

Landi, Ann, *Paul Pascarella*, *ArtNews*, June 2014

David Richard  
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Paul Pascarella's 16 recent works call to mind several venerable traditions: Japanese screen painting, Asian landscape in general, and Abstract Expressionism, especially of the spontaneous Pollock drip school. Divided into triptychs, the six large paintings here – the biggest 60 by 90 inches – deftly incorporated bits of collage along with spatters and ripples of paint, and they conveyed enough gestural ebullience to suggest the sheer joy of their making. In *Asia* (2013) and *Imaginary Beings* (2014), in particular, there are hints of figuration and suggestions of plant and animal life that stop short of literal-minded depictions of actual anatomies. *Dance* (2013) conjures both a parade of Chinese paper dragons and a swirl of sashaying geishas. It's when Pascarella veers into territory way too reminiscent of Pollock, in both palette and gestures, that his airy sense of space and command of color and medium begin to feel tired. This is as true in the big paintings like *New Moon 3* (2010) as it is in smaller works such as *New Moon 4* (2011). The diminutive 16-by-12-inch panels that carry the most punch – such as *Kasahara* and *Beach* (both 2012) – succeed because they've been injected with enough air to let the viewer's imagination roam (and roam away from the artist's 1950s antecedents).

All the paintings could have benefitted from a different configuration in the gallery; they were basically deployed in an L-shape, forcing the viewer to round a corner in a way that didn't allow the smaller and larger works to play off each other. But no matter how they are seen, Pascarella's canvases at their best have a sophistication and energy that are as timeless as they are seductive.

-Ann Landi



Paul Pascarella, *Dance* (triptych), 2013  
acrylic, oil stick, collage on panel  
48 x 72 inches