ALEX KWARTLER

Alex Kwartler's paintings subtly dismantle the ordinary symbols and signs that permeate our everyday lives; collapsing the transcendental and everyday onto the painted surface. A varied lexicon of codified signs and signifiers such as pennies, Powerball, Tums, tin cans, and telephone receivers dot Kwartler's paintings. These quotidian and anachronistic items of pure utility become iconographic against Kwartler's ground of heavily processed expressionist gestures. Thoughtful and incisive, he deconstructs painterly space and visual meaning with sharp wit and humor.

Alex Kwartler received his MFA from Rutgers University, New Brunswick, NJ and his BFA from The Cooper Union, New York, NY. Kwartler has mounted three solo exhibitions at Magenta Plains. He has exhibited his work at The Green Gallery, Milwaukee, WI; 47 Canal, New York, NY; Mana Contemporary, Jersey City, NJ; Ceysson & Bénétière, New York, NY; Nathalie Karg Gallery, New York, NY; MoMA PS 1 Contemporary Art Center, New York, NY; Mana Contemporary, Jersey City, NJ; White Columns, New York, NY; Bortolami Gallery, New York, NY; Mitchell-Innes & Nash, New York, NY; Martos Gallery, New York, NY; Casey Kaplan, New York; NY; Petzel Gallery, New York, NY; and Wallspace, New York, NY. His exhibitions have been reviewed in The New York Times, The New Yorker, Frieze, Artforum and Art in America. Kwartler's paintings were featured in "Painting Abstraction" edited by Bob Nickas and published by Phaidon Press. Kwartler was artist-in-residence at The Chinati Foundation in Marfa, TX in Spring 2017.

Born in 1979, New York, NY
Lives and works in New York, NY

Two Coats of Paint
June 22, 2018

Two Coats of Paint

Alex Kwartler: Tenuous survivalism

Alex Kwartler, installation view at Magenta Plains

Contributed by Sharon Butler / In ﷺSnowflake,ﷺ Alex Kwartlerﷺs recent show at Magenta Plains, small-scale paintings captured the desultory emotional tenor of 2017. Compared with his **earlier exhibitions**, which featured a lively, large-scale abstractions alongside smaller black pictograph-like images and explored notions about surface and spontaneity, the work on view this year appears slow, dark, and extremely deliberate.

Alex Kwartler, Snowflake (To the Harbormaster, for ML), 2018, oil and pumice on canvas, 14 x 11 inches

The title of the show references an epithet, originally hurled at coddled millennials, that Trump trolls adopted to level at anyone deemed too sensitive—primarily liberals—during the 2016 presidential campaign. Many of the paintings in the show feature kaleidoscope-like shapes, formed from combining outline images of people carrying bags and rolling suitcases (“schleppers”). Dark gray outlines against cool white fields, both with matte surfaces, absorb light rather than giving anything back. The schleppers seem imprinted on the surface rather than brushed, and together the figures form crude snowflake-like forms with empty star or badge shapes in the center of the canvases.

Alex Kwartler, Alex Kwartler, Penny III, 2018, oil on canvas, 24 x 20 inches

Kwartler has adopted a range of different approaches for the current work. Several pieces are made on canvasboard and displayed behind glass in black wooden frames, a strategy more commonly used for photographs than painting. By arraying the paintings in this way, Kwartler creates distance from the artist's touch and imparts a sense that they are valued relics from the past. Two of the paintings, *Celebration! (After Childe Hassam)*and *Apotheosis (with tuna)*, have metallic disks from the tops of tuna cans embedded in them, with the 2020 sell-by date clearly stamped on their surfaces. In another untitled painting, a dense dark swirl, like a somber version of the background from a sixties psychedelic poster or the *Time Tunnel* vortex, is joined by a forlorn piece of popcorn, resting inside the glass at the bottom of the frame.

Alex Kwartler

Two more traditional paintings, *Penny II* and *Penny III*, feature white-on-white and grey-on-grey images of Lincoln pennies, dated 2016, that seem to be falling in the air as if during a coin toss. The close-neutral palettes are reminiscent of **Luc Tuymans' early still life and figure paintings**. Several paintings, black-and-white like the images of the schleppers, present traditional (but melting) snowflake images crafted with a gritty combination of dark grey oil paint and pumice, evoking snow not at the beginning of the storm when it creates a magical landscape, but rather several weeks in, after the bright white becomes speckled with ash and soot.

In their deft and knowing dreariness, Kwartler's new paintings challenge viewers to confront ugly, sad reality. They are poems about the delicate object that has survived, but just barely.

The New York Times
June 15, 2018

The New York Times

What to See in New York Art Galleries This Week

Nathaniel Robinson and Alex Kwartler

Through Sunday. Magenta Plains, 94 Allen Street, Manhattan; 917-388-2464, magentaplains.com.

What's so fascinating about virtuosic reproductions of everyday objects we don't care much about in the first place? The seven fiberglass-reinforced gypsum cement sculptures composing Nathaniel Robinson's "No One's Things," one of two excellent solo shows running concurrently at Magenta Plains, capture the minute buckles and crinkles of crushed paper cups, an umbrella canopy, and a miniature blue tent with astonishing fidelity. But their fun house scale — cups, umbrella, and all are each about the size of an ottoman — and slightly abstracted color are enough to put them into a strange virtual territory somewhere between trompe l'oeil and the uncanny valley. They're like demonstration models of synthetic American abundance.

Downstairs, the diffident, intensely self-conscious paintings of Alex Kwartler's "Snowflake" are named after poems by Frank O'Hara and Emily Dickinson, among others, but the poet they made me think of was A.R. Ammons. Whether he's painting wavering vortexes of nauseous nocturnal rainbows, grayscale pennies falling through nothingness, or a gritty, soot-colored snowflake, textured with crushed pumice, that fills its little canvas, Mr. Kwartler rigorously strips away every extraneous mark and gesture until he's left with only a naked, nearly colorless thought. But what this reveals, particularly in the snowflake paintings, is an evanescent beauty very much like the delicate shapes that pass through ocean foam. *WILL HEINRICH*

Installation view of Alex Kwartler's "Snowflake" paintings at Magenta Plains. Magenta Plains

ALEXIS ROCKMAN

Alexis Rockman is an artist and environmental activist who began making paintings and works on paper to build environmental awareness in the mid-1980s. Embarking on expeditions to distant locations like Antarctica and Madagascar in the company of professional naturalists, his work tells stories of natural histories confronting the challenging future we face of the biodiversity crisis, global warming, and genetic engineering.

Notable solo museum exhibitions include Alexis Rockman: *Manifest Destiny* at the Brooklyn Museum (2004), which traveled to the Wexner Center for the Arts (2004) and the Rhode Island School of Design (2005). In 2010, the Smithsonian American Art Museum organized Alexis Rockman: *A Fable for Tomorrow*, a major survey of his paintings and works on paper which toured to The Wexner Center for the Arts. In 2013, The Drawing Center mounted *Drawings from Life of Pi*, featuring the artist's collaboration with Ang Lee on the award-winning film *Life of Pi* (2012). His series of seventy-six New Mexico field drawings was included in Future Shock" at SITE Santa Fe (2017-18). Alexis Rockman: *The Great Lakes Cycle*, a major exhibition of large-scale paintings, watercolors and field drawings, toured the Midwest in 2018-20, opening at the Grand Rapids Art Museum and traveled to five other institutions in the Great Lakes region. Alexis Rockman: *Shipwrecks*, opened at the Peabody Essex Museum (2021) and traveled to Guild Hall (2021), Ackland Art Museum (2022), and Princeton University Art Museum (2022). In May 2023, The Mystic Seaport Museum presented Alexis Rockman: *Oceanus*, featuring ten large-scale watercolors and an 8-by-24-foot panoramic painting commissioned by the museum for their permanent collection. Mark Dion and Alexis Rockman: *A Journey to Nature's Underworld* was presented at the Bruce Museum, Greenwich, CT in the summer of 2023 and will travel to the Virginia Museum of Contemporary Art, The Tang Teaching Museum and other institutions through 2025.

Rockman's work is represented in many museum collections, including the Baltimore Museum of Art, Brooklyn Museum, Crystal Bridges Museum of American Art, Grand Rapids Art Museum, Los Angeles County Museum of Art, Museum of Fine Arts, Boston, New Orleans Museum of Art, San Francisco Museum of Modern Art, Smithsonian American Art Museum, Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum, and Whitney Museum of American Art.

Born 1962, New York, NY
Lives and works in Warren, CT

Creative Boom
March 21, 2024

CREATIVE BOOM

New Alexis Rockman exhibition is an urgent look at the rise of global wildfires

Connecticut-based contemporary artist Alexis Rockman has returned to Huxley-Parlour with Conflagration, a solo exhibition of nine new paintings focusing on the increasing occurrence of wildfires worldwide.

What connects Greece, Canada, Spain, Russia, and Portugal? In 2023, they were all ravaged by wildfires, with Canada breaking previous records by a significant margin. These infernos led to emissions of roughly 410 megatonnes of carbon, with many areas experiencing wildfires for the first time.

Artist Alexis Rockman is responding to this monumental ravaging of ecosystems in Conflagration, his newest exhibition of paintings at Huxley Parlour. Running until 13 April, the show consists of nine new artworks, including dramatic paintings in which Alexis has chaotically applied paint to reflect the urgency of the situation.

The paintings, developed over 2023, are presented in a critical "moment of no return" regarding the global climate crisis. Putting the behaviour of humans around the world under the microscope, Conflagration presents "a pressing vision of the critical environmental state of the planet."

It also represents the latest step in Alexis's 40-year journey of developing a distinct visual language, described as "natural history psychedelia". Featuring radiant, scorching colours and an iconography which draws on everything from natural history illustrations to dioramas in the American Museum of Natural History, this eclectic style is perfectly suited to making a statement about the ongoing climate crisis.

This approach is not just art for art's sake, either. "His methodology is further anchored within rigorous scientific research, often conducted in collaboration with scientific experts and historians, and extensive first-hand field study," the gallery adds.

However, as well as tying into his interests as an artist, Conflagration also represents something of a departure. Here, Alexis brings his attention to the present moment and foregoes the post-apocalyptic dystopias that are to be found in his previous work. The end of the world isn't way off in the future; in fact, it's happening right now.

"This series, too, returns to a gestural, impasto style used in earlier works," adds Huxley-Parlour. "Using a combination of oil paint and cold wax on wood to create visceral marks enlivened with a sense of urgency, his gestural brushstrokes reference canonical landscape paintings by Turner, Courbet, and Peder Balke while calling to mind the heavily applied, textural surfaces of Clyfford Still."

Alexis contrasts this painterly language, which traditionally venerates the sublime beauty of nature, with a hallucinatory depiction of the world in ecological collapse. The two contrasting elements come together powerfully to create paintings that are at once spectacular and horrifying.

"Their monumentality is underscored by the inclusion of small-scale foreground elements such as traditional fishing vessels, recreational kayaks, wildlife and livestock," the gallery concludes. "This fundamental tension between beauty and catastrophe defines the world of Conflagration, making Rockman's demands for environmental action more compelling than ever. "

Hyper Allergic
July 4, 2023

HYPERALLERGIC

Alexis Rockman Depicts the Ominous Beauty of Glaciers and Shipwrecks

Rockman renders crashing ships invisible behind clouds of snow.

Alexis Rockman, "The Wreck of the Ancon" (2023), oil and cold wax on wood, 48 x 80 x 2 inches (all images courtesy Sperone Westwater)

Dramatic glacier cliffs, painted in craggy daubs of blue and white, tower above the sea throughout Alexis Rockman's portentous exhibition, *Melancolia* at Sperone Westwater. Each painting, in oil and cold wax on wood, depicts one of two scenes: a historical arctic shipwreck, such as the freight and passenger ship Ancon's 1889 crash near Alaska, or an ablating glacier. Both types of scene fixate on a moment of loss, portraying the ship's impact with the ice or the glacier's runoff as kinetic bursts of paint. The surprising visual resemblance between these two different subjects underscores maritime exploration's historical role in contemporary ecological decline, while also romanticizing that decline.

Rockman has painted a sublime arctic landscape before — the gargantuan "South" (2008), which spans almost 30 feet in length across seven pieces of gessoed paper — but the artist typically works in a surreal, almost comic register. The majority of his acclaimed landscapes imagine fantastical eco-dystopian futures, with cross-sectional above-and-below–water compositions that resemble certain natural history museum dioramas, in which exotic animals teem amid the ruins of human civilization. *Melancolia*'s glacier paintings, in contrast, offer no glimpses of what lies beneath the water's surface and are almost devoid of human or animal presence, with even the crashing ships rendered invisible behind clouds of kicked up snow. A small lone kayak occasionally dots the paintings' foreground waters, the kind of detail sometimes present in Hudson River School paintings to convey the grandeur of nature's scale.

Alexis Rockman, "Chattermarks" (2023), oil and cold wax on wood, 48 x 40 x 2 inches

That Hudson River School influence finds its most telling expression in Rockman's "The Wreck of the Ancon" (2023), which alludes to Albert Bierstadt's late-career painting, "Wreck of the 'Ancon' in Loring Bay, Alaska" (1889). Bierstadt was actually a passenger aboard the Ancon when it crashed into an iceless harbor reef; after being rescued, he spent the next week drawing studies of the wreck from a nearby beach. His painting of the scene is uncharacteristically prosaic: beneath a drab sky, the Ancon lists, sleepily, near the shore. Rockman's version is not only more theatrical, with a large spray of snow depicting the crash itself, but also fictionalized, reimagining the crash as occurring against an imposing glacier. This creative liberty encapsulates *Melancolia*'s stylized sadness, the way its arctic paintings portray loss as sudden and spectacular. Such ominous beauty makes it hard to perceive the many gradual, ordinary steps on the path to collapse.

Alexis, Rockman, "Exfoliation" (2023), oil and cold wax on wood, 48 x 40 x 2 inches

BARBARA ESS

Photographer Barbara Ess was renowned for her haunting pinhole photographs and for performing in experimental bands in New York City's 1980s and 90s downtown art scene. Ess long used unconventional methods to underline the subjective nature of experience and representation. Ess' more recent projects in photography, video, and sound dealt with themes of boundaries, distance and separation. Employing lo-fi optical devices and image systems, small telescopes, and a toy microscope, Ess embraced the glitches and unintended artifacts resulting from her processes, seeking to depict the uncertainties of perception and uncover "ambiguous perceptual boundaries between people, between the self and the not self, and between 'in' here and 'out' there."

Barbara Ess received a BA from the University of Michigan in Ann Arbor, Michigan and attended the London School of Film Technique in London. Upon her return to New York City she became involved with music, performance, photography and the creation of artist books. Ess had numerous solo exhibitions of her work throughout the United States and Europe, including retrospectives at the Queens Museum, NY, the Center for Fine Arts, Miami, FL and the High Museum of Art, Atlanta, GA. Other selected solo exhibitions were held at Magenta Plains, New York, NY; 3A Gallery, New York, NY; Thierry Goldberg, New York, NY; Incident Report, Hudson, NY; Wallspace, New York, NY; Moore College of Art, Philadelphia PA; Curt Marcus Gallery, New York, NY; Faggionato Fine Arts, London, UK; Frederick Giroux Gallery, Paris, France; Michael Kohn Gallery, Los Angeles, CA; Stills Gallery, Edinburgh, Scotland; Fundacion La Caixa, Barcelona, Spain; Galeria Espanola La Maquina, Madrid, Spain; Interim Art, London, England; Ghilaine Hussenot, Paris, France and Johnen+Schöttle, Cologne, among others.

