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HENNI ALFTAN

by Johanna Fateman

In this Paris-based Finnish painter's magnetic début at the Karma gallery, painterly wit comes at no cost to beauty. The subjects of these nineteen canvases—clever cropped views, alternately fuzzy and crisp—include haircuts, lonely interiors, clothing, and human figures, after a fashion. The people who appear in Alftan's figurative works are anonymous, with their backs turned and their body parts rendered as flattened shapes. In "Hands Behind His Back," the artist is far more attentive to an expanse of black sweater, in which careful zigzagging lines of raised paint closely mimic the texture of knitwear, than to the peach-gold hands themselves. The malleability of oil paint is also evident in the verdant blurred landscape of "English Garden." Rain through a window is represented by rhythmic Ab Ex-like white drips, a gorgeous collapsing of pictorial foreground and physical surface.