

GALLERIES

# At Kathryn Schultz Gallery, playful pops of comfort and delight

By **Cate McQuaid** Globe Correspondent, Updated January 15, 2020, 1:22 p.m.



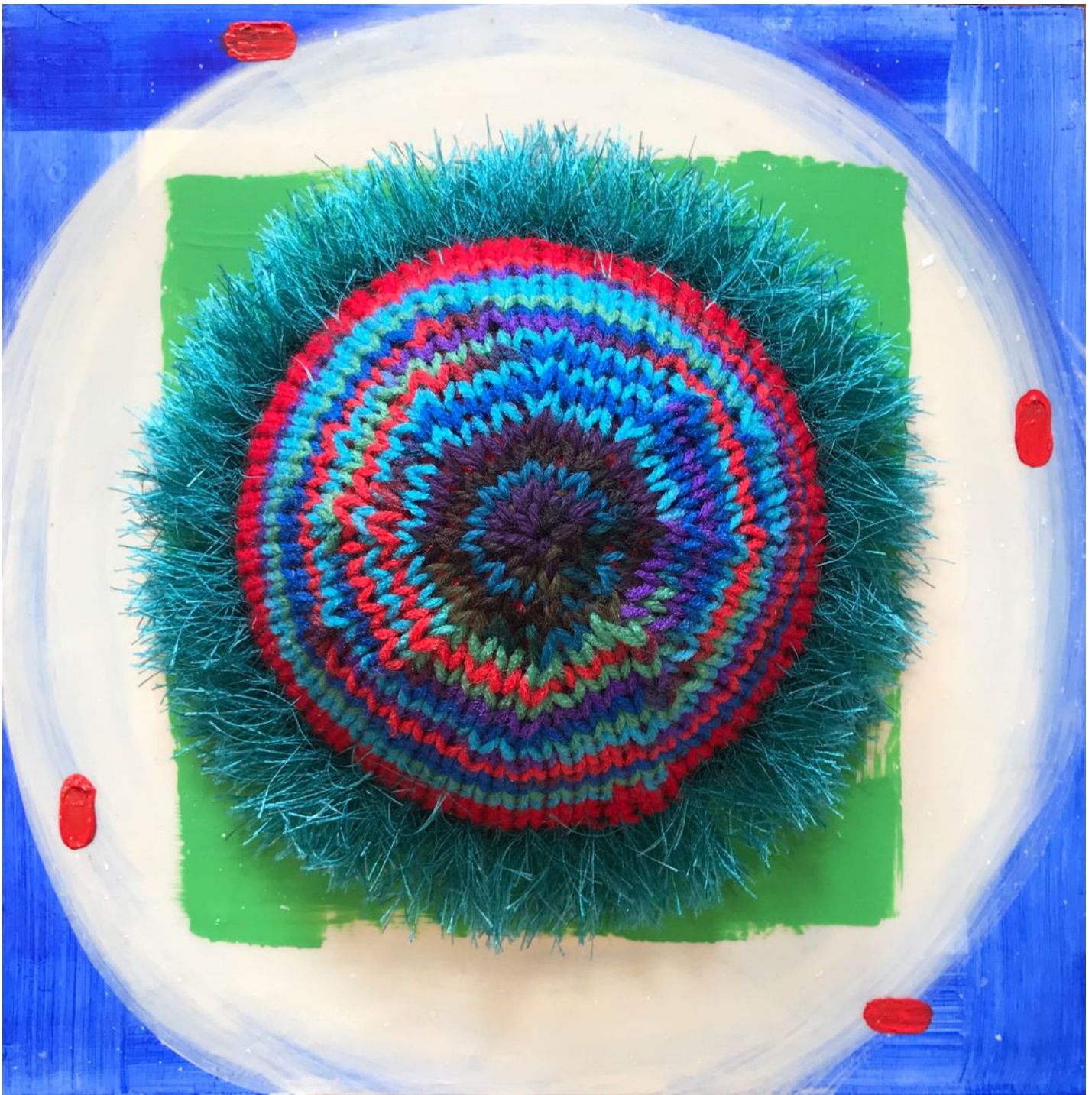
Valérie Gobeil's "Horizon line" is tufted like carpets. CAMBRIDGE ART ASSOCIATION (CUSTOM CREDIT)/CAMBRIDGE ART ASSOCIATION

“Soft Shoulder” a vibrantly goofy show at Cambridge Art Association’s Kathryn Schultz Gallery, is as comforting as it is amusing. This seems to be guest curator Cathleen Daley’s wheelhouse; it’s a tonic aesthetic of Day-Glo colors and touchable texture we’ve seen before at Room 83 Spring, the Watertown gallery Daley co-founded.

The open-ended theme — think of an unpaved edge along a road, or the support of a shoulder to cry on — evokes transitions, liminal space, and the body. The abstract works here exude a DIY-style humility and awkwardness. This is a gallery full of wallflowers at a school dance, arriving at the glorious realization that they will never fit in, and damn it, they don’t want to.

I’m not sure where the horizon line is in “Horizon line,” Valérie Gobeil’s textile piece. It’s tufted like carpets but insists that it’s a painting. Biomorph shapes scoop and poke around each other. Some are striped, some are gridded; one looks like a giant finger with a swirly, fuchsia fingernail. Tangy tones and a cartoony edge recall Elizabeth Murray paintings, but this is homey with yarn.

Like “Horizon line,” much of the work in “Soft Shoulder” slides between genres. Marta Kaemmer’s playful installation of domes on painted panels — part-bullseye, part eyeball, part ski cap — throws sculpture into the mix with painting and fiber art. “Sighting” is a striped knit with a turquoise fringe; “Under boob” is a rosy hemisphere reined in with a netted sling. They are at once broad jokes and contemplative mandalas, bright and touchable as toys.



Marta Kaemmer created a series of domes on painted panels, including "Sighting." CAMBRIDGE ART ASSOCIATION (CUSTOM CREDIT)/CAMBRIDGE ART ASSOCIATION

In Samantha Fields's audacious, frouffy "Venus of Ramsdale," pink ruffles froth around several porcelain legs shaped like those of an elegant end table, which stand on a mirror in a kiddie pool, so you can look up the skirt. Tassels and a bubblegum-pink wig finish off the piece. Fields throws pretty stones at fusty old hierarchies favoring clean lines over ornamentation, fine art over decorative art.

There is plenty of rigor in “Soft Shoulder,” but it doesn’t get in the way of the sheer pleasure of art that’s tactile, bright, and merrily subversive.

## **SOFT SHOULDER**

*At Kathryn Schultz Gallery, Cambridge Art Association, 25 Lowell St., Cambridge, through Feb. 1. 617-876-0246, [www.cambridgeart.org](http://www.cambridgeart.org)*



Three views of Samantha Fields's "Venus of Ramsdale." CAMBRIDGE ART ASSOCIATION (CUSTOM CREDIT)/CAMBRIDGE ART ASSOCIATION

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