Her photographs have been included in group exhibitions at institutions including the Tang Museum, Sarasota Springs, NY; New Museum of Contemporary Art, NY; Baltimore Museum of Art, Baltimore, MD; Princeton University Art Museum, Princeton, NJ; Middlebury College Museum of Art, Middlebury, VT; Southeast Museum of Photography, Daytona Beach, FL; Contemporary Art Center, Cincinnati, OH; Victoria and Albert Museum, London, UK; and National Museum of Modern Art, Tokyo, Japan. Barbara Ess was the subject of cover stories in Artforum and Art in America and a monograph of her work, I Am Not This Body, was published by Aperture in 2001. Her work is in numerous permanent collections, including The Art Institute of Chicago, The Whitney Museum of American Art, Museum of Contemporary Art Los Angeles, San Francisco Museum of Modern Art, The National Museum of American Art, Smithsonian Institution, The Carnegie Museum of Art, The Walker Art Center, Pompidou Center/Musée d'Art Moderne, and Modern Art Museum of Fort Worth, TX. Ess was an Associate Professor of Photography at Bard College in Annandale-on-Hudson for over two decades.

Born in 1944, Brooklyn, NY
Died in 2021, Elizaville, NY

Aperture
October 27, 2023

aperture

The Creative Power of Barbara Ess

The artist, who died in 2021, played a crucial role in establishing downtown Manhattan as both a scene and a style. **By Jesse Dorris**

Installation view of *Barbara Ess – Archive*, White Columns, New York, 2023

Toward the back of White Columns's outstanding recent exhibition *Barbara Ess – Archives*—past the photo of a baby whose chimerical eyes interrupt an otherwise glazed expression, past flyers advertising outrageously stacked lineups of bands at legendary New York City clubs—two typed white pages hang on a wall. Each is undated. Each is titled, in capital letters, *STATEMENT*. The one on the right begins with a one-line paragraph: "The natural subject of photography is voyeurism." The one on the left repeats the same thing. Except, in Ess's red pencil, a spiral almost closes itself around the word *voyeurism*. A circle fully traps the word *natural*, which Ess also pencils within quotation marks. Another red line leashes it to a large question mark.

Words like *natural* and *voyeurism* seem germane to the life and work of Barbara Ess. Before her death in 2021, she played a crucial role in establishing downtown Manhattan as both scene and a style. In an ecosystem of big lofts, low rent, and high ambitions, Ess blossomed. That's her in those band posters; in the feminist trio Y Pants, she and the artist Virginia Piersol and the filmmaker Gail Vachon played Mickey Mouse drum kits and kiddie-size pianos for what was fittingly advertised as "amplified toy rock," at CBGB and the epochal 1981 Noise Fest—a nine-day marathon at White Columns's previous location on Spring Street, organized by Thurston Moore in part to debut his new band, Sonic Youth. Ess kept excellent binders of this ephemera and asked the writer and curator Kirby Gookin to hold a parallel, backup archive.

Detail of *Barbara Ess – Archive*, 2023

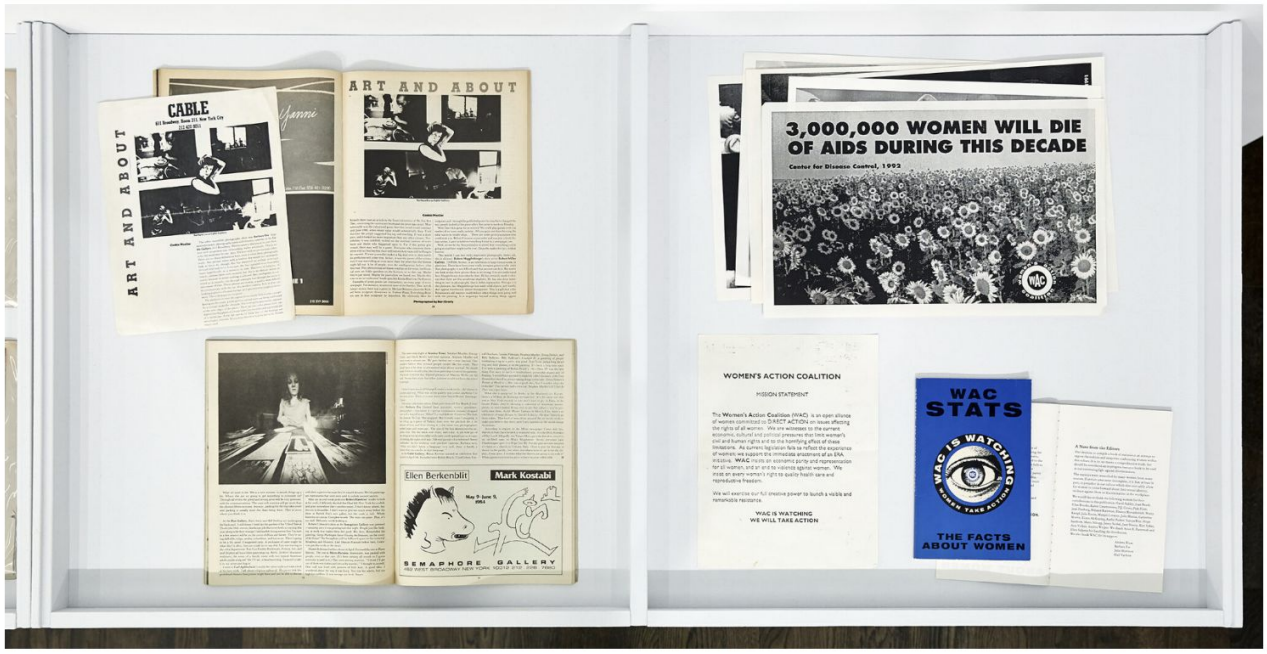
The *Archives* exhibition pins the contents of those binders to the gallery's walls, which, after all, are flyers' natural habitat. Certain kinds of people built certain kinds of lives assessing these kinds of layered invitations; the walls of bars were social calendars. Walking past their recreations, I wonder if I would have been invited, would have gone, would have met someone and lost them. At the entrances of the kind of record store that would sell Y Pants' music, flyers used to pile up like Félix González-Torres mounds, never seeming to lose their mass as if they were themselves alive. All this ephemeral is melancholic. I'm grateful it survived. And I feel I'm somehow eavesdropping.

Details of *Barbara Ess – Archive*, 2023

Ess made things of what she saw people doing on all those nights out: a publication called *Just Another Asshole* (*JAA*). Edited with her longtime partner, the experimental-music linchpin Glenn Branca, *JAA* quickly became a who's who of the downtown scene. The pair invited artists—among them Kathy Acker, Barbara Kruger, David Wojnarowicz, Lynne Tillman—to do whatever the hell they wanted on its newsprint pages or within a cassette tape. *JAA* was a mixed-media zine that could take most any format. In terms of chronology, ambition, and result, you could slip it between publications such as *File* and *Visionaire*. At White Columns, a display table offers a 1987 *Village Voice* review of issue seven by Vince Aletti, which quotes Ess saying that the zines "aren't about *craft*, they're about sensibility." Aletti eyes the issue's photographic contributions by Louise Lawler and Laurie Simmons, writing, "The new portraitists use the medium as a distancing device, subverting the notion of sympathetic portraiture by refusing to pierce the façade." Today, that kind of po-faced posing seems like the birth of a New York style, one that has sympathy for the notion that a facade is as close to the truth as you can get.

Barbara Ess, *Portrait of Cookie Mueller*, n.d.
Courtesy the estate of Barbara Ess and Magenta Plains, New York

The exhibition presents just one example of the pinhole photography Ess later became known for, as Aperture published a monograph of this work in 2001, and, more recently, Magenta Plains gallery has begun exhibiting the pictures. But this example is a doozy: The undated *Portrait of Cookie Mueller* centers the writer and actor in a circle of light like a Renaissance saint. Mueller turns over tarot cards for an unseen subject. The inquisitive light of the pinhole makes it all but impossible to look away. Mueller couldn't have known how soon her own life would be extinguished nor how subsequent generations would take her up as a role model and icon. Perhaps in this pinhole, Mueller is peeping into a similar cult-hero future for Ess.



Detail of *Barbara Ess – Archive*, 2023. All installation views courtesy the estate of Barbara Ess and White Columns, New York. Photographs by Marc Tatti

And it came true: as AIDS and gentrification ravaged the downtown scene, Ess joined the radical feminist group Women's Action Coalition (WAC) in 1992. Its mission statement, displayed on a table next to a pamphlet emblazoned with WAC's eye-catching logo of an eye with the acronym arranged into an iris, reads, in part, "We will exercise our full creative power to launch a visible and remarkable resistance." WAC taught women and other feminists that what matters isn't only *that* you organize, but *how* you organize. Sensibility is political. Ess spent the next two decades as a professor in the photography program at Bard College. A sample classroom assignment in the show is titled "Tell Us Something About Yourself." Twenty-six prompts follow, including "Use the photograph to bring us closer. Use the photograph as your mother. Use the photograph as your lover. Use the photograph to keep us away." *Barbara Ess – Archives* uses her photographs, uses what she made, to tell us about herself, and how all the playing around downtown became a posture, then a politic, then a pedagogy. She made it feel like a natural progression, and it deserves a look.

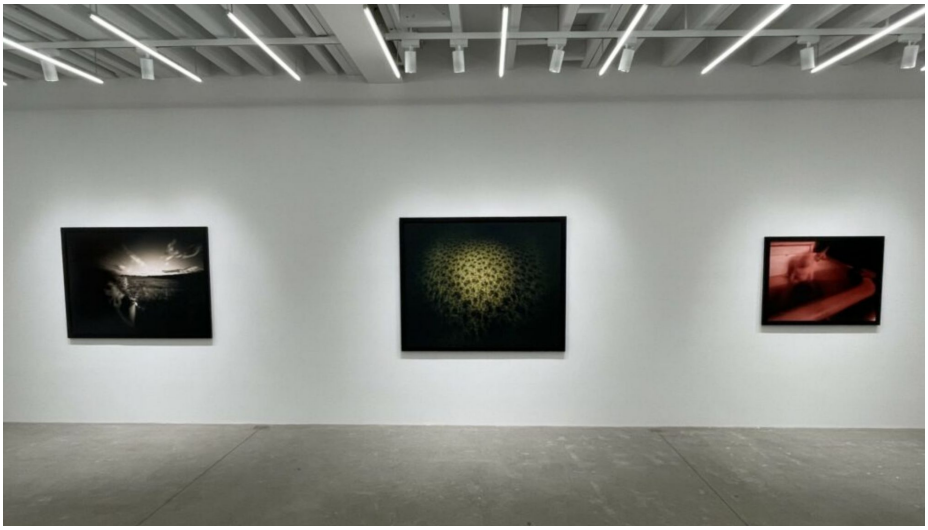
Barbara Ess – Archives was on view at White Columns, New York, from September 12 through October 21, 2023.

Collector Daily
April 12, 2023

COLLECTOR DAILY

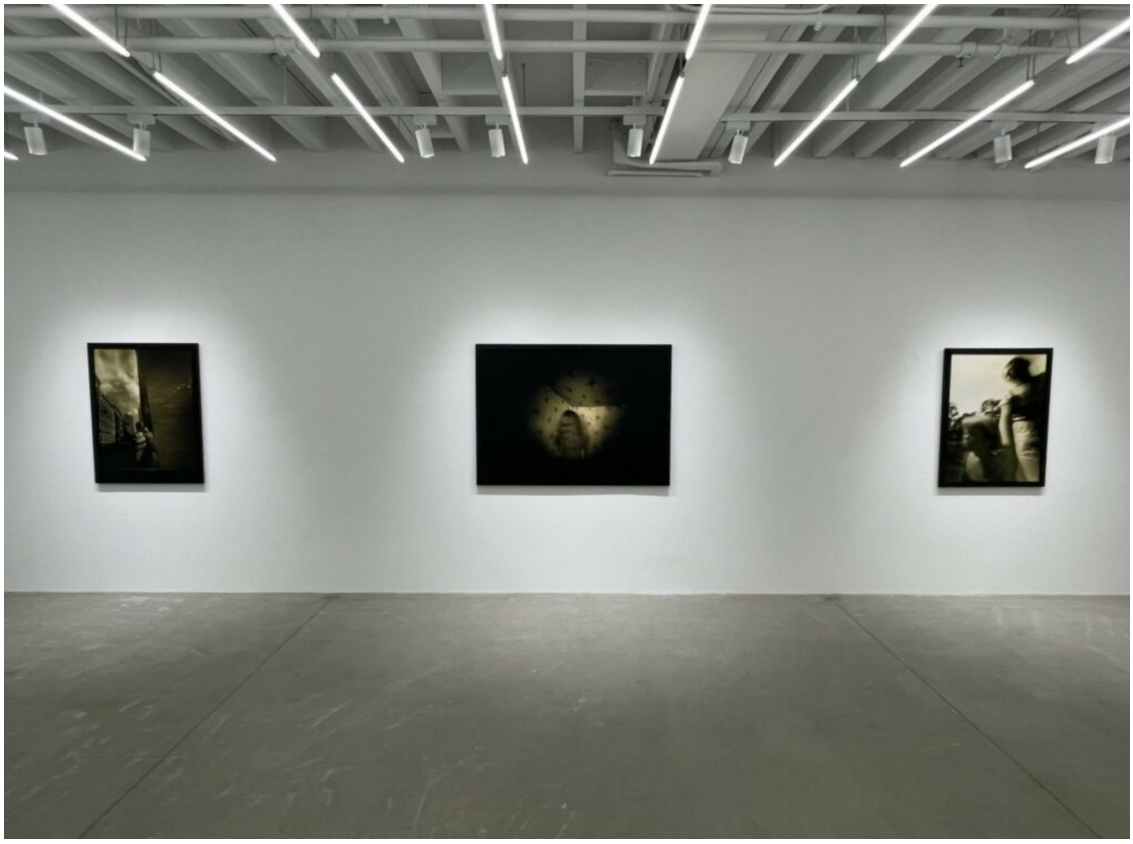
Barbara Ess: Inside Out @Magenta Plains

By Loring Knoblauch / In Galleries / April 12, 2023



Comments/Context: When a sophisticated contemporary photographer deliberately decides to employ a homemade pinhole camera to make his or her images, we can assume that we are dealing with an artist who wants to push back on the traditions of the medium. While virtually any digital camera purchased today will nearly automatically deliver a consistent set of crisply perfect exposures, a pinhole camera is inherently makeshift – depending on the mathematical proportions of the simple box and its aperture and the way the camera is then used by the photographer, all kinds of distortions, blurs, and dark tunneled effects are possible (and likely). By choosing an artistic tool that delivers such unstable and improvisational aesthetics, the photographer is signalling that he or she wants to explore ideas and moods outside the ordinary.

