

HYPERALLERGIC

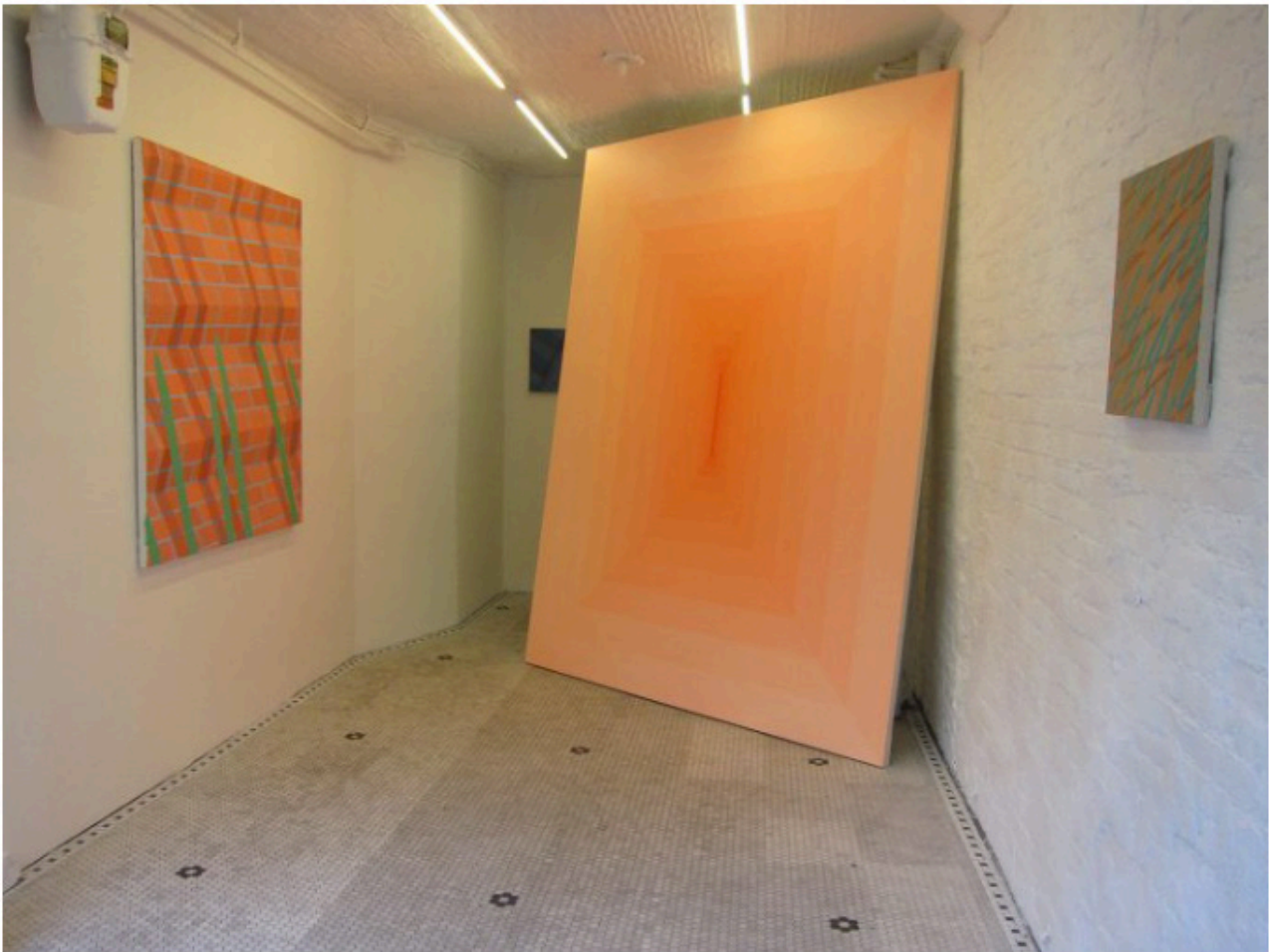
Art **Reviews**

Paintings that Stress the Strangeness in Ordinary Surfaces

Corydon Cowansage's works on canvas twist our perspective on such typically drab images as blades of grass and brick surfaces.



Claire Voon November 21, 2016



Installation view of Corydon Cowansage's solo exhibition *Dwell* at Miller Contemporary (all photos by the author for Hyperallergic)

Living up to the invitation offered in its title, *Dwell*, the current exhibition at Miller Contemporary presents paintings that make you want to settle into the space and linger. Five works on canvas by New York-based artist [Corydon Cowansage](#) focus on typically drab images — blades of grass, brick surfaces, and a hole, all displaced from any context — yet, with their perspectival twists, ordinary surfaces become strange and magnetic. The paintings fill the tiny gallery for Cowansage's first solo show; bright and rhythmic, they transform the space by expanding its narrow passage.



