

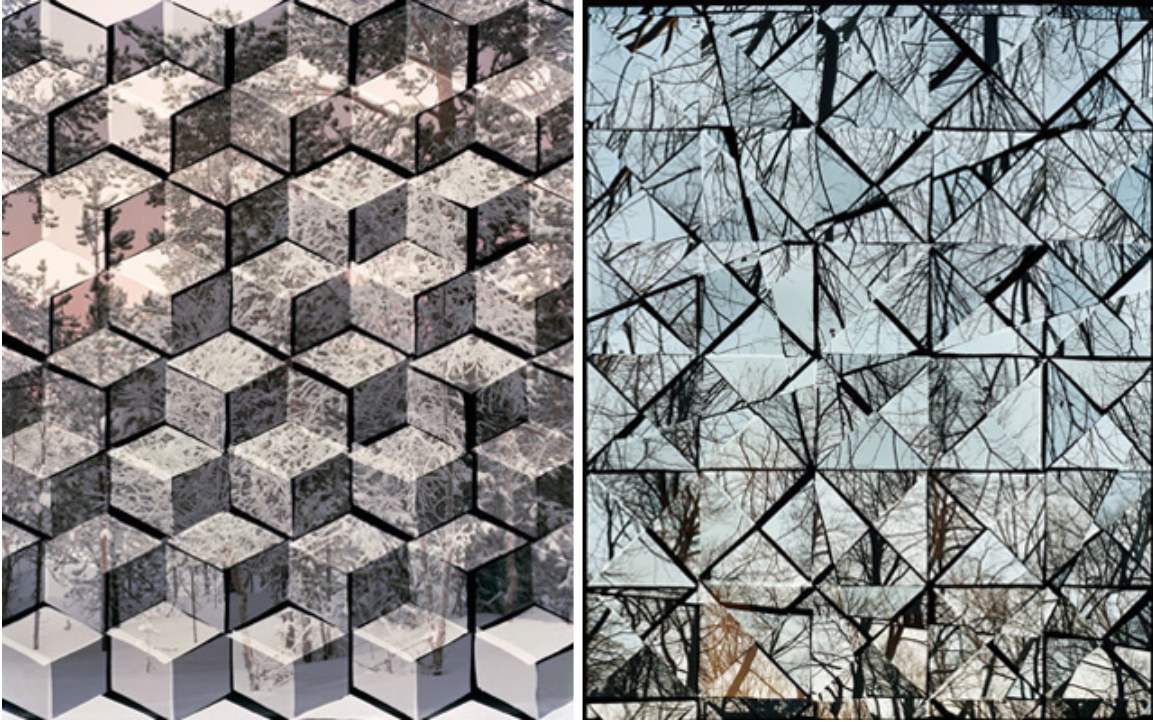
HYPERALLERGIC

Sensitive to Art & its Discontents

GALLERIES

The Unstable Art of Pattern Recognition

by [Claire Voon](#) on July 21, 2014



Hannah Whitaker, "Barcroft Branches" & "Arctic Landscape (Trees)" (both 2014) (via taymourgrahne.com)