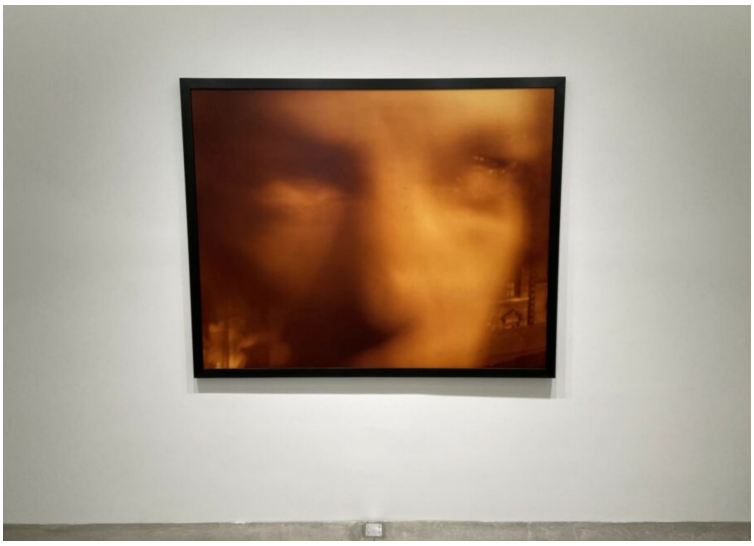
This show gathers together a selection of Barbara Ess's pinhole photographs from the 1980s and 1990s, giving us a taste for how her conceptually-savvy and experimentally-rich photographic mind leveraged the atmospheric qualities of such a simple camera. Each of the images on view feels both intimate and uneasy, expressively probing emotional terrain that doesn't entirely want to give up its secrets.



Ess's 1986 pinhole image of a woman in a kitchen picking up the shards of a broken cup turns a mundane moment into something fleetingly ethereal. The scene itself is straightforward – a woman bends down to pick up the fragments of a broken white cup which has fallen on the kitchen floor; the setup includes the checkerboard tiled floor of the kitchen, the nearby cabinets, the dark legs of a disembodied man, and the woman herself, crouched down in a black dress decorated with white splotches. But Ess's vision of this forgettable moment feels altogether surreal. Echoes of black and white jump and swirl around the frame, from the dress to the broken cup to the wildly distorted tiles of the floor. The scene is both sharp in some areas and blurred in others, with the light flared along the edges of the cabinets and behind the legs of the man and the form of the woman dissolving into darkness on the right. Seen as one integrated instant, the effect is strangely Alice in Wonderland magical, with time and whatever we might call reality being bent right before our eyes.

Several of Ess's photographs are steeped in a sense of hazy memory, of instants captured that are then refracted through the distorting mechanisms of the mind. In one image (from 1984-1985), a mother holds the hand of a child, perhaps on a walk in the park or backyard, with both figures seen from below and blurred almost into faint recognition. The low angle puts us in the mind of the youngster, with the towering mother overhead looming like a protective superhero (or ominous monster). In another (from 1984), an anonymous kiss on the sidewalk in New York seems to have been caught by a passing pedestrian, the unlikely passion of the moment somehow seared into the fleeting glimpse; the darkened edges of the picture seem to pull us right into the urban romance, the kiss taking place with dismissive disregard for whatever might be going on nearby. And a third image (from 2000) is called a self portrait, but all it reveals is a partial sighting of the artist, her face pulled into a distorted blur as the camera focuses its attention of the whorl of grassy meadow in the background behind her; Ess becomes an insubstantial ghost in this picture, a sunny day version of a self in a particular place perhaps now lost to the passing of time.

Images like these can often drift into a literalness that drains them of their mystery, but the best of Ess's pictures settle into uneasy psychological territory, leveraging the aesthetics of the pinhole camera to wrap her subjects in enveloping darkness and insubstantial blur. Are they images from the world around us, or fantasies (or memories) bouncing around in Ess's head? That we can't quite know is what gives these images their durable bite – their expressiveness wanders from exterior to interior without a defined border, making perception something more malleable than usual.



BILL SAYLOR

Bill Saylor emerged from the vibrant painting scene that developed in the 1990s in Brooklyn. Incredibly influential to a younger generation of painters, Saylor's work is distinguished by his merging of explosive gestural abstraction with a comprehensive personal iconography, revealing an anthropogenic concern and interest in natural history, weather patterns, and marine biology. Saylor's work recycles and reframes elements from graffiti, cave painting, and industrial production while mining the legacy of both American and European expressionism.

Bill Saylor has held solo exhibitions at Magenta Plains, New York; Galerie Julien Cadet, Paris; Leo Koenig Inc., New York; The Journal Gallery, Brooklyn; and Loyal Gallery, Stockholm. Two-person shows include Air Like Wine with Rob Mcleish at Neon Parc, Brunswick, AU; Bill Saylor & Josh Smith at Hiromi Yoshii Gallery, Tokyo, JP; Bill Saylor & Aidas Bareikis at Shoot The Lobster, New York, NY; Bill Saylor & Donald Baechler at Makebish, New York, NY; and Mason Saltarrelli and Bill Saylor at Shrine, New York, NY. Saylor was included in Animal Farm at the Brant Foundation and has participated in group exhibitions at Venus Over Manhattan, New York; CANADA, New York; Martos Gallery, Los Angeles; MIER Gallery, Los Angeles; Ceysson & Bénétière, Luxembourg and Yerba Buena Art Center, San Francisco. Saylor's work was also included in Contemporary Painting curated by Alex Katz at the Colby College Museum of Art in 2004. In 2010, Saylor collaborated on the zine "Ho Bags" with Harmony Korine and he was an artist-in-residence at the Chinati Foundation in Marfa, TX.

Born in 1960, Willow Grove, PA
Lives and works in Brooklyn, NY

Whitehot Magazine
June 2020

NOAH BECKER'S WHITEHOT MAGAZINE OF CONTEMPORARY ART

East Hampton NY: Mason Saltarrelli and Bill Saylor at Duck Creek Arts Center

Installation view, Duck Creek Arts Center, 2020

Le Deuce Deuce: Mason Saltarrelli and Bill Saylor

Duck Creek Arts Center

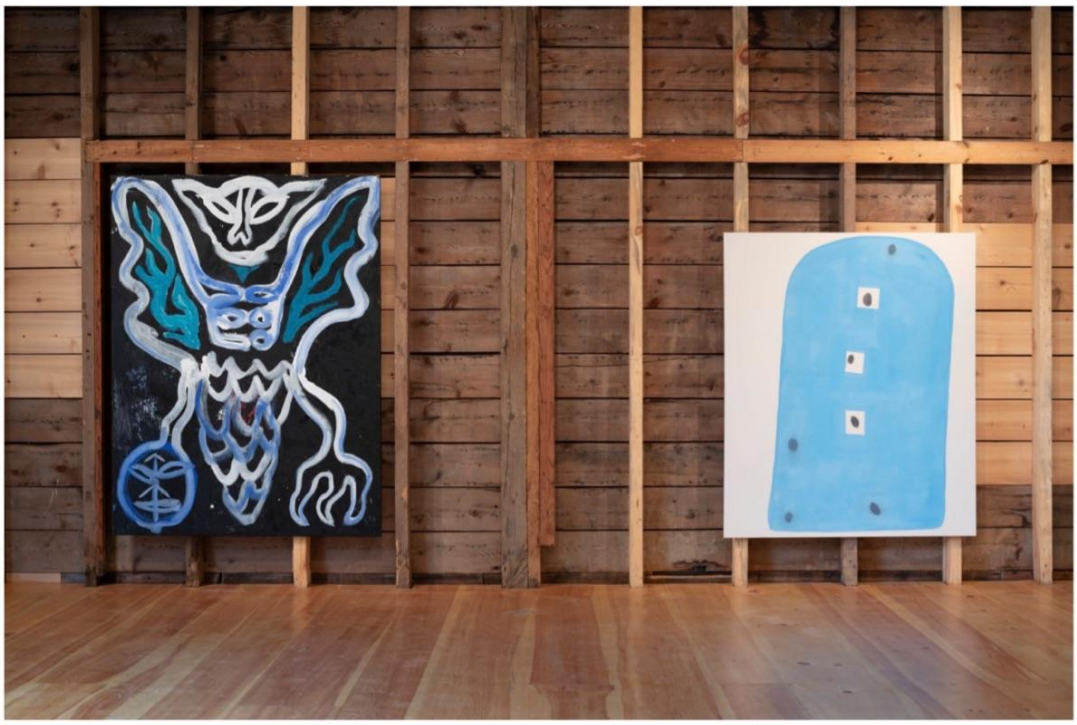
Open to the Public Friday, Saturday & Sunday, 12- 4pm

By CHASE SZAKMARY, June 2020

Beyond the glitz of Main Street, Newtown Lane, and the perfume weighted air with news of monolithic Manhattan galleries eastward expansions—winding over old Indian footpaths, paved roads, through wooded reef, is the turn off for Squaw Road, site of The Arts Center at Duck Creek's recent exhibition of works by Brooklyn based artists' Mason Saltarrelli and Bill Saylor.

The show entitled, "Le Deuce Deuce" is as much a sequel to their preceding exhibition at Shrine (of the same name minus a Deuce),as it is, an algorithmic word play of a tawdry homonym or a Vulcan reminder of life's multiplicity—*we come in peace*—not without permutations.

The shows namesake rolls on the same side of separate dye; two mid-career artists that took similar journeys through the core of NY's neo-expressionist universe, both performing as assistants to art elite, Julian Schnabel, at his Seven Sister's studio, but at different times. They would later encounter one another through a process not unlike osmosis. On Instagram, a mutual appreciation for one another's work stoked a karmic bond. It seems almost fated now that they are here together, in the mythical land of Pollock-Krasner, not far from their old Seven Sister's haunt.



Installation view, Duck Creek Arts Center, 2020

Upon arriving at Duck Creek, two things are apparent: the rhythmic drumming of car tires upon the bumpy road like ritual, and three structures that emerge from a clearing in the wood like Puritan mountaintops. It is relevant that their work would be shown here. In a space, buoyed by the boundlessness of nature and time. It allows if just for a moment meditation of our tiny thought littered minds on something greater, that might then reward us upon our departure with a renewed vigor, to do better toward one another because after all we are our brother's keeper.

So it is, Saylor and Saltarrelli or Saltarrelli and Saylor (sounding like a hip Manhattan ad firm) present a universe, in eight works total, two paintings and two sculptures from the former, and four paintings from the latter.

Saltarrelli's color palette is muted and does not visually overlap with the vibrant flashe, oil, and spray on Bill's canvases. But I wonder, if a certain level of synchronization were desired, in addition to the subdued white and blues, might a touch a yellow (like in Bill's *Triad* piece or the ochre in *Lucky Charms*) have taken the exhibition further along. But this is not my primary grievance just a thought that came to mind while viewing Saltarrelli's work. My chief complaint is that such a thought came to mind at all. The work is smart, so I would have liked more of it in a room all its own, given opportunity to build on its quiet complexities. However, short attentions drift towards the gargantuan creatures in the room.

I'm drawn into swashbuckling conversations with the likes of Charles Darwin and Thomas Pynchon; they're conversing over the subconscious mind of *Faulkner, Gremlins, and Kush*—all portals for me into the realm of artist Bill Saylor.

Installation view, Duck Creek Arts Center, 2020

Bill has been a mainstay in the Brooklyn art-scene since the late 90's. His irreverent style, expressionistic like Penck and genuine like Traylor, merges marine biology and 80's pop culture. A style that has outlasted "rebellious" fades touted about town like seasonal handbags. Saylor stakes his claim over an occultic look that better encapsulates the rebellious American artist than what some Chelsea project space might manufacture. One need only to look upon his jerry-rigged studio, assembled outdoors with tarpaulin, wood, and other colloquial things.

A few such items have entered the show, in the form of his assemblage, *Accumulator*, made from: pine tree trunk, cedar board, metal, mylar, and PVC pipe. This departure from his paintings has the feel of folk art found in an eccentric's defunct barrier beach house. It attempts to do as it says on the tin, *accumulate*, like the tiny wood totem mounted to its satellite dish with cosmic comic book powers. However, it feels to me a bit extraneous.

There's a different sort of sensibility. It's stripping the paint. The totem mounted to the piece has a godlike aura but it's throwing off the power dynamic in the room. Like Matisse's studio show, the work is a chance to draw back the curtain on Saylor's studio process but in this instance, it seems out of place.

The show plays to the multitudes of our shared experiences for all things living, and showcases two talented painters, playing a similar song just so differently. Had I a wish upon those stars it would have been to incorporate more the dialectic of the land and infrastructure available. If possible, sew the expanse so that Saltarrelli's language be read clearly, with proper inflection, and Saylor's work returned to its natural habitat, in the sway of the tree's, oriented by the triad constellation of barn buildings —a satellite nation of painterly delight. **WM**

Document
October 15, 2019

DOCUMENT

4 artists comment on Bill Saylor's primordial, uncanny allure

Bill Saylor paints in a gestural code rooted in history that dates back to 4,000 years ago, when prehistoric humans painted on cave walls, carrying with it the abstract expressionism that originated in New York in the 1940s and '50s. But Saylor honed his own practice in the Brooklyn of the '90s, the Brooklyn that came decades before Whole Foods and Apple planted their roots on its streets. The figures that form from Saylor's abstraction demonstrate his concern for the anthropogenic environmental distress that is destroying the Earth's flora and fauna. His latest exhibition, *Neptune's Machine*, is on view at Magenta Plains through October 23, the same date the catalog for the show will be released. *Neptune's Machine* pays homage to the world's oceans, the ecosystem that also acts as the planet's lungs, generating the air that we breathe. Echoes of fish, seahorses, squid, and other ocean wildlife appear throughout Saylor's work, doubling as an urgent call to action.

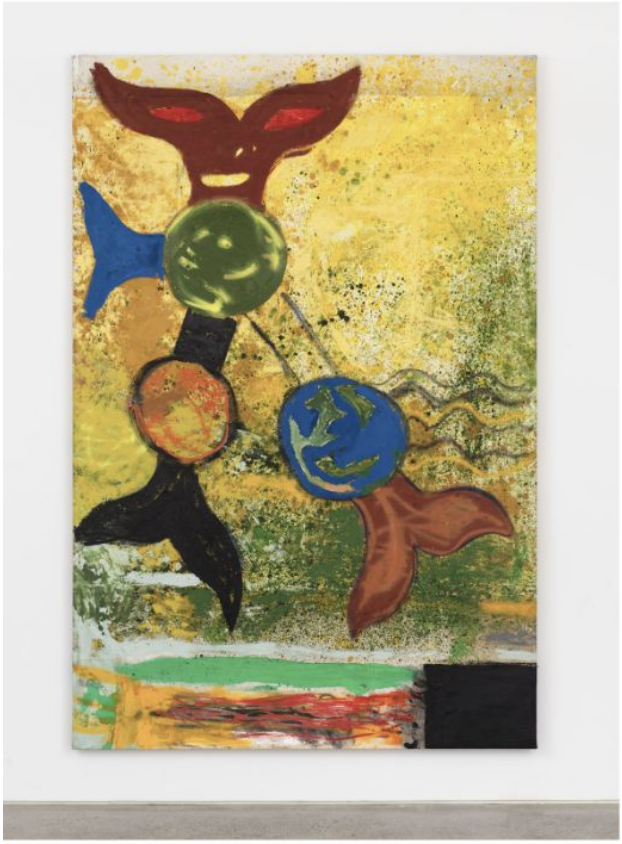
Saylor is an artist's artist. So much so, that artists Alex Katz, Josh Smith, Kenny Schachter, and Sadie Laska included Saylor's work in group shows which they curated. In the early aughts, Saylor formed relationships with a circle of Brooklyn artists who include Smith, Joe Bradley, and Katherine Bernhardt. Many of them also collect his work.

Document asked artists Walter Robinson, Justin Lowe, Jeff Elrod, and Chris Martin to comment on Saylor's allure.

