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# ARTFORUM

## Critic's Pick: Clayton Colvin At Margaret Thatcher Projects

By Rowan Ricardo Phillips  
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*Beneath Light and Shadow*, 2013, Acrylic, graphite, charcoal, conte crayon, and ink on Arches watercolor paper, 37 x 28 inches (94 x 71 cm)

The nine paintings that comprise Birmingham, Alabama-based Clayton Colvin's "Put Down Your Stars" operate within that inchoate space between stoic, Apollonian formalism and exuberant figural expression. Shapes—particularly squares, rhombi, strokes, and arabesques—vibrate and twist on the canvas in response to Colvin's manipulations of color, depth, and repetition. At times, painting seems to give way to drawing, and at other times, drawing seems to give way to painting. Erasures and additions reveal and conceal other layers, complicating ideas of before and after, original and addition, right-side up and upside down. The paintings thrive in paradox: They can seem crowded and full of movement, a sense of unsettled energy populating their spaces; after sustained viewing, however, a calm and measured contemplativeness saturates the canvases.

*Beneath Light and Shadow*, 2013, a painting on watercolor paper, foregrounds two bright and floating coral-

colored acrylic forms, seemingly sentient masses of curlicues lit in their empty spaces by vivid markings of crayon; they resemble cellular membranes enlivened by the activity inside them. One of the forms is centered, and the other, as though entering or exiting, is almost entirely off the edge of the canvas. Graphite, charcoal, and inks create an interrupted and rather busy study of perspective.

*Canine Sensibility*, 2013—which, like all works in the show, are graphite and acrylic on linen—is scored by purple, pink, and white rhombi extending diagonally from the top left of the canvas to the bottom right, like a slanted peninsula, across its sea-blue background. *Brain Wash*, 2013, is similarly shaped but drifts toward the left from the top

center and is striped by thick lanes of oranges, reds, grays, and whites, its background a faded blossom of overlapping colors. There is cohesion within the chaos, slight rhymes of gesture or intent. The paintings seem to move when you don't look at them and stand still when you do—each striving to represent both the noise in which contemporary life finds itself ensnared and the quiet meditation that can free it.