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Art in Review

Keegan Monaghan

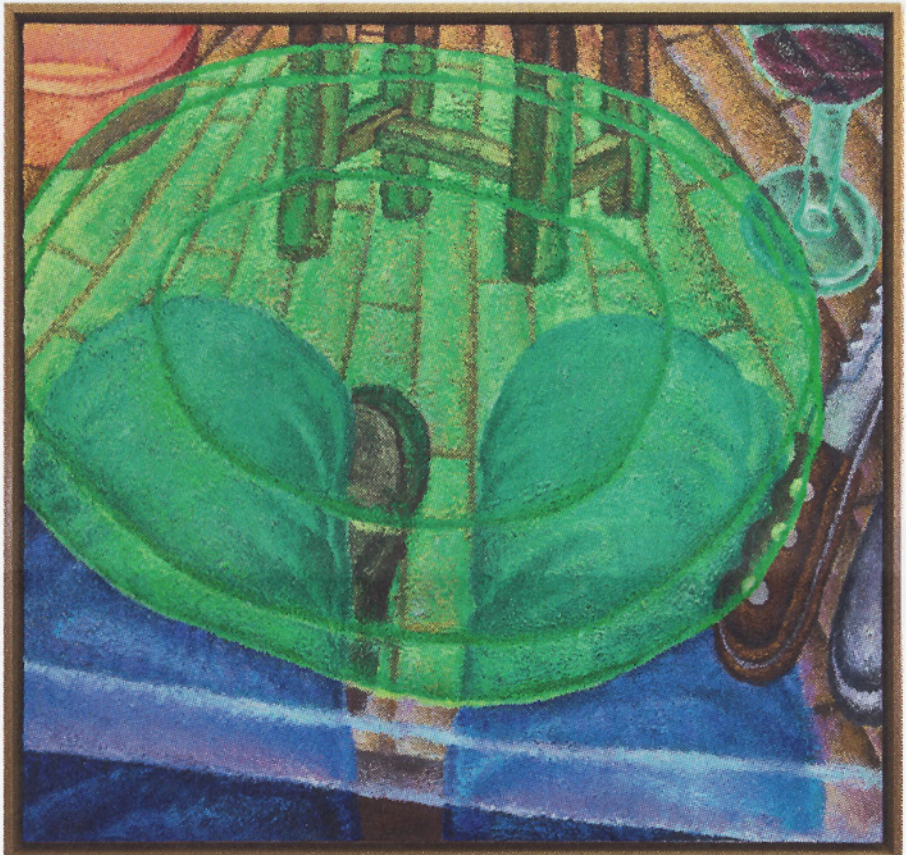
'You Decide to Take a Walk'

On Stellar Rays
1 Rivington Street,
Lower East Side
Through Aug. 12

With their thick crusts of oil paint, suspenseful noirish settings and liberal borrowings from his hometown heroes the Chicago Imagists, Keegan Monaghan's paintings initially appear freighted in so many ways. Give them time, though, and they lighten up, revealing nuanced colors and whimsical musings on perception.

The best paintings bring Mr. Monaghan's own generational perspective (he was born in 1986) to bear on the Imagists' legacy, dropping their rubbery and pugnacious figures into narratives of contemporary surveillance and voyeurism. In "My Place," he takes us inside a plush orange living room with two stereoscopic portholes; it might be a brain or the interior of a virtual reality headset, or a purposeful confusion of those subjects.

And in "Introspection," he conjures an unexpectedly beautiful moment of transparency; painted from the perspective of



COURTESY OF THE ARTIST AND ON STELLAR RAYS

Keegan Monaghan's painting "Introspection" (2016).

a seated figure who is looking down at his denim-clad thighs through a sheer green plate on a glass table. The painting's gristly surface somehow enhances the crystalline effect. Elsewhere (in the nocturnal scene "The Sign Post"), the same rough texture diffuses the red lights of

a speeding police car, which cast a faint glow on the shoe of a fleeing person in the lower right corner. Here Mr. Monaghan's fully loaded brush approaches, but ultimately shies away from, some equally heavy subject matter.

KAREN ROSENBERG