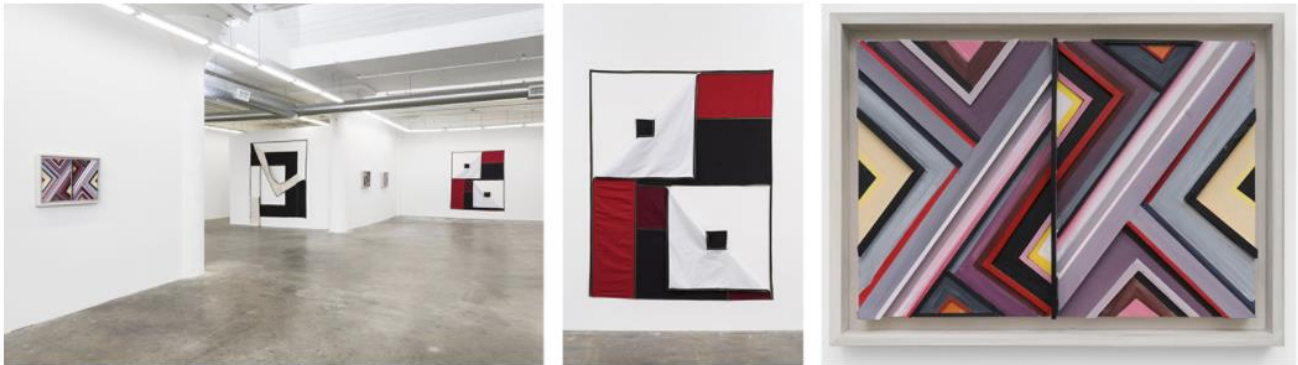


"Pick of the week," by Jody Zellen for What's on Los Angeles, March 4, 2021.

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**Karen Carson**  
***Middle Ground***  
**Gavlak Los Angeles**  
**January 9 - March 6, 2021**



In the documentary *Made You Look: A True Story of Fake Art* a film about the Knoedler Gallery and forgeries of abstract expressionist paintings implicates gallery director Ann Freeman the main interviewee in the film. Watching the movie, I was struck by the way one of her tops could be zipped to form a rectangle and unzipped to become a triangle. It reminded me of one of Karen Carson's early works on view at Gavlak Los Angeles. In *Middle Ground* Carson juxtaposes unstretched canvases from her *Zipper* series (1970s) with painted bas relief wooden pieces created between 2018 and 2020.

The *Zipper* works are playful. Created in response to male dominated Minimalism, Carson constructed canvas pieces where different colors of fabric were zipped together and pinned to the wall. These works could be zipped and unzipped to allow for different configurations of shapes in infinite arrangements. In *Red, Black, White* (1972-2016), sections of the double sided, hand-sewn red, black and white canvas are unzipped to form squares, triangles and other geometric shapes. In *Two Right Angles* (1972), portions of the canvas fall to the floor exposing not only areas of blank wall, but also allowing gravity and entropy to come into play. While based on possibilities within fixed geometries, there is an implicit looseness and flexibility in the *Zipper* works. They are beautiful and unsettling simultaneously and though created in dialogue with art from the 1970s, they continue to resonate today.

Carson's current works are smaller, tighter and more colorful than the older *Zipper* pieces.

# GAVLAK

LOS ANGELES | PALM BEACH

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Begun while summering in Montana, the bas reliefs reflect the colors and shapes of nature rather than the urban landscape. Each work is comprised of fragments of painted wood, pieced together to form overlapping and criss-crossing geometric shapes that rise off the surface. The effect is like looking into a kaleidoscope. The colors are bright and bold and each work seems to have an internal rhythm. *Yellow Diamonds* (2018), is a quasi-symmetrical work where angled wood painted in tones of light to darker yellows extend from the center toward the edges to create wedges of interlocking diamonds that rise above a background of vertical stripes in various hues. *Turquoise Eyes* (2018-19), is more complex. The eyes of its title are orange triangles surrounded by turquoise and black that allude to animal eyes (perhaps an owl?). The work reads like a multi-colored, geometric, rorschach pattern and becomes a visual palindrome. In *Red Fracture* (2020), Carson has inverted and flipped the composition. A thin black strip of wood protrudes at the center of the piece, dividing it in half. From here, gray and red toned slats become a pattern of lines and angles as they extend toward the edges of the structure.

Like her *Zipper* series, Carson's latest works are hybrids— both paintings and sculptures. While the older canvases explored how hard edged Minimalism could become soft and floppy, the bas reliefs can be seen as flattened landscapes where the colors and shapes of mountains, deserts and sunsets have been abstracted into three dimensional geometric forms.