



## Harold Ancart

Artforum, June 2015  
by Chinnie Ding

# ARTFORUM

## New York

### Harold Ancart

**CLEARING**  
396 Johnson Avenue  
May 12–July 12

The cosmic nightscapes riotously abloom in Harold Ancart's new works on canvas land us on an exotic planet. Vibrant plants, bonfires, and astral confetti in the show's seven oil-stick paintings thrum in tropical colors against abundant, magnetic fields of black that concentrate contemplation, evoking lacquerware worlds. But if believable blossoms top stems here, so do moons and gradient disks resembling telescopic iris shots onto other planet floors, upending figure-ground certainties. The echo between a restless treelike shape in one painting and airborne sawtooth blobs in another (all works untitled, 2015) enacts these paintings' own shifting states of coalescence and disassembly, like cloud clusters or avian flocks. Seen up close, even the color-flecked carbon black sometimes suggests ripped rind more than deep space.

The history of painting that lives in these works like chromosomal traces enriches such dimensional unknowns. Fauvist and Symbolist flavors are joined by AbEx and Minimalist devices, such as in the neat horizontal shelf of white paint frosting one work's upper band, unaffected by the big stylized bonfire below that is the painting's apparent subject. Discrete veins of color and encroaching edges recall Clyfford Still's seismic fissures, while the single pin-thin verticals of white paint suspended in two works seem equally mindful of AbEx zips and Asian folding screens. The show's sole small work, pictorially nearly identical to the big bonfire painting, faces the latter on the opposite wall, like a portrait or a progeny, as if either fantasia were indeed life-size.

This is the planet of painting, after all, and Ancart's space exploration is the exploration of painted space: More than depicting petals and flames, how might a painting itself grow like a flower, ignite like fire, and bring about forms that thrive as life-forms in the otherworld it always is?



Harold Ancart, *Untitled*, 2015, oil stick on canvas, 113 x 81".

— Chinnie Ding