

February's First Saturday event celebrates abstract painting and sculpture by, Joe Nolan

In Ancient Rome, February was a time for celebrating the city's wolf-suckled founders Romulus and Remus. Lupercalia was a three-day pastoral festival that featured naked men chasing after women and whacking them with shaggy goat thongs. History! Sure beats the hell out of Valentine's Day, amirite? Thankfully, the February Art Crawl won't commodify your relationship or condemn your loneliness. And the open-ended Arcade seems custom-made for streakers! It's also where you're likely to find the best abstract painting show on a night that's brimming with them.

Jane Fox Hipple's paintings at **Coop** are rough, minimal and abstract, and often feature a single shade of color matched with white. This dearth of elements limits the subjects Hipple might paint, but she seems quite happy making work that demonstrates and points only to itself: These are paintings about painting. Hipple employs oddball titles like "Do again" and "As such no such allegory." The titles add to the whimsical feel of the work, extinguishing a hunt for meaning and encouraging the pleasures of pure seeing instead. If you love painting, what else could you want? Personally, I love painting, and from what I've seen in various online galleries, Hipple's black fields, white dots, stark dashes and textured rectangles could be the best thing at the Art Crawl this Saturday night.



Jane Fox Hipple at Coop Gallery

As boiled-down as Hipple's work is, **Christopher Roberson's** multimedia sculptures at **40AU** are more elemental. In his latest work, the artist employs colored chains, organic textures and the almost iconic use of a simple semicircle shape to realize a formally fetching aesthetic that ranges from weird to wacky, novel to nostalgic. **Pound for Pound** spoofs sports with sculptures of concrete and rubber that achieve fuzzy-goopy organic textures that are as alien as they are inviting. I hope Roberson also brings along some of his monochrome drawings, which seem to be both studies for his sculptures and works that speak for themselves.

Artist **Philippe Pirrip** wears a lot of hats. His Facebook page says he's an intern at The Frist, a delivery driver for Nashville Arts magazine and a "gallery whore" at **Blend Studio** — the space in The Arcade that's hosting an Art Crawl reception celebrating Pirrip's one-man show. In his artist statement, Pirrip offers a quote from philosopher/novelist Georges Bataille. The quote finds the "Story of the Eye" author arguing form and meaning at a universal scale, and also at the level of the lowliest spider. Pirrip, who has named his exhibit **Bataille and Spider**, is a painter and photographer, but he's also built installations and shot videos. Given his multimedia tendencies, I'm not sure what to expect from this exhibition, but his latest painting series might have taken its hue from Bataille's "Blue of Noon."

Along Fifth Avenue, February takes a decidedly feminine turn, finding three exhibitions by women artists opening on Saturday night. **Jane Braddock's Liberated While Living** is the artist's latest series of text-filled paintings, and gallery-goers who missed the exhibition's debut at Belmont last fall will get a second chance to see it at **The Arts Company** this month. Braddock's best works feature phrases that speak to perception. These seem to comment directly on a viewer's gaze, and pieces like "This has nothing to do with thinking" might catch over-intellectualizing crawlers off guard.

At **Rymer Gallery**, two artists tackle relationships — with other people and with ourselves. **L.A. Bachman's Give and Take: The Joys and Compromises of Intimacy** explores the things we talk about — and the things we leave out — when we talk with our friends, lovers, parents and children. As her title implies, **Give** is about balance — aesthetic as well as amorous. **Susan Maakestad's** wide-open vistas speak to the disembodied perceptions of the security camera images the artist uses as her jumping-off point. These abstracted landscapes look like scenes out of the apocalyptic History Channel show *Life After People*, but while even her best scenes are unpopulated, they tingle with feeling and consciousness.

The three-woman show at **Tinney Contemporary** features soft palettes and big paintings. **Martica Griffin's** mixed-media canvases are built up in layers of abstract patterns, while **Mary Long's** encaustic panels are ordered and sedate. But it's likely that **Lisa Weiss** will steal this show with her large, textured panels that speak to architecture as much as they speak to painting.

Keep crawling, crawlers.