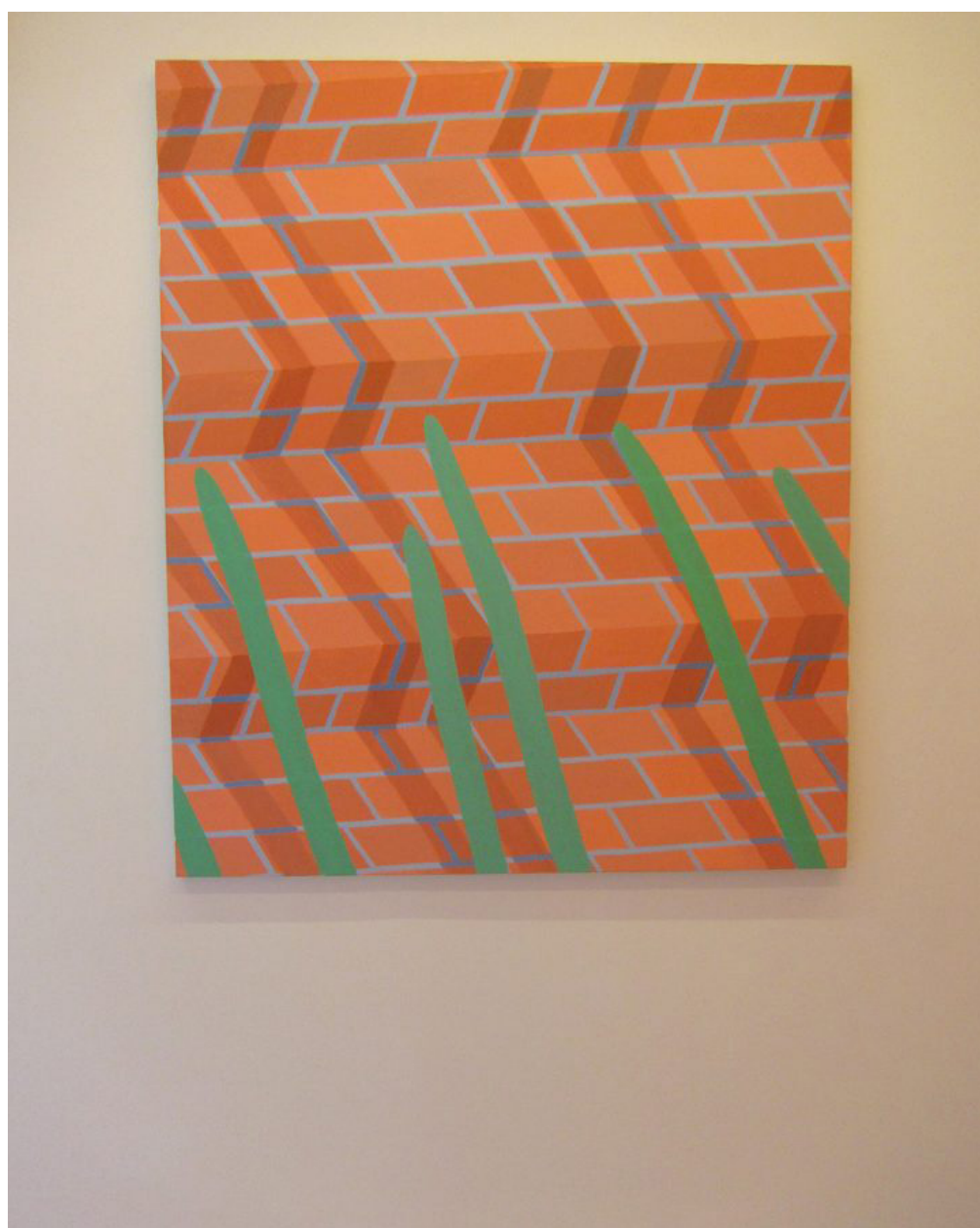
Corydon Cowansage, "Grass #62" (2016)

The piece that commands immediate attention is “Hole #11,” which stands nine feet tall and leans casually against a wall, as if still waiting to be hung. Although crammed into the space, the angled canvas is unimposing — buoyant almost, seeming somehow capable of levitation. The painted concentric rectangles present a large cavity (for

all her playfulness, Cowansage opts for deliberate straightforwardness when it comes to titles) that’s luminescent with soft, subtly shifting shades of orange. The lines form not just a hole but a hazy, enticing portal that beckons you to enter; you feel like you could almost step right into the tilted plane and, through it, into a distant realm.