Walter Robinson—"Bill? Doesn't he come from a small town in PA? Like, Appalachia? The Marcellus Shale? With like 10,000 active fracking wells? I hope so, since that's what I get from Bill's paintings, a stew of down-home folk culture all mixed up with ancient Ptersaurian spirits that rise up from those deep wells. All that gives his work this atavistic charge, and ties our reptilian brain to the primordial earth. It's an uncanny feeling, really. Know what I mean?"

Justin Lowe—"Bill Saylor is one of the last natural ones. The last wild man. I don't think people are having kids like him anymore. My understanding is that Bill makes most of his work outside in Pennsylvania near the woods. Which makes the paintings strange attractors and imbues them with something that is very personal to him and whatever 'high weirdness' is going down at that site. Which is to say that it can not be imitated and that you should not try to do this at home!

The creatures in his paintings seem recollected from an interim space that changes faster than you can catch your breath. A cryptozoological 'who's who' of the regulars creeping around Cthulhu's domain. This is Bayside voodoo. If Captain Beefheart and his Magic Band were performing at Jack Smith's lagoon, it is their presence you feel, that you think you see the shadows of, but definitely can't confirm that you did in fact see them. Only Bill *sees* them, they however, definitely see us."



Jeff Elrod—"I met Bill Saylor in 2001 in New York when he had a show at Leo Koenig Gallery on Franklin Street right before 9/11. I had just joined the gallery after the untimely closing of Pat Hearn Gallery. I do remember being slightly intimidated by his paintings at the time but I immediately liked Bill and we became friends right there.

Bill is steady, always working. Direct. No pussyfooting. He's the kind of artist that makes you think you don't work enough or work hard enough. He is also the nicest guy in the world. That 2001 show was downright wild. I thought the paintings looked like something conjured from a seance. They were haunting, as if ghosts painted them. Muddy apparitions with little existence marks and stains scarring the surface like something trapped in a mirror. They had no exit. I loved them. His paintings are the visual equivalent to eating Pop Rocks to me. Sweet but gnarly. Laden with crypto-demonic cartoons in thick opaque paint that make you want to eat them. I think of Bill's paintings as an antidote to all strategic painting. They breath life.

Artists that come to mind relating to Bill Saylor's work: Dante and Don Van Vliet (a.k.a. Capt. Beefheart)."

Chris Martin—"Love Bill and his work."

DON DUDLEY

Don Dudley is a crucial, historical link between the optical and surface oriented “Cool School” or “Finish Fetish” generation of California artists who came into prominence in the 1960s and the more cerebral, Hard-edged Minimalist artists such as Frank Stella, Brice Marden and Ellsworth Kelly. Dudley’s practice embraces drawing and painting by way of sculpture and installation—creating subtle and sophisticated wall works that stand out for both their elegance and formal intelligence. Throughout Don Dudley's seventy-year career he has challenged artistic conventions and the traditional concept of painting by incorporating industrial materials in his work such as aluminum, lacquer, homasote and plywood.

Dudley lived and worked on the West Coast for thirty-eight years before relocating to New York City in 1969. Settling first into a loft on Broome Street in SoHo, he later became one of the early pioneers in TriBeCa—where his studio remains to this day. The analytical artistic approaches in New York—especially the visual language of grids, modularity as well as the aesthetics of industrial manufacturing—had a profound impact on the artist and shifted his work away from the luscious opticality of the early works made in Southern California. He focused his attention on structure and seriality, solidifying a connection to artists such as Anne Truitt and Donald Judd.

Throughout the 1970s and 1980s, Dudley explored modular and serial structures with monochromatic color schemes as well as site-specific spatial installations, exhibiting in “Corners” at MIT Vera List Art Center in 1979 and mounting solo shows at P.S.1 Contemporary Art Center in 1982 and New Museum of Contemporary Art in 1984. Select group exhibitions at major institutions include Contemporary American Painting at the Whitney Museum of American Art, New York, NY (1972); Double Take at New Museum of Contemporary Art, New York, NY (1978); and Activated Walls at the Queens Museum of Art, New York, NY (1984).

After a twenty-five year hiatus from exhibiting, Dudley's work was rediscovered in 2011 to great acclaim. Recent solo exhibitions include Don Dudley: New Work, Magenta Plains, New York, NY (2022); Don Dudley: Early Work, Magenta Plains, New York, NY (2019); Don Dudley: Activated Walls and Recent Works, Galerie Thomas Zander, Cologne, DE (2018); Don Dudley: Recent Work, Magenta Plains, New York, NY (2017); Modular Spaces, Galerie Thomas Zander, Cologne, DE (2013); Don Dudley, I-20 Gallery, New York, NY (2011); and Don Dudley, Mendes Wood, São Paulo, BR (2011).

Born in 1930, Los Angeles, CA
Lives and works in New York, NY and Kerhonkson, NY

The New York Times Style Magazine
February 26, 2024

The New York Times Style Magazine

Against All Odds, New York's Artist Buildings Have Survived

Generations of creatives once flocked to the city seeking affordable rent. Now, despite skyrocketing real estate prices, some continue to carve out studio spaces of their own.

Don Dudley. Miranda Barnes

Location:
TriBeCa, Manhattan.

Number of artist-tenants:
Two. For decades, beginning in the 1970s, the late 19th-century building was made up of five A.I.R. lofts, all occupied by artists. Now the married artists Don Dudley and Shirley Irons, who own the building's top floor, are the only ones left. (The Odeon restaurant is next door.) Irons described the rest of the curren tenants as "pretty much rich people."

Strangest object in the studio:
Dudley, who supported himself for many years as an art handler with his own shipping company, lost the tip of his right index finger in a crating accident; it's preserved in their freezer.

Don Dudley, 93, abstract painter and sculptor: "I ran into [the Pop artist] Jim Rosenquist outside of his loft on Broome Street in 1969. He was loading up a truck and moving his whole studio down to Florida. He said, 'You want [the loft]?' And I said, 'Sure! How much?' It was $200 a month, and that sounded just right. A few years later, the guy who owned the building said, 'We're gonna raise your rent.' To $250 a month. So I got on my bicycle and just kept riding around downtown until I found someplace empty. This building was a five-story former twine and cordage warehouse. The landlord wanted $1,000 a month for the whole thing, $200 a floor. I took the top two floors, some friends took the floors below and we had the whole building for $1,000 a month. This was 1971.

Things were fine until the landlord sold the building to some Iranians; it came in a bundle with a bunch of other buildings in TriBeCa. The new owners now wanted $1,000 a floor. But they couldn't get rid of us and finally just abandoned the building. They'd bought a dozen buildings, and I guess they figured they could just let this one go. The city took it over for lack of tax payment in the early '80s, then sold it back to us for $100,000 — or $20,000 a floor. We had a great lawyer."

Two Coats of Paint
November 16, 2022

TWO COATS OF PAINT

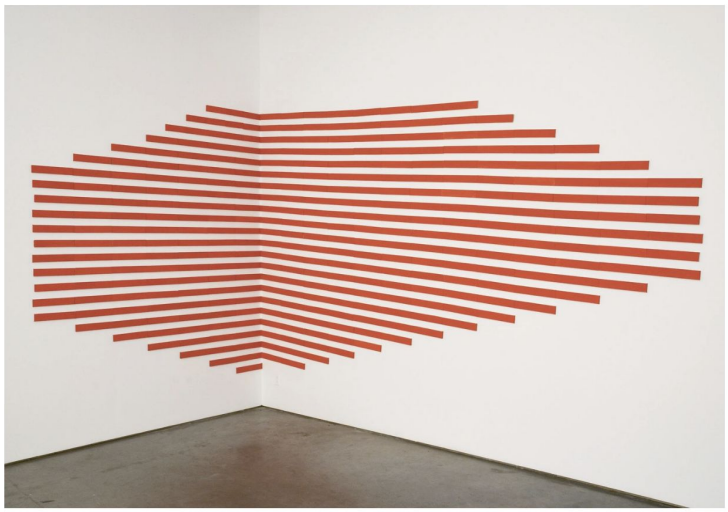
SOLO SHOWS

Don Dudley's pure authenticity

Contributed by Adam Simon / In 1979, Don Dudley, whose solo exhibition "New Work" is now on view at Magenta Plains, installed *Red Corner* in a group exhibition at the Vera List Art Center of the Massachusetts Institute of Technology. In doing so, he essentially reshaped the room, flattening the corner, obliterating any sense of spatial depth. *Red Corner* consisted of what appeared to be 23 parallel strips of Homasote, a cellulose-based fiberboard, used widely for soundproofing and cheap construction. The strips were two inches wide, hand-painted light red, with two-inch spaces between the strips that acted as white forms alternating with the red of the painted Homasote. The configuration increased in length as it moved from top and bottom towards the middle, but the ordering principle at some point gave out, and an irregular shape emerged that looked like an abortive attempt at pure geometry.

Red Corner was not the first of Dudley's modular installations, but it was exemplary of his concerns at the time. The two perpendicular walls morphed into what appeared as a flat surface holding an image. There was something slightly off about it, though. It lacked the industrial rigor of Donald Judd, the pure presence of Ellsworth Kelly, or the equanimity of Anne Truitt. Each horizontal strip was composed of multiple eight-inch segments, held to the wall by single nails. The visible nail heads and the cracks between the segments were odd compositional elements. Why not use longer strips, cut to size, adhered in a less obvious way?

Don Dudley, #174, 2021, Acrylic on birch plywood, 44 x 70 x 3 inches



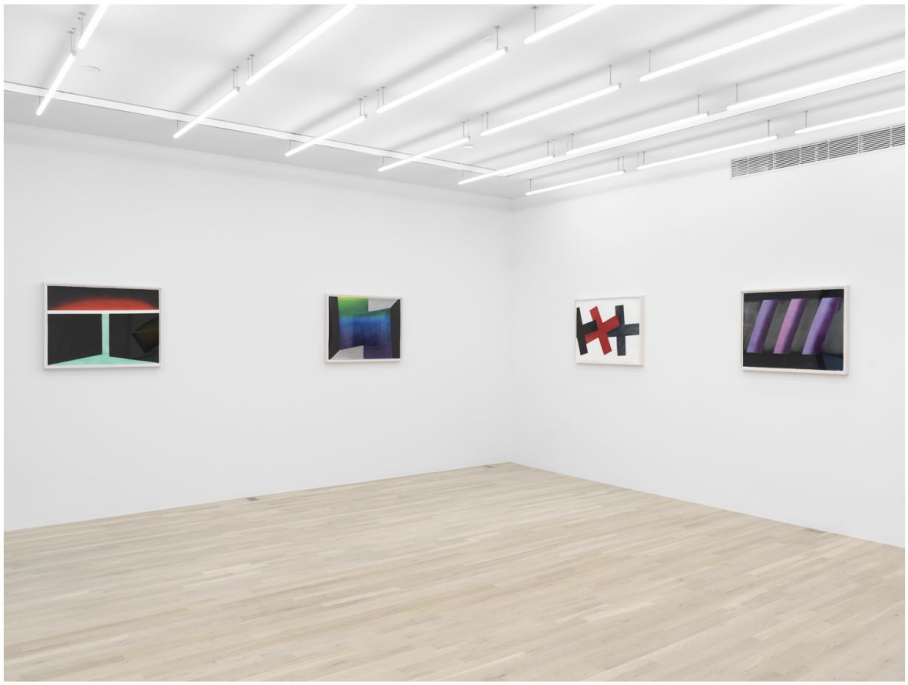
Don Dudley: Red Corner, 1979, acrylic on Homasote, 20 feet wide; installed at I-20 in 2011 (via Art in America)

Red Corner was not the first of Dudley's modular installations, but it was exemplary of his concerns at the time. The two perpendicular walls morphed into what appeared as a flat surface holding an image. There was something slightly off about it, though. It lacked the industrial rigor of Donald Judd, the pure presence of Ellsworth Kelly, or the equanimity of Anne Truitt. Each horizontal strip was composed of multiple eight-inch segments, held to the wall by single nails. The visible nail heads and the cracks between the segments were odd compositional elements. Why not use longer strips, cut to size, adhered in a less obvious way?

A Norwegian philosopher once told me that 1970s Minimalism was the type of art that he felt most corresponded with philosophical thought. I had only a rudimentary knowledge of Western philosophy, but I knew what he said was true – not in the sense that Minimalism was the most profound or far-reaching art, but in the sense that it constituted a rigid interrogation of first principles. Dudley's work has always existed somewhere between Minimalist purity and a less clearly defined realm that partakes of the gestural, the atmospheric and the associative. In this he offers a heterodoxy that feels less austere and therefore timely. His minimalism has always had a West Coast flavor, more concerned with perception than objecthood. Like many artists of his generation, he has steered clear of expressionism, or anything that shifted attention from the object to the artist. His focus has been on the purely visual.

Don Dudley, #180, 2020, India inks, acrylic, colored pencil on paper, 31 3/4 x 24 3/16 x 2 inches

Before moving to New York from California in 1969, Dudley was associated with the Finish Fetish school of West Coast abstraction, creating highly finished prismatic works that conjured a feeling of the sublime in nature. Later, after the monochrome modular works such as *Red Corner*, there were other site-specific installations in which geometric shapes incorporated gestures and colors, appearing as rendered surfaces, like badly scuffed floors. Throughout there were drawings which, like the large-scale works, ranged from the diagrammatic to the fully pictorial. This range is evident in Dudley's current show, which features four plywood constructions on one floor and works on paper on another.



Magenta Plains Gallery: Don Dudley, New Work, 2022, Installation View

The works on paper reflect a kind of thwarted formalism. Rendered in ink, acrylic, and colored pencil, vaporous expanses of multi-hued colors are air-brushed into what would otherwise be simple arrangements of geometric shapes. There are intimations of sky, cast light, and weather, but always within delineated shapes that interact wit other shapes of flat color. It's a convincing amalgam. Somehow, the atmospheric and geometric coexist in a believable, non-referential dreamscape. Dudley's birch plywood constructions are installed in a below-ground gallery, a large, airy room with high ceilings. The four works are elegantly hung, one to each wall, so that the wall becomes part of each piece, a negative complement to the constructed forms.

For me, the show's masterworks are the two pieces that most resolutely declare their objectness: *#174* and *Untitled*. Both are birch plywood constructions of mostly solid color – red and black for *#174*, and red, black and yellow for *Untitled*. In each there is an underlying tension between the pictorial and the literal. Suggested spatial shifts or alignments of forms are either contradicted or made redundant by what the plywood shapes are physically doing. Like most of Dudley's constructions, these works exist at the intersection of painting and sculpture. Both seem immutable. At the same time, they contain multiple traces of the hand, glitches, odd spaces and missed connections. It's hard to convey in words, but there is an uncanny feeling of something so authentic that it feels like deception. Time stops.

Don Dudley, Untitled, 2019, Acrylic on birch plywood, 87h x 68w x 2 1/2d inches

It is the dialectic between facticity – the object declaring its objectness – and pictorialism that ultimately energizes Dudley's work, one informing the other. At age 90, he continues to represent a merging of these seemingly opposed aesthetic phenomena, resisting easy classification in favor of a singular vision – nail heads, cracks, and all.

JANE SWAVELY

Jane Swavely's (b. 1959, Allentown, PA) abstractions attempt to reconcile romanticism and minimalism while referencing natural and cinematic elements. Intense areas of color are set against zones where paint has been wiped from the surface, revealing undertones and vestigial forms. Swavely's practice is intuitive and comes from the artist's subconscious, each work an expression of a lingering thought. Compositionally, visual evocations of screens and portals are constant in the work as is an illusive silver tone, appearing intensely reflective and polished in some works and a tarnished patina in others. When combined with rich pigmented color otherwise present in her paintings the results can be emulsive and luminous, recalling some alchemical consequence.

