

Space, interrupted

By [Cate McQuaid](#)

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Craig Taylor's often captivating abstract paintings at LaMontagne Gallery make smart use of space, patterning, tone, and gesture. In his diptych "Obfuscate Interface," the two sections are similarly painted, with one less than half the size of the other, and inverted. Both sport bold orange stripes down a ground that shifts from garish yellow to murky green. In the center, Taylor breaks up the certainty of his space with a cloud of stuttering gestures. It interrupts the orange bars, posing riddles about what's in front and what's in back.

Monica Nydam's thoughtful paintings from the "Untitled (horse series)," also at LaMontagne, began when she posted an offer on Craigslist to paint beloved objects. One respondent invited her to portray Minnie, a chestnut-colored horse. In this series, Minnie replicates and often blurs to the point at which she's impossible to see. The rush of the blur can be rapturous, with the object of affection nearly lost in the fierce tide of love.

Nydam's works are as much about painting as they are about love. She pulls us in with her strident smearing, then dizzies us with symmetry, and stops us short with hints of pattern and precisely rendered elements, such as Minnie's spindly legs painted with a calligraphic simplicity, or small windows where the blurring pauses and we glimpse a patch of grass, or of Minnie's flank, and breathe deep.

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