does *Gafat* (2016), an indeterminate form of fleshy peach and green intersected by bold strokes of royal blue and cadmium orange that could have stepped out of de Kooning's *Two Figures in a Landscape* from 1967 (it didn't).

But Martiny's monochromatic pieces are as emphatic as ever. *Tuu* (2016), an immense "dab" of deep brownish violet, is as self-possessed a painting as you can imagine, defying its dramatically plain-Jane color. It stops you like a period at the end of a sentence. You have to admire it.

In most of these works, Martiny has moved away from forms that immediately evoke other forms - I've seen paintings of his shaped like commas, for instance. And these new, less referential shapes match up nicely with his more nuanced palette.

Through April 23. Pentimenti Gallery, 145 N. Second St. Hours: 11 a.m. to 5 p.m. Wednesdays through Fridays; noon to 5 p.m. Saturdays. Information: 215-625-9990 or [www.pentimenti.com](http://www.pentimenti.com).