

*The T List*

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## Glimpses of New York, Painted by Martha Diamond



From left: Martha Diamond's "Facade 1982" (1981-82) and "Orange Light" (1983). Courtesy of the artist and Magenta Plains

As the poet Bill Berkson once wrote, [Martha Diamond](#), who is known for her indelible New York cityscapes rendered in thick, gestural brush strokes and bold, contrasting colors, “builds edifices that bring citified chaos into focus as character, condensing the rush and stabilizing it as an emblem.” Next week sees the opening of a new show, at Magenta Plains gallery on Manhattan’s Lower East Side, that explores the depths of Diamond’s affinity for these structures. Culled from pieces completed in the ’80s, a pivotal decade for the artist that culminated in her work appearing in the 1989 Whitney Biennial, the six large-scale oil paintings to go on view share a palette of muted grays, midnight blues, glowing yellows and burnt scarlets — shades encountered on a lonely stroll at night, or thanks to a peek through the blinds after dark. (A number of preparatory studies on Masonite will also be on display.) Having lived and worked on the Bowery since 1969, Diamond indeed draws on scenes from her own walks through the city, depicting grids of buttry windows (as in “Moonlight/City View #2,” 1981) or stacks of green fence screens on identical balconies (“Untitled 11,” 1987). She also paints with her nondominant hand, which gives her canvases their intimate, figurative quality. They brood, slump and occasionally menace, and yet they’re also solitary and anonymous — in other words, the works themselves are true city dwellers. More than a particular place, says Olivia Smith, the gallery’s director, they “represent a memory of something that we all recognize.” For this New Yorker, whose city has felt all but unrecognizable these past 10 months, it’s a welcomed remembrance. *“Martha Diamond: 1980-1989” is on view from Jan. 13 through Feb. 17 at Magenta Plains, 94 Allen Street, New York City, [magentaplains.com](http://magentaplains.com).*