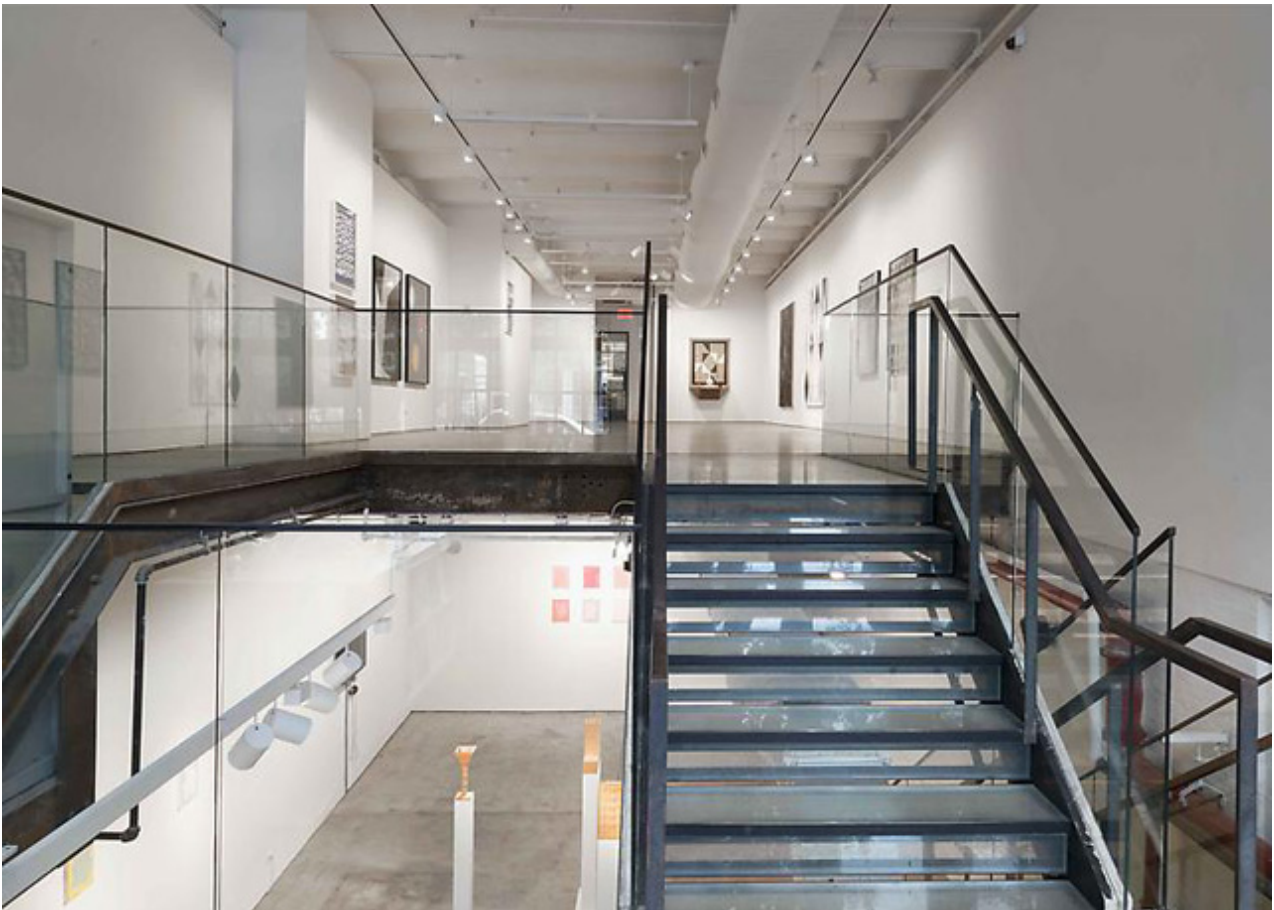
Fixed Unknowns, the [current exhibition](#) on the upper level of Tribeca's Taymour Grahne Gallery, breeds constant questioning of the image before the eyes. The group show featuring works by Hannah Whitaker, Shirana Shabazi, and Kamrooz Aram embraces the unstable, seeking to topple the stasis of the two-dimensional plane.



Hannah Whitaker, "Blue Paper (Albers)" (2014) (via hwhitaker.com) ([click to enlarge](#))

