

ARTSY

## How an Artist's Foggy Recollections Become Ghostly Reconstructions of the Past



ARTSY EDITORIAL

OCTOBER 31, 2014

Clare Grill, a prolific painter whose multilayered and intimate work has for the majority of her career, been wound up in the subjects of domesticity and the home, starts nearly every painting with a specific object or scene in mind. Often the original figure is lost in her carefully wrought fabric-and-oil constructions, but its after-image—and, perhaps more importantly, the emotional tug that led Grill to it in the first place—remains.

Grill, whose new solo show “Mary, Mary” is currently on view at Diane Rosenstein Fine Art, has begun to work with larger canvases in recent years. The New York-based artist distresses and wears down the paintings throughout her process, creating work she says is “as much scraping away and lifting” fabric and paint as it is piling it on.

The erosion of these layers is crucial to Grill's ghostly and at times melancholy work, which blends a reverence for physical craft and folk art with distinctly modern modes of abstraction. Paintings such as *Peach* (2014) and *Flukes* (2014), nostalgic and mysterious, only faintly point to the contours of their subjects; awash with muted tones and vaguely



# Diane Rosenstein Fine Art

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cubist shapes, they have the feel of precious handmade objects.

The “Sampler” series, meanwhile, homes in on its influences more directly. Inspired by individual needlework samplers from the turn of the century and named after the girls who made them, the “Sampler” paintings are a jumble of symbols and signs, gently suggested portraits, and translations of their subjects’ inner lives.

These fraught objects—needlepoint being a craft that is both comfortingly domestic and charged with gender-specific associations—tread on familiar territory for Grill, who delights in complicated depictions of femininity.

“Mary, Mary” takes its name, in part, from Grill’s family; female relatives passed the name down through generations, grandmother to mother. “There is a blurriness to memories and to someone else’s past,” says Grill. “You can hear about it, but it’s altered. It’s weathered.”

Her paintings seek the same foggy recollections—ideas rooted in chillier traditions or histories but made real in their individual reconstructions.

—Molly Osberg