Jane Swavely attended the figurative academic program at Boston University College of Fine Arts which was led by Philip Guston in the 1970s and subsequently James Weeks. Swavely moved to New York City in 1980, and worked as an assistant to New Image artist Lois Lane while attending the School of Visual Arts, and then for Brice Marden until 1985. In 1986 at the age of twenty-five, she held her first solo-show at CDS Gallery. She was part of the CDS Gallery roster until 2005. As her career progressed, Swavely became part of A.I.R, a legendary female-run art space founded in the 1970s. A.I.R provided her with five solo exhibitions from 2011-2022, showcasing the depth and breadth of her talent over the years.

Swavely has held solo exhibitions at Magenta Plains, New York, NY; the New Arts Program, Kutztown, PA; Loyola College, Baltimore, MD; and the Mandeville Gallery at Union College in Schenectady, NY. She has exhibited her paintings in group exhibitions in New York, Los Angeles, San Francisco, Chicago, St. Louis, Philadelphia, Nashville, and abroad. Swavely is the recipient of a Ford Foundation Fellowship. Her work is in numerous public and private collections, including the JPMorgan Chase Art Collection and the Allentown Art Museum in Pennsylvania. She currently lives in her loft on the Bowery in New York City and maintains a studio in Hudson Valley, New York.

Whitehot Magazine of Contemporary Art
March 9, 2024

Jane Swavely at Magenta Plains

Installation view, Jane Swavely: Paintings, Magenta Plains, New York

In what has turned out to be a triumphant exhibition, Jane Swavely presented paintings executed over the last couple of years, denoting a pared down phase of her practice to essentials that serve it well. The expediency of the work is alluded to in a somewhat cryptic statement Swavely made (referring to her paintings) she said: "they are better when they are past". Does such a stance–the preference for looking forward that the statement implies–foretell a progressive agenda, or a statement of faith? Either way, moving forward serves her practice with advantage. By committing to pure abstraction, in scale reminiscent of the New York School, Swavely puts methods front and center. There is a preference for the one-shot, the unfussy; a reliance on rags to wipe away and highlight, together with the use of large flat brushes, givings the paintings their greasy, smeary, and particularly feathery atmospheric qualities.

Then, there are her experiences as studio assistant to Lois Lane and Brice Marden, which filters in with nods to 'new image' totemism and distinct color. Swavely has a penchant for contrasts between gritty, sooty, silvers that come across as though they have been admixed with charcoal, and sectors of often acid hues. Her use of silver has been linked with her oft-cited interest in cinema. In a recent interview she spoke of being effected by the compositions and photography found in Michelangelo Antonioni masterpiece "La Notte". Then there is the art-historic lineage of the pigment–from Pollock to Warhol to Stella and Humphries–all of which are absorbed in Swavely's usage, from emotive formalism to remove (chilliness). She has dragged Modernism into the twenty-first century, utilizing the benefit of time, distance and experience. And, yes, there are harbingers to the Ab-Ex trinity of Newman, Rothko and Still, in the work, that can also be viewed as best in a rearview mirror, allowing movement beyond the boundaries of isms.

Jane Swavely, OID #3, 2021, oil on canvas, 56 x 44 inches

Upon entering the gallery one encounters “OID #3 Green”, 2021 hung above the front desk. It is a fantastic piece of bucolic painting, in which smokey labyrinths of slashing brush strokes and washes hold one as if deep within a wood. Or, is it a murky interior, beyond a partially opened door that beckons us? The earliest, and smallest (56 x 44 inches) canvas in the show, it’s distinctiveness seemingly the criteria for setting it off from the main body of the exhibition. Chromatically, it forges a sisterhood with Moira Dryer’s casein panels.

The majority of the works have this delineation of ‘OID’ as a component of their titles. Swavely has said that, referring to this component, that she came upon its meaning a fragment of a work, a mere syllable, as in it’s usage as a suffix often implying an incomplete or imperfect resemblance to what is indicated by the preceding element. And, only later did she come across the three letter combination being used as an abbreviation for: object identifier. Is she pointing out the dependence her work has on preceding history, as in that it is somehow zomboid to the original?

Jane Swavely, Silver OID #6, 2022, oil on canvas, 90 x 90 inches

The gallery proper is lined with six monumental canvases. The largest, “Silver OID #6”, 2022, a diptych measuring seven-and-a-half-feet square, takes place of prominence, occupying the far central wall. By positing one figure, made up of a blackish/reddish/brownish column–with three-quarter of it sitting on the right edge of the left panel and one-quoter taking up the left edge of the right panel–there are evocations of nothing so much as an Oceanic or Easter Island totem. This impression is aided by the ‘chunks’ taken out of it along the uppermost edges by spots of overpaint and/or splatter from the surrounding field of silver. A flanking wall holds two 90 x 45 inch paintings, “Magenta OID”, 2023 and “Silver OID #7”, 2022, a work that Swavely has admitted having struggled with, including intervention by her dog, has led to a result that I would categorize it as involved with what has come to resemble something close to capturing movement. A close cousin to Pat Steir’s waterfalls, there is a rougher, brinier edge here, the flow having been applied by direct contact rather than pouring and washing with spray.

While those paintings become treatises on bisection, or centrality, a pair that share a wall, “Light Trap #3” and “Light Trap #4”, both 2023, each 90 x 45 inches, hanging at a respectful distance from each go with another strategy. These twins each balance an abbreviated rectangle of rich color, with a billowing sail-like quality enhanced by their bendy shapes, bracketed by an L-shaped banding of signature silver. The respective zones are treated with the same atmospheric streakiness we have come to expect. Here Swavely has switched her titling regiment, from the evocative oids, with their intimation of likenesses, to focus the direct gaze at the holy grail of painting.

Jane Swavely, Light Trap #2, 2023, oil on canvas, 73 x 61 inches

The show closes out with “Light Trap #2”, 2023, predominated by brilliant yellows and oranges, delineated as three vertical sectors, the largest a little off-center, and highlighted by a ray running down the left sector that brought to mind illumination from a Dan Flavin sculpture, of all things, but more provocatively, it called to mind the astounding depiction of the angel Gabriel as a pure column of light in Henry Oshawa Tanner’s luminist “The Annunciation”, 1898 to be found in the collection of the Philadelphia Museum of Art.

Henry Oshawa Tanner, The Annunciation, 1899, collection: Philadelphia Museum of Art

The interest that Swavely has culled from the art community recalls the excitement Susan Rothenberg was able to rally to her spare atmospheric imagery that, similar to Swavely's, relied on paramount figure/ground relationships.

As a long-time denizen of the Bowery, whose locale has infiltrated her practice, it seems apt that Swavely's commitment to her resolute career, finds a home at the head bulwark of this storied thoroughfare, giving us a new standard bearer. **WM** **By EDWARD WAISNIS**

Two Coats of Paint
January 18, 2024

SOLO SHOWS

Jane Swavely and the Bowery tradition

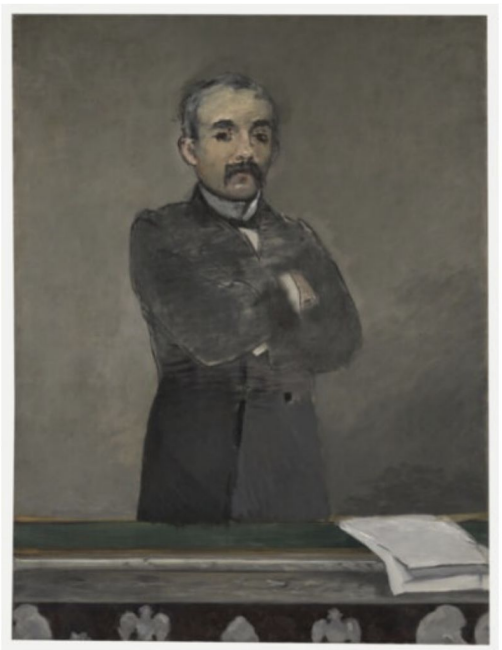
Jane Swavely, OID #3 Green, 2021, oil on canvas, 56 x 44 inches

Contributed by Michael Brennan / **Magenta Plains** is located on the Bowery, just as it breaks left onto Canal Street, in Chinatown. Upon entering, viewers are immediately greeted by a washy *terre verte* Jane Swavely painting, *OID #3 Green*, hanging above the desk. It sets an organic tone and is indicative of the half-dozen paintings to follow, hanging in the first-floor main gallery. Swavely's seven canvases are all vertical, and are mostly diptychs, internalized or externalized. They are loosely painted with a 2- to 2 ½-inch flat brush, heavy on the solvent, with some wiping away by hand. Much color mixing happens directly on the surface. Swavely favors flared, phosphorescent hues. She cleverly manipulates paint with rags to create the illusion of light emitting from the ground. Her work glows, appearing backlit. **Mark Rothko** would often talk about the effects of his timeworn brushes, but **Milton Resnick** revealed that Rothko secretly rendered most of his effects through wiping, adding and subtracting with rags. Swavely is after a different visual feel but employs similar means.

Jane Swavely, Light Trap #2, 2023, oil on canvas, 73 x 61 inches

Swavely's paintings begin and end *in media res*, that is, in the middle of the action. There's not much distinction between background and foreground, underpainting and finish, beginning and end. She prefers her work to appear "super fresh" and not "labored," as she noted in a **2022 *Two Coats of Paint* interview**. I prefer paintings that err on the side of unfinished as opposed to overworked. **Sharon Butler** explored this tension in some depth in connection with the MetBreuer exhibition **"Unfinished: Thoughts Left Visible"** in 2016. For anyone skeptical of the preference, I offer two Manet paintings of French prime minister Georges Clemenceau:

Musee d'Orsay: Edouard Manet, Georges Clemenceau (1879-1880), oil on canvas, 37 x 29.5 inches (94 x 73.8 cm)



Kimbell Art Museum: Edouard Manet, Portrait of Georges Clemenceau (1879–1880), oil on canvas, 45 5/8 x 34 3/4 in. (115.9 x 88.2 cm)

Is the more finished painting on the right actually better? I think the less finished one is the livelier of the pair, and Swavely makes a strong argument for leaving well enough alone. It takes considerable maturity for any artist to recognize when the time is right to step out of a painting, and then simply to stop.

Paintings, of course, embody the artist's lineage. Swavely's might begin with **Olga Rozanova** and run through **Moira Dryer**.

Kremlin Museum: Olga Rozanova, 1917, oil on canvas, (28 x 19.2 inches / 71.2 x 49 cm)

Moira Dryer, Pop, 1989, 2 parts: acrylic and wood, and steel. Acrylic/wood: 48 x 61 inches. Steel Plate: 31 x 13 inches. Courtesy of Van Doren Waxter.

Jane Swavely, Light Trap #4, 2023, oil on canvas, 90 x 45 inches

Jane Swavely, Light Trap #3, 2023, oil on canvas, 90 x 45 inches

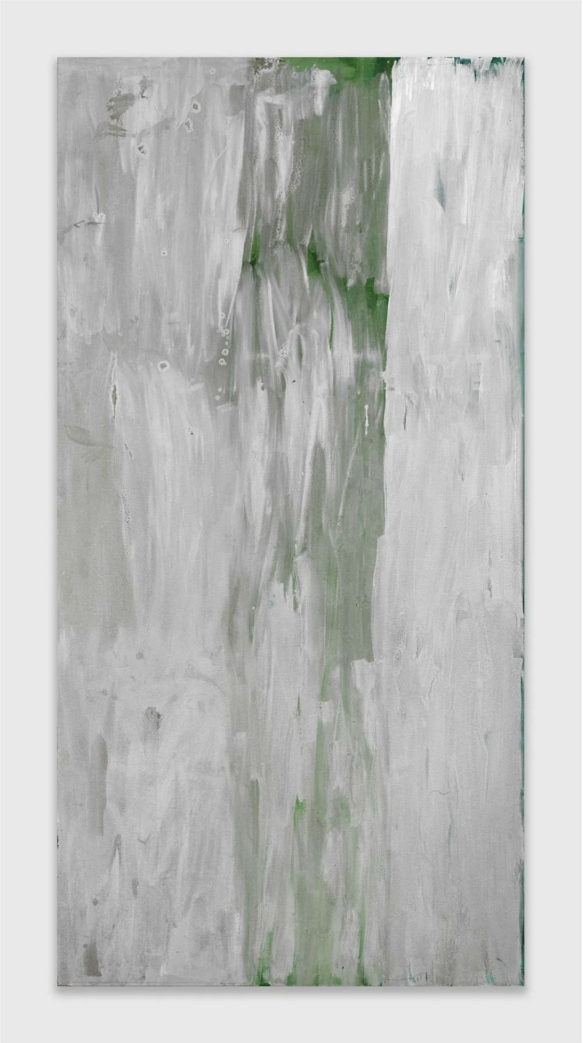
Her two diptychs, with their internalized fissure and doubly gnashing edges, recall **Barnett Newman's** notion of "The Plasmic Image" and **Günther Förg's** post-modern reboots with their lightning bolt drop.

Barnett Newman, Ulysses, 1990, oil on canvas, 132 x 50 inches / (335.3 x 127 cm)

Gunther Forg, Untitled, 1990, acrylic on lead, 94 1/2 x 63 inches (240 x 160cm)

Swavely is most adept in her use of silver paint and finds an extraordinary range of value between light and dark in this color. Silver paint – in particular, metallic aluminum paint – has a long history in "American Type Painting," beginning with **Jackson Pollock** and running through to **Frank Stella** and **Andy Warhol**. Swavely's use of silver is closer to **Warhol's Hollywood silver-screen mode**. Many contemporary painters, such as **Jacqueline Humphries**, likewise use silver as a media signifier. Reinforcing Swavely's reference to cinema is the narrow profile of her stretchers, which nearly sink into the wall, unlike the blocky, more object-like presence of standard heavy-duty stretchers. Swavely considers all interpretations.

Jane Swavely, Magenta OID, 2023, oil on canvas, 90 x 45 inches



Jane Swavely, Silver OID #7, 2022, oil on canvas, 90 x 45 inches

Jaqueline Humphries, NMM...MMM, 2023

Jane Swavely, Silver OID #6, 2022, oil on canvas, 90 x 90 inches

John Millei, Quicksilver #6, 1991, acrylic on canvas, 132 x 132 inches (335.3 x 335.3cm)

John Millei is another contemporary painter who is accomplished at parsing silver, but his acrylic work is flatter and less nuanced than Swavely's oil paint, with its lively interplay of light.

Finally, I appreciate that Swavely, a longtime Bowery denizen, is showing in her own neighborhood. It anchors the context of her abstraction, the Bowery being home at one time or another to its own distinctive subset of New York School artists, including Rothko, **Cy Twombly**, **Eva Hesse**, **Robert Ryman**, and **Brice Marden**. Swavely is pushing the same line, kicking some life into a storied tradition, moving it forward, and keeping it super fresh with modernist painting that raises questions and possibilities rather than enclosing itself in quotations and remaining categorically frozen.

Magenta Plains Gallery: Jane Swavely, Paintings, 2024, Installation View

JENNIFER BOLANDE

Jennifer Bolande emerged as an artist in the late 1970s working initially in dance, choreography and drawing. In the early 1980s, influenced by Pop, Conceptualism, Arte Povera, and the 'Pictures' artists, she began working with found material from the urban and media landscape which she remixed and invested with idiosyncratic narratives. Exhibiting in New York at Nature Morte Gallery, Metro Pictures, Artists Space and The Kitchen, Bolande was noted early on for her works exploring the materiality of photographs. She uses various media including photography, film, sculpture and installation to explore affinities and relationships and to convey embodied experience.