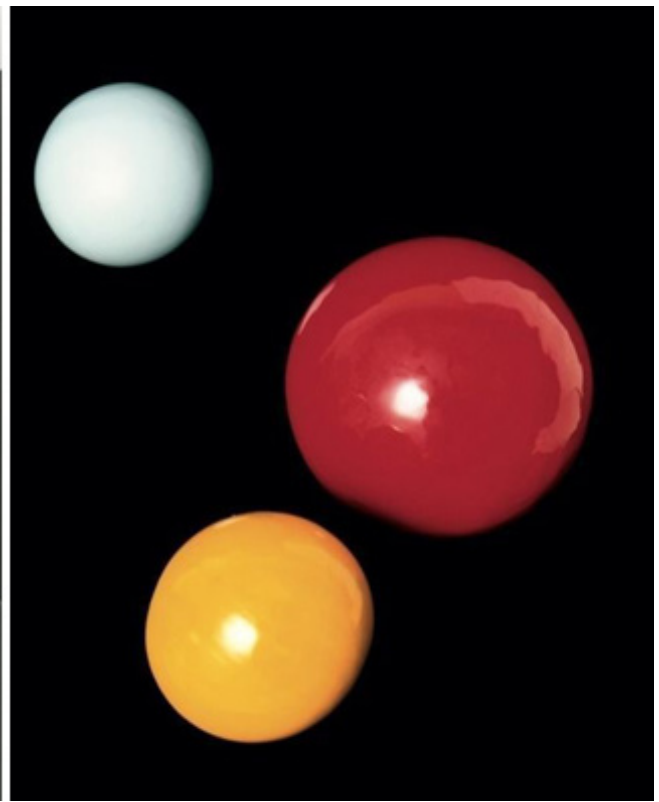
Hannah Whitaker's pairs of prints open the show in arresting displays of geometry and patterns. Hanging one above the other, two of her large-scale works first appear as collages of paper cutouts but upon closer examination reveal themselves as photographs. White polygons create a rhythmic pattern on a blue sheet of paper in "Blue Paper (Albers)" (2014), their overlapping corners seemingly forming an uneven surface, emphasized by the semblance of shadows the sheet itself casts on a background of paneled wood. "Purple Paper" (2014) continues this disruption of the formal surface of the print: a maroon sheet rests on a similar wood-paneled background, its edges curled, scroll-like, to create an even greater perception of space, as if one were looking at a colorful poster glued to a wooden fence.

Another pairing of Whitaker's works on the opposite wall echoes the geometry of her layered paper series, although they reveal themselves more easily as photographs. Tessellations fragment images of branches set against a clear, blue sky and of a snow-covered scene — "Barcroft Branches" and "Arctic landscape (Trees)" (both 2014) — pushing and pulling the surface and manipulating the traditional language of landscape.



Installation view of "Fixed Unknowns" (image via taymourgrahne.com)

Whitaker's play with depth reveals a kinship with Iranian photographer Shirana Shahbazi's images, which, though simple, are the most compelling of the show. Slices of varying shades of gray slide neatly against each other in "[Komposition-03-2011]" (2011), the intersections of the planes having a similar thrusting effect as Whitaker's fragmented photographs — but here, the frame seems like a window to a sculpture, the protrusions made more distant by the shadowy hues. The neighboring "[Komposition-40-2011]" (2011) depicts three enigmatic, colorful orbs — evoking celestial bodies or even billiard balls — floating against a black background to muddle one's perception of depth; it stands as a contrast to the linearity of its gray counterpart, creating a surprising but alluring combination.



Shirana Shahbazi, "[Komposition-03-2011]" and "[Komposition-40-2011]" (both 2011) (via taymourgrahne.com)

The works that deal most with the faculty of display, however, belong to artist Kamrooz Aram, whose oil and wax paintings are more subdued compared to the other works in the show. Upon close scrutiny, however, Aram's paintings reveal chaos in the motion chronicled across the surface of his canvas. Inspired by Persian textiles, his paintings are fundamentally grids decorated with floral motifs, but the artist repeatedly revisits the canvas, smearing, and scratching away paint to create complications within the repetition of a pattern.



Kamrooz Aram, "Ancient Through Modern: Monument to the Sick Man of Europe," (2014), mixed media (via taymourgrahne.com)

Approaching “Untitled (Palimpsest #20)” (2014), which appears as an ominous, monochrome, black painting unveils delicate etchings of lotus-like plants amid broad streaks of paint, giving the impression of a work in flux. Starker and more stable geometry appears in “Ancient Through Modern: Monument to the Sick Man of Europe,” (2014) which hangs alone on the back wall: black-and-white painted triangles appear as a backdrop to three vases arranged neatly on a trapezoidal surface, forming a sculptural, shrine-like piece that finds balance between modern geometry and quiet tradition.

Grouping works in small sets, *Fixed Unknowns* invites a range of investigations into how display affects appreciation. The individual works are easily appealing, but their form and content are subtly augmented by their physical pairings (or deliberate isolation), so that moving through the gallery calls for a continuous re-questioning and re-examining of the works.



“Fixed Unknowns” installation view with all three works by Kamrooz Aram

[Fixed Unknowns](#), featuring the work of Kamrooz Aram, Shirana Shahbazi, and Hannah Whitaker and curated by Ava Ansari and Molly Kleiman, continues at Taymour Grahne Gallery (157 Hudson Street, Tribeca, Manhattan) until September 6.