

ARTFORUM

PICKS

Nathlie Provosty

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AUTHOR: CHLOÉ ROSSETTI

Nathlie Provosty's intimate works on paper, linen, and sheepskin, on view in her debut solo New York exhibition, are as much a meditation on the lineage of materials as they are a visually compelling investigation into the history of recurring geometric forms. In eight diptychs of walnut ink on tea-stained paper, titled *A Week and Its Seven Days: The Merging of Reason and Optical Intuition* (all works 2012), Provosty boldly juxtaposes orderly images—all on the left-hand sides of the pairs—with freeform ones on the right. The left-hand semicircles, squares, and rectangles evoke the illuminated archways and windows rendered in a medieval book of hours, while the right-hand images, unsettlingly unstructured, allude to their opposite—some darker, uncontainable, unilluminated side of human nature. The pairings, perhaps because of their labor-intensive, handmade meticulousness, indeed have a mortal—one might say susceptible—quality, as though one were looking at CT scans of the brain before and after surgery, or X-rays of the left and right sides of the body: one side injured, the other safe.

A book of hours is an illuminated, Christian devotional text. The parchment, filled with corporeal content, such as the Office of the Dead—a prayer cycle for the repose of the soul of the deceased—and meditations on the Passion of the Christ, was often made of calf, sheep, or goat skin. Provosty's works on sheepskin, such as *After Angelico*, are painted, exquisitely, on the vulnerable inside of the skin, replacing gory viscera with impassioned yet cerebral illustration, recapitulating old forms and techniques to articulate an at once age-old and contemporary desire to connect disparate parts into a tangible, approachable whole.