Solo exhibitions of her work have appeared at institutions and galleries around the world including Kunstraum, Munich, DE; MoMA PS1, New York, NY; Kunsthalle Palazzo, Liestal, CH; Margo Leavin, Los Angeles, CA; Galerie Sophia Ungers, Cologne, DE; Urbi & Orbi, Paris, FR; Magenta Plains, New York, NY and Nordanstad-Skarstedt, Stockholm, SE, among others. In 2010, a thirty-year retrospective of Bolande's work was presented by INOVA in Milwaukee, WI which also travelled to the Institute of Contemporary Art, Philadelphia, PA and the Luckman Gallery at California State University, Los Angeles, CA. Her site- specific project, Visible Distance/Second Sight, was featured in the inaugural Desert X 2017 in Coachella Valley, CA. Bolande was recently included in museum exhibitions such as Pictures and After, MAMCO, Geneva; Drawing Down the Moon, Hammer Museum, Los Angeles, CA; Readymades Are For Everyone, Swiss Institute, New York, NY; Brand New: Art and Commodity in the 1980s, Hirshhorn Museum, Washington, DC; Mixed Use Manhattan, Museo Nacional Centro de Arte Reina Sofia, Madrid, ES; Don't Look Back; The 1990s at MOCA, Geffen Contemporary at MOCA, Los Angeles, CA; and This Will Have Been, Art Love and Politics in the 1980's, Museum of Contemporary Art, Chicago, IL, which travelled to Walker Art Center, Minneapolis, MN, and ICA, Boston, MA. Additionally her work was included in Living Inside the Grid, New Museum of Contemporary Art, New York, NY and The Photogenic, Institute of Contemporary Art, Philadelphia, PA. Bolande has been awarded fellowships from the John Simon Guggenheim Foundation, New York Foundation for the Arts, Tesuque Foundation, Elizabeth Firestone Graham Foundation, and the Andy Warhol Foundation. She is professor emerita of New Genres in the Department of Art at UCLA.

Born in 1957 in Cleveland, OH
Lives and works in Los Angeles and Joshua Tree, CA

Bob Nickas
January 2024

The Best of 2023, The Worst of 2023 — Bob Nickas

JENNIFER BOLANDE, *Persistence of Vision*, Magenta Plains, New York.
May 4–June 17

One of the most perceptive/intuitive eyes out there, finding visual correspondence and jokes, mystery and wonder in seemingly mundane moments, situations both staged and happened upon, or an orchestration of happenstance, engaging in a poetics of the everyday. How does she do it, seemingly without doing anything at all? Almost forty years on, hers is an undeniable power of observation that delights in how objects, light and shadows align to perform—windows as mirrors, mirrors as spatial displacement, a luminous pile of ice on dappled green grass (she lives in the Mojave Desert). For Bolande, this is by now second nature, finely-tuned. She does what artists in their generosity have always done, and it's why we need them: they reveal something we hadn't noticed, or that we hadn't seen in quite the same way before. Funny how the world we thought we knew is so effortlessly transformed.

Brooklyn Rail
June 7, 2023

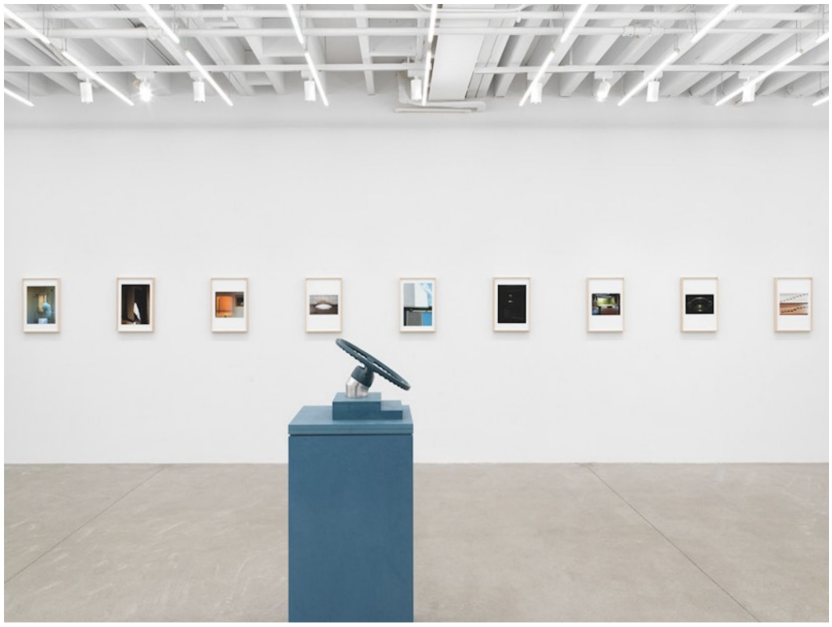
THE BROOKLYN RAIL

"As audience to the world, the objective is to receive as many messages as possible: locating an appropriate rhythm, distance, and angle. Certain things only make sense at this moment, from this angle, others can only be addressed once they have acquired an ambiguous history." —Jennifer Bolande, 1986

1986! That year the high tide of postmodernism and a vibrant market floated many boats. Locally, the art world cast a decadent eye upon glamorized readymades and cringe-y appropriations of biker culture. Jennifer Bolande's eye, no less decadent, mediated the aftershock of the spectacle originating a complex body of work around, among many other things, splashes of milk, inert Marshall amps, and the neglected furniture in porn movies. The suggestion that a viewer "locate an appropriate rhythm" while an object acquires an "ambiguous history" still swims against today's current of one-look art in the streaming age.

Jennifer Bolande, *Mirror Topology*, 2023. Archival pigment print, 19 x 13 inches. Courtesy the artist and Magenta Plains, New York.

On Magenta Plains's ground floor twenty-eight photographs surround a single, centrally located blue steering wheel mounted on a no-nonsense pedestal of the same color. No junkyard trophy, this is a humble wheel that can be physically turned like in some panoptic arcade game situating you in a virtual "wheelhouse." The same object had been employed earlier in Bolande's *Steering Wheel* (1995) photograph where she compares her own knuckles along the ridged grip. The photographic print for Bolande previously served either as a physical material to manipulate or as a mnemonic site. Here each beautiful photograph is intentional, unpopulated and mostly context free except for the brilliant desert light. Immediate "Fine Art Photography" sources include off-center figures like early William Eggleston, Luigi Ghirri and the Kodachrome urban episodes of Saul Leiter. An upturned glass extends a vaulted dome over postcard *Tokyo Under Glass* (all works 2023); a trio of stones describes a single line of marble which travels across the picture and a nocturnal bird feeder substitutes for a newly discovered transparent deep-water species. Artists with cameras historically gravitate toward places and things that signal or resemble their own art, exemplified by young Robert Rauschenberg's photographs of Rome taken as he improvised his nascent assemblages there in 1953.



Installation view: *Jennifer Bolande: Persistence of Vision*, Magenta Plains, New York, 2023. Courtesy the artist and Magenta Plains, New York. Photo: Object Studies.

Upstairs seven images titled “Monoliths” attend four plaster sculptures, “Drifts,” presented atop highly determined solid pedestals. Each photo is of a single tissue/kleenex promoted to the perpetual “next,” a monolith certainly but also a cartoon ghost or witness to some occult ritual. Bolande’s art has always summoned the meta, so as portraiture a “facial” tissue may offer a surface receptive to a fleeting reproduction albeit in a Shroud of Turin sort of way. As “icebergs,” the handmade objects shift between the ominous and tragic, but I also recognize a Cubist citadel, Gibraltar (logo for Prudential) and cliffs of chalk, a sentimental sign of home for some crossing the channel. Like an object in a dream or a set in an amateur theater, these generalized formations have yet to acquire an ambiguous history.

Bolande’s oeuvre is singularly resistant to the art fair photogenic and, like Arte Povera (Marisa Merz especially), it requires the physical encounter. My own visit(s) involved taking iPhone images for reference which, I was startled to discover, transformed the four standing objects into blue elongated Pop-y tissue boxes with their contents ready and waiting. In other casual shots the “Monoliths” operate as mirrors, each playing reflective host to out-of-register “Drifts.”

The sequencing of the archival pigment prints allows for many inclusions of water in all its forms which I associate with the unconscious nostalgia for analog photography. Here are two captures of ice cubes (white cubes?), clouds, droplets, filled tubs and milky submerged forks. Iggy Pop made a mysterious claim about being an “ice machine” in the droning “Nightclubbing” and Bolande includes an unsettling image of one, a Judd-like configuration, prismatic visor and all. Nothing could be sunnier than the Magritte-ian *Window with Cloud* and more modernist than *Lines in the Sand* an observation of linear alignments temporarily linking parched earth to sky. Bolande’s attraction to maps as malleable pictorialized space continues in *Mirror Topology* where an angled bathroom mirror reflects a topological mountain range, our planet’s erupting “skin.”

Jennifer Bolande’s earliest assemblage and important photo objects anticipated the abject nineties and later tendencies including the “archival impulse” and “affect theory” et al. The exhibition’s title *Persistence of Vision* may be interpreted as either an attitude or a promise. By Tim Maul

Jennifer Bolande, *Drift 3*, 2023. Plaster, wood, wire mesh on blue pigmented high-density composite plinth and base, overall: 56 1/2 x 20 x 20 inches, sculpture: 12 x 16 x 6 1/4 inches, plinth: 1 1/2 x 20 x 20 inches, base: 43 x 20 x 20 inches. Courtesy the artist and Magenta Plains, New York. Photo: Object Studies.

MARTHA DIAMOND

Martha Diamond received a BA from Carleton College in Minnesota in 1964 and an MA from New York University in 1969, the same year she moved into her loft on the Bowery. In the 1970s, she exhibited in group exhibitions at The Aldrich Contemporary Art Museum, Ridgefield, CT, Hallwalls Contemporary Arts Center, Buffalo, NY, and The Renaissance Society, Chicago, IL. Diamond was represented by Brooke Alexander Gallery from 1976 to 1985 and in 1988, mounted her first museum solo exhibition at Bowdoin College Museum of Art, Brunswick, ME. In 1989, three large-scale paintings were included in The Whitney Biennial, curated by Richard Armstrong, John G. Hanhardt, Richard Marshall, and Lisa Phillips. From the mid-1980s to the mid- 1990s, she was represented by the legendary Robert Miller Gallery and in 2004, The New York Studio School organized a retrospective titled *Martha Diamond: From Three Decades*.

Recent solo exhibitions in New York include *Martha Diamond: 1980-1989* at Magenta Plains (2021); *Cityscapes at Eva Presenhuber* (2018); Martha Diamond: Broad Strokes, at Harper's Books (2017); and Recent Paintings at Alexandre Gallery (2016). Recent group exhibitions in New York City include *Emotional Intelligence II* at Polina Berlin Gallery(2024); *Looking Back / The 14th White Columns Annual – Selected by Randy Kennedy* at White Columns; *Lunch Poems* at Martos Gallery (2023); *Beautiful, Vivid, Self-Contained*, curated by David Salle at Hill Art Foundation (2023); *NY Painting in New York: 1971-83*, curated by Ivy Shapiro at Karma (2022); *In Her Hands*, curated by David Salle at Skarstedt (2020) and *Downtown Painting*, curated by Alex Katz at Peter Freeman (2019). Her work is in the permanent collection of numerous institutions, including Museum of Modern Art, New York, NY; Whitney Museum of American Art, New York, NY; Brooklyn Museum, New York, NY; Perez Art Museum Miami, Miami, FL; High Museum of Art, Atlanta, GA; The Museum of Fine Arts, Houston, Houston, TX; Museum of Fine Arts, Boston, Boston, MA, and Staatliche Museen zu Berlin, Berlin, Germany, among others.

Born in 1960, Willow Grove, PA
Died in 2023, New York, NY

Canvas
September 2021

canvas
ART AND CULTURE FROM THE MIDDLE EAST AND ARAB WORLD

Capturing *the* Light

With Martha Diamond

By: David Carrier

If I were a senior curator with a major museum collection at my disposal, I would love to organize an historical show devoted to urban art. The exhibition would start with one of Bernardo Bellotto's great eighteenth-century scenes of Dresden, then display a Paris cityscape by Camille Pissarro, and continue with a painting of Manhattan by Rackstraw Downes. Undoubtedly, I would show one of Claude Monet's scenes of the Rouen cathedral. And, in my catalogue essay I would include the description of Manhattan by the greatest modernist painter of light, Henri Matisse. When he first visited America in 1930, reports his biographer, Hilary Spurling, "he was enchanted by the light," which was, he said, "so dry, so crystalline, like no other," and "by the combination of order, clarity, and proportion." Ultimately, I would conclude my exhibition with a 1980s painting by Martha Diamond, whose work extends this grand tradition into the present. Like these prior masters, she is a city artist. However, where Bellotto, Pissarro, and Downes show the details of their urban scenes, what interests Diamond most is the light of the city. In that way, her painting, which moves toward (but doesn't aspire to achieve) abstraction, propels this way of thinking into the late twentieth century.

● ***David Carrier:*** **Late last night, I was thinking of your work, Martha. It's really fascinating to me, this conception of being an artist of the city, and your relation to the Baudelairian notion of the painter of modern life. This idea has been around for so long, and yet it's still clearly alive in your art.**

Martha Diamond: Well, I always appreciated this idea of 'Old New York.' I was sort of raised up through it.

David Carrier: **You have this fascinating quote in which you said that "As I child, we did just anything we wanted to do. I was never intimidated by cars, or people, even." That is just a wonderful response to New York City.**

Martha Diamond: My version of the city was borne out of being raised in Queens. When you're a city kid, I think you're convinced that nothing can hurt you. Although, apparently, when I was a little kid, I climbed outside the window and took away all my mother's jewelry. Evidently, I was not afraid of the outside.

David Carrier: **And what floor were you on when you did that?**

Martha Diamond: I don't know, really. I was a little kid, a really little kid. I probably could count, but I don't have any idea.

David Carrier: **Do you feel that that essence of the city has gone, now? Or is it a place you can still walk around and enjoy?**

Martha Diamond: I miss all the old stores and the old neighborhoods. You know, like the book area or the area where they designed clothes. Or the jewelry area.. I liked all the neighborhoods that there were, and I don't think there are so many distinct and individualized neighborhoods anymore.

David Carrier: **I knew an artist, Harvey Quaytman, who lived on your street. When I knew him in the 1980s, the Bowery was close to Soho, but it felt so far away. Now, of course, it's changed completely; the Bowery's just another gentrified neighborhood.**

Martha Diamond: It was different, then. I mean, the humans were different; the doorways were different; the cars were different.

David Carrier: **Do you see your art as a kind of chronicle of a New York that's disappeared, or currently disappearing? Or do the scenes depicted in your paintings exist in the present for you.**

Martha Diamond: I think of them as showing the present. But I don't distinguish my art from what exists outside because my idea of what I make is really kind of primitive. At one point, I remember going to people and explaining, "I make it just like this," and would mimic painting brushstroke by brushstroke in a very simple way. I know that's not how buildings are made, but that's how I understand them. That's primitive thinking!

David Carrier: **You have a very focused interest in the city's light. You're not interested in the pedestrians on the street, you're interested in the light hitting the building. That seems to me a very peculiar and particular interest.**

Martha Diamond: Well, the pedestrians change all the time. And life doesn't, really. It changes, but not in its essence. I like the consistency of the city's buildings, or at least its early buildings.