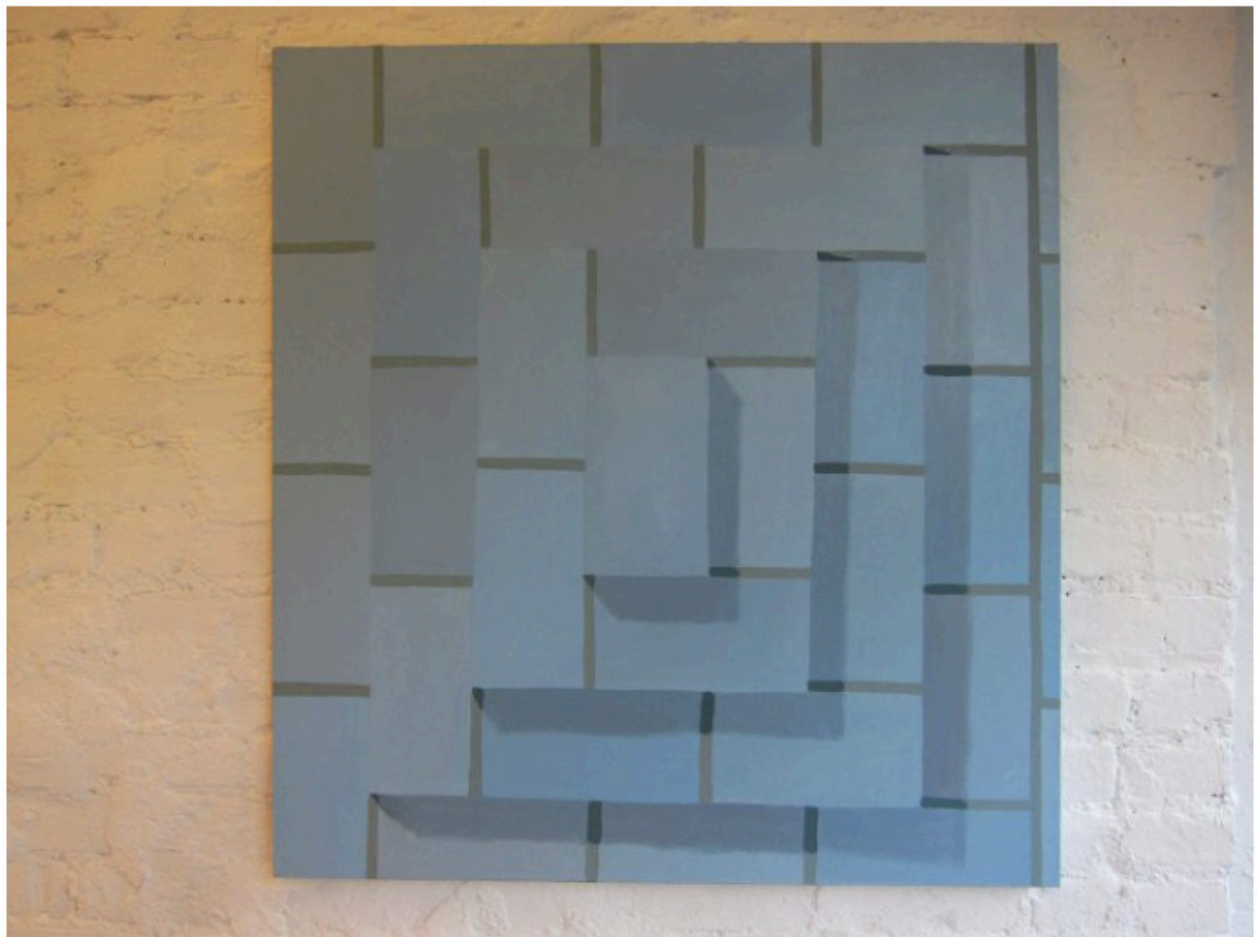
The looming work maintains a steady conversation with its smaller, hung neighbors. “Hole #11” faces the mesmerizing “Stairs #3,” which homes in on a section of brick steps. They stretch the length of the canvas to zigzag like an accordion’s pleats, overlaid with slime-green blades of grass that resemble nematodes. Transformed by Cowansage’s brush, the usually unyielding architecture seems caught in the midst of folding, with the shadows of the wormy figures exaggerating its dimensionality to display a delightful dance of the everyday.

Magnifying and manipulating such familiar patterns of our built environment, Cowansage's smaller paintings situate her viewers in ambiguous positions: we become small, like insects, floating over blue blades of grass that weave neatly together; we hover, like the hook of a crane, over a pile of stacked bricks. In "Grass #59," we gaze at a patch of grass as if examining someone's oddly dyed scalp through a microscope. Every painting is numbered, and this seriality, too, breaks Cowansage's work out of its physical confines. The numbers — here, from 3 to 62 — suggest we are seeing only a small sample of the artist's visions; they remind us that the banal can continuously mystify with unexpected depth and dynamism.





Corydon Cowansage, "Grass #59" (2016)



Corydon Cowansage, "Stack #5" (2016)



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