

# The New Criterion

Art May 2018

## Gallery chronicle

by [James Panero](#)

*“James Little: Slants and White Paintings” at June Kelly Gallery*



*James Little, Apache, 2017, Oil on stained linen, June Kelly Gallery*

There is nothing embalmed in James Little’s use of wax. A master of the volatile medium of encaustic, Little creates living, breathing abstractions of oil and wax on canvas. Now at June Kelly Gallery, he returns to the diagonal, with interlocking stripes arranged in vertical bands. The forms have a dynamic, rotational quality, enhanced by an immersive sense for color. The satin-like wax surfaces, brushed clean, serve as tactile skin.

Framed by two large abstractions, *Democratic Experiment* (2017) and *Temporary Fixation* (2018), one green and one red, the exhibition is interspersed with smaller compositions. On one wall, diagonals of a similar but smaller design draw viewers in with surface variation. Raw pigment replaces oil and wax for a more aqueous finish. On the opposite wall, Little surprises with abstractions on stained linen of a very different feel. Here, white screens of paint are punctuated by ovals. The mysterious, tessellated forms act as small windows onto deeper layers of ovals and colors. Stencils? Masks? Resists? Unlike the perfected surfaces of Little’s diagonals, these roughened appearances invite speculation as to their manufacture, hinting at, but not revealing, their particular processes of creation.