Installation view, Martha Diamond: *1980–1989, Magenta Plains, New York, NY.*

David Carrier: **I was just looking at the paintings that you're going to show next month, Martha, and I was interested in how you have those structures, those grids. It seems to be really central to this group of paintings. They're very basic, almost primitive, to use that word again. In fact, I would definitely call your Green Cityscape (1985) primitive! How would you describe it?**

Martha Diamond: Green. What else can I say? That's it. It's a realistic painting in greens because I wanted to see if I could get away with doing that. I don't know how I initially conceived of it. Maybe I was thinking of the buildings I saw out of the windows of various places I lived when I was young. But I didn't go up to the Metropolitan and imitate what I saw. The subjects of my art are the buildings around us. These were the buildings outside my window... I'm a very primitive person in that way, I think. And I don't mind that. No, I don't mind that at all.

'Green Cityscape' (1985). Oil on linen. 90h x 72w inches. Courtesy of the artist and Magenta Plains, New York.

David Carrier: **One commentator says, "Diamond is doing for the cityscape what Joan Mitchell does for the greater outdoors." And I thought, that's interesting, but also weird, in a way, because what's more different than a tree and a building? You couldn't work outdoors? That wouldn't interest you?**

Martha Diamond: I'd really have to know more about it in order to feel comfortable doing it, whereas with the city buildings, I take it for granted. I was born in Manhattan. I've lived in Manhattan for a long time, and I've walked through it for a long time. But trees are specialized, and I guess I don't think of buildings as particularly specialized.

David Carrier: **When you call yourself a "primitive" painter, do you mean that the histories of Bellotto in the eighteenth century, and Pissarro, in the nineteenth, don't particularly matter to you as much as the immediate and visceral experience of being on the street? Would that be a fair characterization?**

Martha Diamond: I never thought of that, exactly. But, yes, for me, I think that's true.

David Carrier: **The German Expressionists of the 1920s were doing scenes of the city, and they were interested in the aggressive, visual life of Berlin, at that point.**

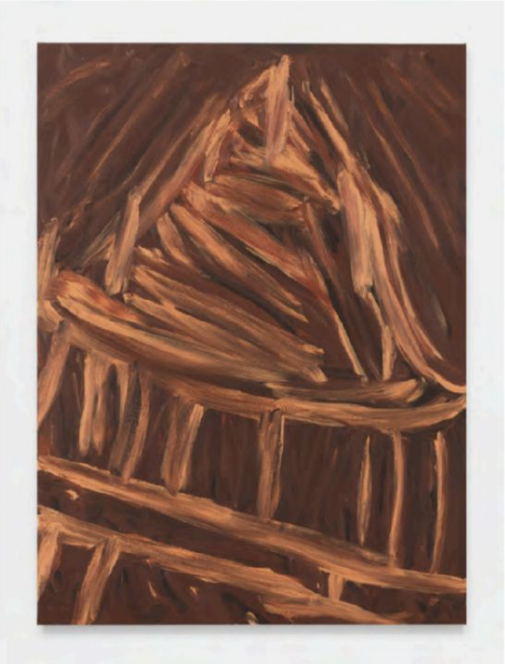
Martha Diamond: I guess if I were going to paint the people or the social aspect of the city, that's probably where I'd go with it. It would be interesting. I remember very clearly growing up in New York City and noticing how the other kids I went to school with dressed, and how their parents dressed for their jobs, and other little differentiating details about their families. But now, everybody dresses alike. My closet must have 25 pairs of dungarees. It's the same every day.

David Carrier: **You've cited two painters – Jackson Pollock and Andy Warhol – who, early on, were important to your work. Reading that, I thought, wow! Really? Such different people. Heavens! Can we talk about that for a moment?**

Martha Diamond: Jackson Pollock tossed paint. But Warhol? I guess I just take him as it comes, you know? If someone's painting soup cans, that's okay with me. And if someone's throwing paint, that's also okay with me.

David Carrier: **You remain, in a certain sense, a figurative painter, a painter who needs the city. You didn't move all the way into abstraction, as did many of the artists who followed de Kooning. You wanted to remain attached to that city grid; that city structure – the life, and the buildings, and so forth. You didn't want to be an Impressionist painter of the city, but you also didn't want to make a purely abstract work. You sort of wanted to be in a place in between? Here I think of your painting, Structure (1993), as an important example.**

Martha Diamond: When I made that painting I was thinking, "Can I make an orange cityscape, or can I do it with a different color?" That's all I thought. It wasn't realism...I mean, I really think that is how simple-minded I was. I know I've described my approach as primitive before...



'Structure' (1993). Oil on linen. 60h x 49w inches. Courtesy of the artist and Magenta Plains, New York.

David Carrier: **Often, intuitive artists like you have difficulty finishing. Certainly, de Kooning did. Is that ever a concern of yours? How do you know when something is finished and ready to leave your studio?**

Martha Diamond: Pretty much when I don't feel like doing anything else to it.

David Carrier: **In other words, after it achieves a certain kind of rightness?**

Martha Diamond: Yeah, a point where whatever information I was thinking of putting down seems to exist now on the canvas.

David Carrier: **Right. And do you ever come back to a painting, over months and years? Or is the process faster than that?**

Martha Diamond: I put together something that holds together visually, and makes some kind of sense, visually. All the hints should be there, somehow. So, I'm not documenting the city for anybody. I've never done wrist work; it's not what I do. As a matter of fact, one friend calls me "slasher!" I wave the brush around wildly. The fact that I use brushes, I think, is a big part of what I do. Brushes have limited definition. I care more about evoking the light than depicting the details.

David Carrier: **Do you ever look out from the Bowery onto the street and make art?**

Martha Diamond: Yes. And I've done drawings on the street, in crayons, in pen. I love the city, so I look at it often. And I have a memory of places which I can also use to my advantage.

David Carrier: **I pulled out this statement I like from Bill Berkson: "The light on buildings against the high, Atlantic sky, makes New York life tenable." The buildings and the light – the combination – it seems like you need both? You don't want to just show the building structure, it really is all about the light against the buildings?**

Martha Diamond: That's the New York City I live in. I mean, the buildings are there, and the light is there. I'm not often out in places where there isn't natural light. Unless I'm in a coffee shop.

David Carrier: **Do all of these super skyscrapers give you a sense of how the city has changed and morphed throughout the years?**

Martha Diamond: The details aren't interesting. I mean, what am I going to look at? There are some buildings with real decoration, but they were built, 50, 70 years ago. The light's all there is defining anything. I think that must be what I see. I mean, I'm sort of simplified, but there it is.

David Carrier: **What would be the first painting that you would think of as being a work of yours?**

Martha Diamond: When I was young, we lived across the street from a relatively new grammar school. I tried to draw my street outside the window of my class, in the second or third grade, or so, and I only had paints that weren't really subtle. Anyway, my first art problem was how to paint asphalt.

David Carrier: **You were a self-trained artist in New York. That's amazing to me. There are so many art schools, yet you taught yourself?**

Martha Diamond: I did go to classes on 57th Street, at the art school that was there, and learned from somebody about painting with brushes. I loved that, and I still use those kind of Asian brushes that I first learned about at the time.

David Carrier: **In one of your past interviews, you speak about your time teaching and your female pupils, and the often-difficult place for women in the American art world. Can you say anything more about that, especially now, after looking back at all the changes the artworld has seen over the years?**

Martha Diamond: Well, I think the only changes I know of are changes that other people made, really. I taught at Skowhegan a few times, and sometimes the men wouldn't teach the female students. Obviously, I didn't approve of that. And I wasn't a lunatic about social stuff but, I thought, how could you not pay attention to all the women artists out there? And somehow, at a certain point, I just made a point of teaching the women students and telling them stuff that I thought they needed to know.

Martha Diamond photographed by Georges Piette in her studio in 1993. Courtesy of the artist and Magenta Plains, New York.

David Carrier: **Was that when you began to form a community of friends around you who were poets and artists?**

Martha Diamond: That came later when I lived in Manhattan. And, with Peter Schjeldhal, whom I met when I was studying at Carlton College, in Minnesota. There were all kinds of people there, and it was great.

David Carrier: **When did you move to the Bowery?**

Martha Diamond: 1969

David Carrier: **When you got there, was it already crowded with artists?**

Martha Diamond: Yes. Living on the Bowery, that's where I first started really meeting artists in earnest. That was a wonderful time. And it was a great time for parties, really good parties. And you could walk at night and find other parties if the one you were invited to wasn't so great. You could just go up and ask a random stranger if you could go to their party since the one you were at wasn't so good. We would do that all the time when a boyfriend of mine and I hosted parties. People would call and say, "Could we come?" And we'd say, "Yeah!" It was a great and interesting time to meet a lot of artists who were talented at many of the things that I didn't really experience growing up in Queens. Like cooking, for instance. I mean, my mother cooked nothing. So, you know, I discovered food during my time living in the Bowery. You know, after all these years, I've never really had any complaints about living in New York.

David Carrier: **At the end of the day, from your perspective, has the artworld changed over the years?**

Martha Diamond: Where is the artworld? If you can find it, sign me up! ■

The New York Times
January 20, 2021

The New York Times

3 Art Gallery Shows to See Right Now

Irving Penn's notion of photographism; Martha Diamond's spectacular cityscapes; and the sculptor Fawn Krieger's "experiments in resistance."

Martha Diamond

Through Feb. 17. Magenta Plains, 94 Allen Street, Manhattan; 917-388-2464; magentaplains.com.

The building in Martha Diamond's 1983 painting "Orange Light," an anonymous hulk near the Bowery studio she's occupied since 1969, is soot gray and simplified halfway to abstraction. Silhouetted against a dense orange sky, it looks like an accidental vortex of ash in some supernatural forge. It's made of nothing but straight lines and angles, but the brush strokes themselves are too slippery to lie even. And though no bodies or faces are visible, it feels inhabited all the same. In its self-contained grandeur and eerie harmony, the piece evokes a Mondrian windmill.

Along with "Orange Light" and three other spectacular cityscapes the size of skyscraper windows, "Martha Diamond: 1980-1989" includes two striking large still lifes and 22 tiny Masonite studies. The studies are surprisingly substantial, exhibiting a range of textures, compositional possibilities and colors that get sheared away in the headier large paintings. It's interesting, too, to compare first drafts to two of the final cityscapes. The small version of "Facade 1982" feels less successful than its full-size simply because the colors aren't quite as dreamy, whereas the miniature "Red Cityscape" matches point for point but, at nine inches high, feels drastically different.

Still, it's the cityscapes you'll remember. Red strokes as broad as floorboards roil like crashing ice floes in "Red Cityscape," while in "Facade 1982," buoyant yellow lines float against midnight blue.

WILL HEINRICH

Martha Diamond's "Orange Light" (1983), oil on linen.
Martha Diamond and Magenta Plains

MATTHEW WEINSTEIN

Matthew Weinstein studied Art History at Columbia University. After he worked as a writer and critic. He was also a regular contributor to Artforum when in 1982 he stopped writing criticism, turned to fiction and took up painting. In searching for a way to combine his narrative impulse with a painterly sensibility, Weinstein began to study 3D animation production. Putting exhibitions on hold for two years while he mastered a professional animation software, Weinstein began exhibiting again with animated films that incorporate text, music, performance and technology. Gradually, objects and paintings began to emerge from Weinstein's virtual world. He now works with a small group of animators, actors and musicians and is constantly producing what he calls "animated cabarets".

He has had solo exhibitions and participated in group exhibitions at Sonnabend Gallery, New York, NY, Baldwin Gallery, Aspen, CO, White Box, New York, NY, Sebastian Barquet, New York, NY, Carolina NItsch, New York, NY, Baumgartner Galleries, Washington DC, Young Projects, Los Angeles, CA, Wetterling Gallery, Stockholm and Gothenburg, SE, Nolan Judin Gallery, Berlin, DE, Barbara Farber, Amsterdam, NO, LA Louver, Los Angeles CA, Deitch Projects Los Angeles, CA, Galerie Camarga Vilaca, São Paulo, BR, Lehman Maupin, NY, Studio La Citta,Verona, IT, Thaddaeus Ropac, Paris, FR, Film Cologne, Cologne, DE, Bravin Lee, NY, Kevin Bruk, Miami, FL, Postmasters Gallery, New York, NY, Mario Diacono, Boston, Neumann Wolfson, New York, NY, Honor Fraser, LA, Daniel Weinberg, Los Angeles, CA, Galeria Lehman, Lausanne, Kunsthalle al Hamburger Platz, Berlin, DE, Greene Gallery, Geneva, CH, Rochester Contemporary Art Center, Rochester, NY, Museo de Artes Visuales Alejandro Otero, Caracas, VE, Off Shore Gallery, East Hampton, NY, Todd Gallery, London, UK, and Hacienda La Trinidad Parque Cultural, Caracas Venezuela, Caracas, VE, among others. Weinstein's works of art are in private and public collections around the world, including the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York, the Nassau County Museum of Art in Roslyn, NY, the Sammlung Goetz and the Bayerische Staatsgemäldesammlungen, both in Munich, DE.

Born in 1964 in New York, NY
Lives and works in Brooklyn, NY

The New York Times
October 30, 2015

The New York Times

ART MATTERS

A Video Installation, Starring One Seductive Fish

Scenes from the 15-minute film by the artist Matthew Weinstein.

By Isabel Wilkinson
Oct. 30, 2015

In the opening scene of "É Lobro," the artist Matthew Weinstein's new 15-minute animated film, a fish is born out of a machine. She swims — scales glittering and tail gliding — through darkness, pausing to bask in a martini glass, get her make-up done and kiss a statue of a giant gold chauffeur.

The film, which opens this week at the Jacob Lewis Gallery in New York alongside several paintings by the artist, is a little bit twisted and occasionally funny — like a significantly darker "Fantasia." It originated as a commission Weinstein completed for the Charlotte Symphony Orchestra, an animation to accompany its performance of Maurice Ravel's "Boléro." After it was performed, the artist (along with the musician Francis Harris) spent two years re-animating, scrambling the symphony into an entirely new piece. ("I'm trying to do what Pixar does but with three people and no money," he says.)

Weinstein has used fish as the protagonists of his work since 2004, after he rented a home with his partner and had to take care of its resident fish. “I realized that whenever we walked by the tank, they would follow us, to the point where you felt weird about being naked in front of the fish tank,” he says. “They were really looking at us.” The “É Lobro” fish is narcissistic, seductive — and, Weinstein says, has not been named, because “I thought that really famous people like Cher have one name, so I thought that my characters are so famous that they should have no names.”

Weinstein hopes viewers of the piece in the gallery will treat “É Lobro” not as a movie but rather as a painting, an environmental piece that can be experienced on and off. After all, he says, his goal is simple: “I’m trying to make art go some place where art is not supposed to go. And when you confront people with that kind of material, it’s interesting to see how people respond to it.”

