

# The New York Times

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## **'Painting: Now and Forever'**

### **Part I**

*Matthew Marks Gallery  
522 West 22d Street*

*Pat Hearn Gallery  
530 West 22 Street  
Chelsea  
Both through July 31*

There aren't too many generalizations to be made about this enjoyable two-gallery show, except to say that its spacious, playful yet considered installation makes nearly everyone look good, that it is relatively agenda-free and that it substantiates painting's past and present vitality, but in a low-key way.

Stylistic boundaries don't carry much weight here and the distinction between abstraction and representation are confirmed as beside the point. The reputations represented come in all shapes and sizes: big, formerly big, emerging and overlooked. Some of the artists haven't made their presences felt in a while, including Lisa Ruyter, Robin Bruch, Pat de Groot or Larry Poons, whose bristling "Nine Graces" of 1993-94 hangs next to Elizabeth Murray's sleekly abstract "Flamingo," from 1974, which is enlivened by just a soupçon of cartoonishness.

There are a smattering of other pre-90's works, dating back to Paul Feeley's blue-on-red jacks shapes and a beautiful Kenneth Noland target, both from 1962, and works from the 1970's and 80's by, respectively, Andy Warhol and Sherrie Levine. As these references indicate, not all the artists are living. Peter Cain, who died in 1997, is represented by a particularly good painting of a brown car, elongated and upright, on a field of pale blue.

No idea spans more than two or three paintings. At Hearn, a big grainy close-up of lips by Jack Pierson hangs next to a Popish pink-lipped image of Tori Spelling by Suzy Spence, which is followed by a pleasantly relaxed four-panel work of white splatters on pink, by Helen Marden.

At Marks, Sigmar Polke's homespun "Mondrian's Haus" includes plaids and silhouetted pours of white paint. Above it hangs Michael Bevilacqua's "Kissing the Pink," with more plaid and a white silhouette, this time of Matthew Barney with horns. And next to it is a corrosive self-portrait of Ashley Bickerton in which his meticulously detailed head floats in a bright haze of green. Still, if you let the mind play leapfrog, there are connections to be drawn all over the place, and not just between neighbors or even works in the same gallery.

Although weighted toward artists represented by the Hearn and Marks galleries, this show feels open-ended, an impression furthered by the suggestion of a Part II somewhere off in the future.

But a Part II of sorts has already materialized across the street at the Max Protetch Gallery, on the other side of 22d Street, where the collector and private dealer Ruth Kaufmann has organized "From Here to Eternity: Painting in 1998" (through July 31). The work suffers from a crowded hanging, and its distinction between the abstract and the representational feels out of date, especially because it is emphasized by placing artists like John Currin, Lisa Yuskavage and Robin Lowe in extra-close proximity. Still, there is enough of interest here that it feels like a continuation of what's going on across the street.

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