Torey Thornton: Primed for Experimentation

Upon walking into Torey Thornton’s Brooklyn studio on a crisp mid-November day, I was instantly struck by his resourceful ingenuity. “I am thinking about making a sculpture with these,” Thornton said as he picked up a long-necked gourd from an overflowing box on the floor. Drawings were strewn around the space. Wood panels and paintings, some more resolved than others, leaned against the walls. Thornton gestured toward a large-scale work on our left. “I am almost finished with this one,” he said. It is a buttery, pulsating yellow whose image immediately calls to my mind a pared-down graphic of the inner chambers of the heart. It is strange and menacing, yet curiously upbeat. Across the room, he motioned to another painting—one whose color palette is even more riveting. “I like how the stripe on the right in this one reads differently from afar. I love playing with color in unexpected ways,” he explained. What I thought was a carbon black turned into a deep, earthy eggplant pigment. The image hit all the right notes: quirky, roguish, a mix of geometric and organic forms, painterly yet flat, both abstract and figural. Thornton was breaking all the rules, and it was working.
For Momma (Theresa), if it wasn’t for her I would have nothing. She helped Thornton
back things for myself and recontextualizing the excitement . . . .”

Thornton calls into question the processing effect on our feelings and our behavior. The myriad images we digest daily, whether
from life or the media, have a profound impact on how we think and feel about the world.

The paintings in this exhibition are stepping in and out of conversation with one another and the viewer. Owing to his practice, Thornton fights complacency, asking deeper questions each time
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