

# TAMARA ZAHAYKEVICH ZAHAYKEVICH

by David Rhodes

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One enters Tamara Zahaykevich's exhibition on a small ramp that leads down to a set of differently sized rooms. It is a dynamic space and requires a thoughtfulness that is repaid: encountering these interconnected rooms, one is encouraged to take stock of their relational qualities and the particular proportion of each room to its neighbor. Tamara Zahaykevich has installed a number of sculptures—several wall-mounted and one freestanding—that are enhanced by the astuteness of their placement. *flag for change* (2014), only 4 and 3/4 inches, has an entire wall to itself, a wall that is adjacent to *Whole Black* (2015), a much larger work, providing a leap in scale. Both are equally present, and as one soon learns, all of Zahaykevich's pieces hold their space successfully.

The sculptures are animated by a visual conundrum. Zahaykevich's painted objects draw on painting's efficacy at creating fictive space while utilizing a physical construction of irregular and specific shape. An additional complexity arises when one considers the historical residue of the (often found) materials Zahaykevich uses to build her work. Paper, Styrofoam, old painting palettes; such materials are archived until the moment arrives when their use is formally and conceptually appropriate. The frugality and modesty, which are both implied and adhered to, eschew monumental and domineering solutions. The physical nature of the work is leavened by intricate surface maneuvers and markings.

Foam board is often cut and glued or taped to incrementally make an exoskeleton, as in *Ate Szechuan Peppercorns* (2015). Here, the subsequent painted and shellacked surface doesn't follow the surface contours except as a support. The overlapping discs of blues, reds, grays, and violets appear as a shifting and expanding space and also, from close proximity, interlock like patches or scales. This arational combination is one of the work's great strengths, allowing for surprise and openness. One engages in a kind of pleasurable visual sleuthing that incorporates a dose of the uncanny to keep things from settling one way or the other, thus retaining a productive ambiguity where seduction meets subtle provocation. There is a resourcefulness in both the crafting and construction, as well as in the image, which is simultaneously cohesive in an abstract sense while also making reference playfully and obliquely to the peppercorns of the

work's title. The work recalls Richard Tuttle and Thomas Nozkowski, though Zahaykevich is following an entirely different groove.

In the back room, *Cultural Body* (2014) is freestanding, like a drum or column. Lopsided concentric rings cover the work in a chromatic range and geometric inventiveness that brings to mind the great Sonia Delaunay. There is something associative in any vertical rounded shape that could be a substitute or identification with our own physical presence. And, come to think of it, some of the wall-based works are somewhat torso-like too. But this connection is undermined by the lightness of the works, which speak of volume rather than mass, even when carved from solid material like Styrofoam and Ready Patch.

One suspects that the process of making leads unpredictably to the “rightness” that each piece possess visually. This includes a degree of “wrongness” or awkwardness that balances inexplicably, making the sculptures’ cohesion more interesting and unexpected. It is this process that ends up making Zahaykevich’s work so singular.



Tamara Zahaykevich, *Cultural Body* (2014). Foam board and acrylic paint. Courtesy the artist and Kansas Gallery, New York.

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