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# Subverting Space: A Review of Caragh Thuring at Corbett vs. Dempsey

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Caragh Thuring, "Mystic Meatballs," 2019. Oil, charcoal on woven linen and cotton, 48 1/8 x 72 1/8 inches, 122 x 183 centimeters.

## RECOMMENDED

Frequently simple, often simplistic, the paintings in Caragh Thuring's "Builder" are more complicated than they first appear. To start with, it's not even fair to call these works "paintings." Stretched, wall-mounted and hand-embellished tapestries is probably a more accurate description—though even that fails to capture this curious and intoxicating display of image, textile, humor and painterly gesture.

Based in London, the Belgium-born artist typically boasts a playful, Rebecca Morris-like approach to composition that teases the tensions between figuration and abstraction. But for this debut exhibition in Chicago, Thuring has created a new body of work heavily indebted to the strictures of photographic space. All of the six large-scale pieces appear rapidly executed (each from 2019), are lightly touched, and contain imagery woven directly into the canvas support.

Works such as "Heatwave" and "Desire Lines" offer up deep-space snapshots of the American Southwest that are subverted and compressed by a cursory application of traditional materials: oil, acrylic and gouache. In "Mystic Meatballs," the neutral hues of the canvas and linen thread lend an aged, stately air to an otherwise banal picture of a half-eaten lunch. In contrast to the previous two, the paint application serves a more descriptive function, suggesting a checkered tablecloth and a pair of ghostly pale hands, all the while warping the pictorial space.



*"Caragh Thuring: Builder" installation view. /Image courtesy Corbett vs. Dempsey.*

It's in the jet-setting "Leaders and Laggards" that the show hits its stride. Two dogs peer triumphantly from the luxurious seats of a private jet. The picture is set against the stitched linen backdrop of a stocks and shares report straight out of Threadneedle Street. Though the scene is rendered in a "I painted this in one-go" aesthetic of brevity, the space resonates with a complexity not always present in the companion pieces. In this work, the stitched image actively resists the work's spatial read, rather than creating it.

On balance, the ubiquity of photographic imagery has overly conditioned our expectations of and demands for the depiction of space. The monocular gaze of lens-based media is seductive and tyrannical, and like all tyrants, it's also a liar: we don't see in linear perspective. That the space of Thuring's latest work is so heavily invested in photography is not unusual—almost all contemporary art is in some way. But by embedding it into the ground of her support, her act of subverting and distorting that space is. (Alan Pocaro)

*"Builder" continues through October 12 at Corbett vs. Dempsey, 2156 West Fulton.*