

HESSE FLATOW

Tatum, Charlie. "Critics' Picks, Kevin Ford, Version Version at Tops Gallery." *ARTFORUM*. Online. January 2019.

ARTFORUM



Kevin Ford, *Memphisish Vase*, 2017, acrylic on canvas mounted on panel, 9 x 12".

MEMPHIS **Kevin Ford**

TOPS GALLERY
400 South Front Memphis basement
December 7, 2018–January 25, 2019



Afterimages are the bright lights or colors that remain in one's field of vision after the original image is no longer present. With their combinations of soft lines and harsh hues, Kevin Ford's airbrushed paintings seem to stick to one's retina. In his show "Version Version," Ford depicts Pop-like abstractions of people, animals, and objects in lurid swaths of color—magenta, safety yellow, turquoise. In *Banana* and *Journal*, both 2017, the titular subjects fade in and out of view against their glowing neon backgrounds.

Ford's use of acrylics feels distinctly digital, as if the compositions were made in Microsoft Paint—and there's humor in translating that crude, obsolete medium into fine art. Comedic, too, are the works' titles: *Uncut Amputee*, 2018, shows a limbless statue of a torso with a prominent uncircumcised penis; *Memphisish Vase*, 2017, and other painted vessels playfully refer to both the gallery's location and the postmodern design group. In *Oh No*, 2018, a woman holds her hands up to her face, her grief, anxiety, or embarrassment undercut by the painting's exuberant colors.

Many of Ford's paintings (and graphite drawings also on view) look to art history, taking on the staid categories of the still life—a favorite subject of seventeenth-century Dutch artists, now infused with searing pinks, greens, oranges, and yellows—and the nude, with figures posed as if they were classical statuary or, as in *Uncut Amputee*, with statues or artifacts as subjects themselves. Ford blends the past and the present to examine the history not only of things but also of how we perceive them.

— Charlie Tatum