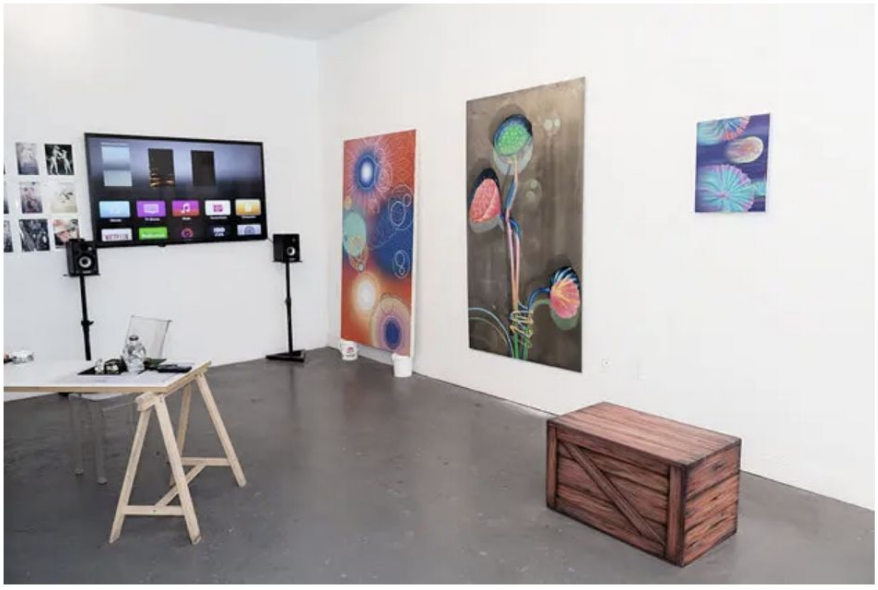
“Matthew Weinstein: É Lobro” is on view through Dec. 12 at the Jacob Lewis Gallery, 521 W 26th St., New York, jacoblewisgallery.com.

Brooklyn Magazine
March 16, 2015

BROOKLYN

INSIDE THE STUDIO OF MATTHEW WEINSTEIN

By Kristin Iversen



All photos by Maggie Shannon

Matthew Weinstein

Perched high above the industrial border of Clinton Hill, Weinstein's studio is a sun-filled, high-ceilinged, multi-windowed space that the artist found on Craigslist about a year ago. The space itself is pristine in a manner that might not usually be associated with a vision of an artist's studio as some sort of messy explosion of paint and canvas. Rather, Weinstein explains, "I keep it really clean because I do more thinking here than making things. I work really slowly. I spend more time figuring out how to make things than actually making them. It's like my work; it's very precise."

While precise is certainly one word for Weinstein's meticulously planned pieces, merely describing it that way belies its seductive quality, and the way in which his art—particularly his new digital animation videos—insinuates itsef into your consciousness, playing with any preconceived idea you might have about what is art and what is simply craft. For that reason, it is possible to find yourself mentally lost in a space that might be uncluttered with the typical trappings of creation, but which deeply confounds consciousness, as your eye and mind wander from one thing to the next.

PETER NAGY

Artist-dealer Peter Nagy founded the fabled East Village gallery, Nature Morte, with fellow artist Alan Belcher in 1982. Nature Morte was among one of the most important artist-run galleries of the 1980s, focused on a new type of work that blended Conceptualism and Pop Art exploring the relationship between art and commodity and exhibiting some of their generation's most promising young artists including Gretchen Bender, Jennifer Bolande, Joel Otterson and Steven Parrino. In addition, Nature Morte hosted one-off exhibition projects with a number of artists including Vito Acconci, Ross Bleckner, Louise Lawler, Sherrie Levine, Thomas Nozkowski, Richard Pettibone, Keith Sonnier, Robert Gober and a collaborative work by Laurie Simmons and Allan McCollum. Throughout the 80s, Nagy was represented by International With Monument, a gallery run by Liz Koury and Meyer Vaisman which also exhibited Peter Halley, Jeff Koons and Richard Prince. Nagy's iconic work includes his Xeroxes (the earliest body of work he produced from 1982 to 1985) as well as his black and white Cancer, Baroque and Rococo, and early Orientalist Paintings. Nagy went on to exhibit his work to critical and commercial acclaim throughout the 80s and 90s nationally and internationally, holding multiple solo exhibitions at Jay Gorney Modern Art and in Europe. Peter Nagy has lived and worked in New Delhi India since 1992 and reopened Gallery Nature Morte in New Delhi, India—considered by many to be the most important gallery of contemporary art in India today.

Peter Nagy studied Communication Design, Art History and Theory at Parsons School of Design, N.Y., from 1977 to 1981. His work has been included in solo and group exhibitions at Centre Pompidou, Paris, FR; Museum of Contemporary Art, Los Angeles, CA; The New Museum of Contemporary Art, New York, NY; The Aldrich Museum of Contemporary Art, Ridgefield, CT; Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, NY; and The Whitney Museum of American Art, New York, NY. He also participated in installations by Group Material at Documenta 8, Kassel, DE and Americana in the 1985 Whitney Biennial. Recently Nagy's works from the '80s were included in shows at The Met Breuer, New York, NY; the Hirshhorn Museum, Washington, DC; Magenta Plains, New York, NY; Tate Modern, London, England; Centre National d'Art Contemporain, Geneva, and the Museum of Contemporary Art, Chicago. Nagy has received awards from the Pollock Krasner Foundation, the Jean Stein Foundation, as well as an award for Curatorial Excellence from the India Habitat Centre, New Delhi.

Born in 1959, Bridgeport, CT
Lives and works in New Delhi, IN

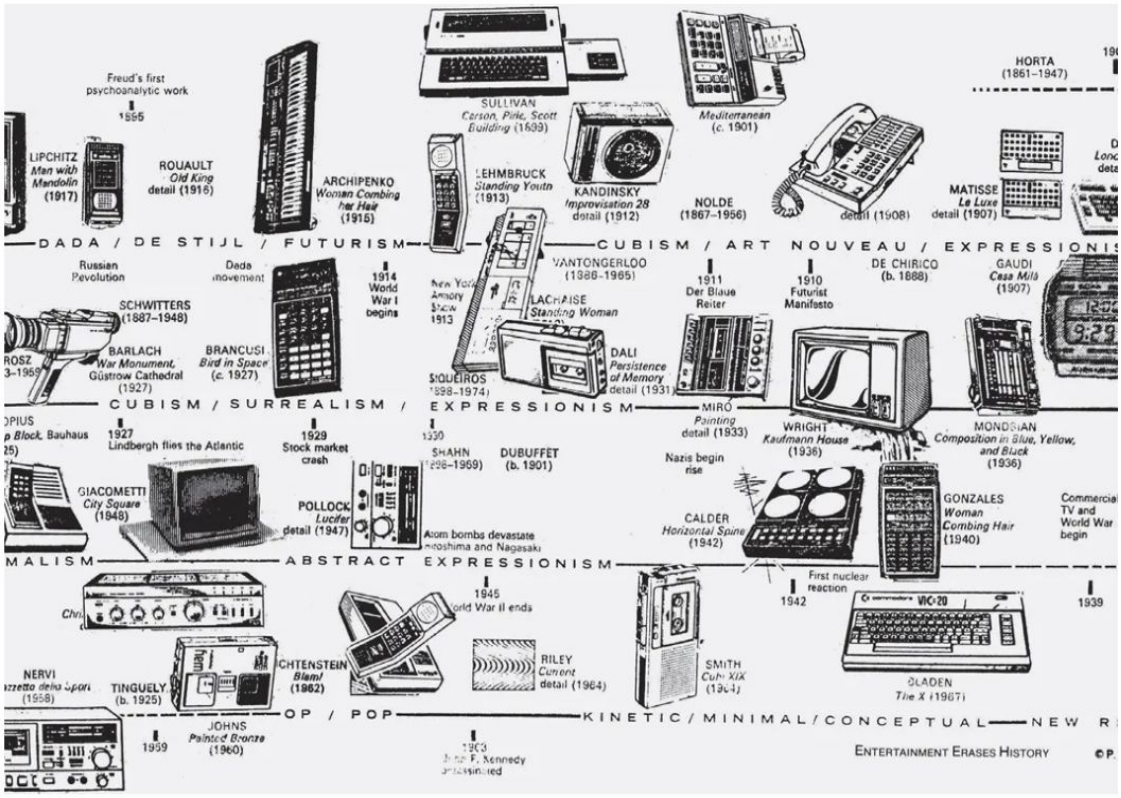
Artforum
October 27, 2023

ARTFORUM

Peter Nagy

Jeffrey Deitch | 18 Wooster Street

By Jan Avgikos



Peter Nagy, ***Entertainment Erases History*** **(detail), 1983,** UV print on vinyl, 6' × 11' 1".

As an artist and a cofounder of legendary East Village gallery Nature Morte, Peter Nagy launched his storied career amid the combative, hyperintellectual atmosphere of 1980s postmodernity. This retrospective survey of works produced between 1982 and 1992, all rendered in black and white, constituted a richly nuanced time capsule of a paradigm-shifting period.

To revisit work predicated on cultural critique several decades after its production is to submit it to quite an acid test. How amazing to discover that Nagy's early output, which shows the artist's penchant for mapping transformations wrought by expanded media, increased corporate power, and concentrated flows of capital, felt downright prescient today. Like Warhol, Nagy was practically clairvoyant in his observations about art and its commodification, the ballooning culture of the copy, and our ongoing anxieties about authenticity. Two persistent themes concerned dysfunction and obsolescence in relation to the canonical history of art, as well as the idea that history itself has come to an end. What a time to bring this era of Nagy's art back: in a "future" New York boarded up and in the grip of a pandemic.

The exhibition took its name from an eleven-foot-wide print on vinyl, *Entertainment Erases History*, 1983, that replicates the look of a classroom wall chart. It features a time line of the twentieth-century avant-garde, but, instead of displaying illustrations of famous artworks, it is littered with images of old electronics in the style of a Crazy Eddie discount store advertisement. One saw TV sets, transistor tape recorders, cassette decks, office telephones, even a vintage computer monitor and keyboard. But the piece reveals something else as well: It typifies Nagy's near-obsessive interrogation of the distinction between art culture and mass entertainment, which he pursued across a broad spectrum of materials. In works ranging from acrylic on canvas to enamel on aluminum—and those dispersing images and text on wool, vinyl, photo-etched magnesium, sandblasted aluminum, and photocopy paper—the experimental range of production values is matched by stylistic diversity. The artist has borrowed from Conceptual and commercial art to create hybridized objects that speak as much to the experience of the consumer as to the acquisitive instincts of the collector.

Nagy's work revels in subterfuge. In *Intellectual History*, 1984, he appropriates a map of New York's Metropolitan Museum of Art and substitutes a horde of corporate logos—AT&T, Atari, Canon, IBM, Xerox, and others—for the art. *International Survey Condominiums*, 1985–90, promotes playful confusion between a museum and a condo tower. These works critique institutions, but on occasion Nagy may have also waded into the personal. Take *The Illusion of Aesthetics*, 1983, which replicates an old advertisement for Jon Gnagy, the popular mid-century television artist who demystified the process of creating art for generations of kids through his syndicated program, *Learn to Draw*. One wondered if Big Gnagy made a lasting impression upon Little Nagy once upon a time.

Yet for all of its droll observations, Nagy's art of this period is ingrained with a sense of loss, as if something profound was coming to an end. A series of graphic black-and-white paintings produced between 1985 and 1987 are collectively known as the "Cancer Paintings." According to the gallery, the artist "applied the pathology of cancer to the production of signs, creating 'cells' by sandwiching logos and other graphic elements until defamiliarized and abstracted." The works resonate as brand insignia, but disfigured—distortion itself takes center stage. *Four Cancer Logos*, 1989, a woodcut, might represent any number of contagions. Its quartet of rondels are so densely worked that their illegibility translates as our inability to see clearly—but also as productive chaos. Then and now, we revel in excess, visual pandemonium, and scrambled cultural references as our global modus operandi. Perhaps the collision of periods, styles, and differences is a necessary prerequisite for culture's advancement, for out of contamination comes a grand new cosmopolitanism.

The New York Times
July 16, 2020

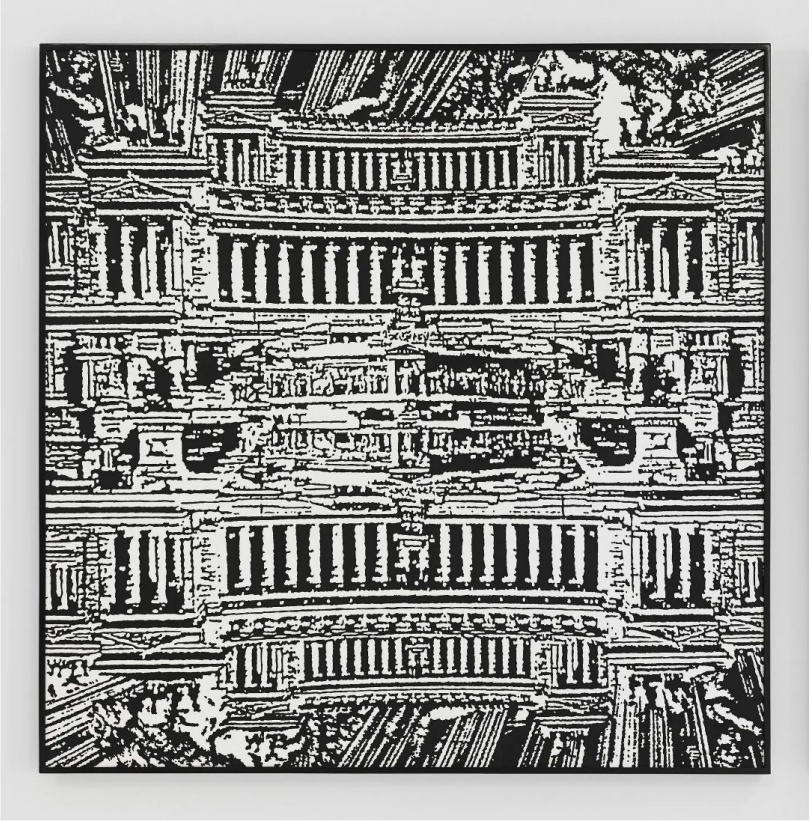
The New York Times

As Galleries Reopen, Two Critics Find Rewards Eclipse the Angst

Holland Cotter masks up on the Lower East Side and SoHo; Jillian Steinhauer discovers eco-feminist art taking root in Chelsea.

Peter Nagy at Jeffrey Deitch Gallery, 18 Wooster Street; deitch.com.

I was saving Peter Nagy's retrospective at Deitch in SoHo for another trip. But it was open (with masks and gloves on offer near the door), so I went in. I'm glad I did. It's great.



Peter Nagy's "Sopra Tutta Italia" (1989), acrylic on canvas. Peter Nagy and Jeffrey Deitch, and Magenta Plains

American-born, Mr. Nagy has lived since 1992 in New Delhi, where he runs one of the most influential contemporary galleries on the subcontinent. He initially founded that gallery, however, with a fellow artist, Alan Belcher, in Manhattan's East Village in 1982. And the Deitch show (a collaboration with a Lower East Side gallery, Magenta Plains), surveys the art Mr. Nagy produced between that year and his move to India.

The context for the work's creation — an art world of V.I.P. privilege, brand-name aesthetics, and hyperinflationary sales — is familiar, though on an unthinkably exaggerated scale, today. And Mr. Nagy caught it, back then, to a T. In graphically striking black-and-white prints and paintings, he conflated the floor plans of museums and luxury condos, rendered art and advertising indistinguishable, and, using proto-digital technologies, turned images of metastasizing cancer cells into chic décor.

The work, on view through Aug. 15, looks slicingly cool and sizzlingly prescient at Deitch, a gallery which, since the 1980s, has done its fair share to create the cultural order that Mr. Nagy — and Mr. Boskovich, and Ms. Mundt, and Mr. Galanin, in their different ways — bitterly critique. Will this old order be restored post-pandemic? Or will the social and economic upheavals still very much in progress change everything? We'll find out, one masked, socially distanced reopening at a time.