

THE BOSTON GLOBE

Arts & Reviews

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John Obuck: New Paintings

At: OH+T Gallery, 450 Harrison Ave., through Dec. 16. 617-423-1677. ohtgallery.com

Making mischief

Modernism's emphasis has always been "what you see is what you get," but painter John Obuck wittily subverts that creed in his show at OH+T Gallery. He's like a latter-day Mondrian, deploying flat tones, spare shapes, and the grid, but his grid is painted with bevels, so it looks like a window; a realist sprite is making mischief in a modernist world.

You may think, for a moment, you're looking through a window, but Obuck returns us swiftly to modern art, specifically neo-geo, by cutting shapes out of the canvas. In "Red Right Angle," the middle row of squares seems to shift to the left, as if on sliders, leaving a hole in the center of the canvas where he has positioned a bright yellow oval painted with a red, L-shaped grid. It sits against a black oval, looming like a dark moon through the entire grid. A smaller, gray-striped canvas perches on top, sneaking to one side.

Obuck's sharp paintings set the viewer wavering perilously between the illusion of depth, suggested by the windows, and the defiantly flat geometry he carves out within the windowpanes.

