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Space & Specters: From Calvino to Tarantino

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A work by Daniel Wiener at Frosch & Portmann.

A couple group shows currently on view on the Lower East Side are winsome and diverting in different ways, and they transport their viewers into very different, indeed differently distant realms.

Inspired by Italo Calvino's *Cosmicomics*, the eponymously titled exhibit at **Frosch & Portmann**, curated by gallery artist Vicki Sher, does a fine job of paying homage to the Italian author's meanderingly, pensively, insouciantly exploratory narrative mode, not least insofar as the show presents a visual sphere that is both cosmic, at times almost blatantly so, and comical. A work by Katherine Bradford on handmade paper, for example, features one of her trademark caped superheroes in flight, a swath of red along the work's bottom register suggesting that the character's point of departure was Mars, perhaps, or maybe some imagined lava pit on Venus. Fantastically flying person notwithstanding, Bradford's piece is one of the show's grounding elements, so to speak, given its figurative frankness, and one might say it provides the viewer with a protagonist-cum-navigational companion while confronting the bizarreness of David Finn's *Weight*, which reads a bit like a crazily appendaged space rover taken over by a cast of cartoon characters, or Daniel Wiener's *We Go To Their Faltering*, a wall sculpture that would look like an extraterrestrial monster even in the absence of the show's operative context. So, too, would Jay Henderson's *Roof*, and his *Disk* would be of lunar suggestivity anyway, not unlike Ye Qin Zhu's series of lumpily preservational, delightfully mixed-media wax sculptures in the window, which look like a researcher's trove of outer-space-culled seedballs—in which the 'seeds' include spiders, flies, pieces of fruit and art supplies. Sher has included a piece of her own in the show as well, a mixed-media work on paper called *The Little Prince*, a spare composition featuring a splotchily blotted, long-limbed form that seems to tiptoe along moments after alighting upon some far-flung surface—while cosmic whatevers dangle daintily and zip along dashingly throughout a fathomless galactic canopy.