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'I Am the Magic Hand' and Antony: 'The Cut'

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Sikkema Jenkins & Company

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Sometimes talent is concentrated, sometimes it spans multiple mediums. That of Antony, singer-songwriter and leading light of the musical group Antony and the Johnsons, is the spanning kind. He is also a serious visual artist. His first solo show in New York follows exhibitions in Los Angeles and London, and introduces a sensibility that is consistent with his heart-rending songs and warbling delivery: fragile, falling apart but surviving, even defiant. Not surprising, he is still finding himself, swerving between an expressionistic abstraction and a romantic Minimalism that is very much of the moment.

Antony works with notable physical confidence and ease and is especially adept at multimedia collages that use found papers and images, involve as much destruction as construction and combine varying degrees of drawing and painting. "Lavender Ghost," with its jagged shape and surface, is a good example of the elegant, fragmentlike *mélanges* that result. Stronger still is "Black Parts," a seemingly irrational mosaic of black tones cut mostly from photographs and held together with tape. There are moments of bad M.F.A. installation art like "Creativity." "Six," which consists of six lengths of wood, each encased in a soft white fabric, connects clearly to early 1970s Post Minimalism yet doesn't seem derivative.

"I Am the Magic Hand," a group exhibition of recent work by the painters Allison Katz, Carmelle Safdie, Lisa Milroy, Jane Corrigan and Paula Wilson, occupies more space less densely. Organized by the painter Josephine Halvorson, it takes its title from a 1937 photograph by John Gutmann of a phrase scrawled in chalk on a wall that's also in the show. But in most cases the hands here are less genuinely magical than searching and promising. Nearly all the works exceed the physical boundaries of painting in some way, most impressively Ms. Wilson's exuberant "Between Two," a large and elaborate conflation of painting, collage, relief and printmaking that depicts two abutting brick facades, and much else. Painting slightly cartoonish scenes of human encounters in oil on small canvases, only Ms. Corrigan is unconcerned with the traditional boundaries of the medium.