



Andrea Belag: *Black Tie*, 2000, oil on canvas, 78 by 66 inches; at Bill Maynes.

protests in the 1960s. There were 1950s yearbook shots of graduates of the institute's present-day successor, Hampton College, the students looking antiseptically middle-class; nearby, in a time-weathered, Victorian-era image, an affluent-looking African-American family seated at dinner seems oddly forlorn. The translucent muslin allowed for different images to be seen simultaneously, giving the illusion of witnessing a transformation through time.

In a small hallway, a large canvas showed a digitally printed photo of institute founder Samuel Chapman Armstrong, a son of Hawaiian missionaries, standing on a porch presiding over his family. "With your missionary might," read quietly ironic superimposed text, "you extended the hand of grace reaching down & snatching me out of myself." On one side, a photo showed 10 Native Americans wrapped in blankets; on the other, almost unrecognizable, was a photo of the same group clad in Anglo-European suits, hair shorn, grasping hats.

Weems's voice reciting an impressionistic text echoed hypnotically through the wood-paneled rooms. Some predictable points were scored—how once-vital Native American cultures live on, trivialized, in the names of sports teams. Mostly,

though, the artist's meditation was far more subtle, serenely narrating a process of transformation and loss. In one canvas, Weems herself, seen from behind, gazes at an image of buffaloes plunging over a cliff. Superimposed text reads: "From a great height I saw you falling Black & Indian alike and for you I played a sorrow song."

[Itinerary: *High Museum, Atlanta, June 2-Sept. 6; Nelson-Atkins Museum, Kansas City, Mo., Oct. 20, 2001-Jan. 2, 2002; University Museum, California State University, Long Beach, Jan. 29-Apr. 27, 2002; Hood Museum, Dartmouth University, Hanover, N.H., Sept. 14-Dec. 1, 2002.*]

—Carey Lovelace

Andrea Belag at Bill Maynes

This was a deceptively simple show of eight oil-on-canvas abstract paintings. All were composed of juxtaposed bands, some overlapping, in a consistent palette of rich crimson, Prussian blue, yellow, orange, green and black. As predictable as this format may sound, Belag is able to find a great deal of variety in it. Indeed, it's evident that there's a restless mind at work here, placing and rearranging the same basic elements for varying effects of

mood, color temperature and visual weight.

Belag's vertical rectangles resemble windows; but in this case, the "frames" of the windows are as important, and as visually assertive, as the "view." *Restless* (all works 2000) gives us a thick, black horizontal band right where our line of sight wants to penetrate the painting. We maneuver our mind's eye around and beyond it. Sometimes such potentially frustrating, casementlike stripes act as foils for other, less assertive colors. In the large canvas called *Black Tie*, a thick bar of alizarin crimson occupies the area below the black "horizon," bringing out a thinner and much brighter band of green below it. Prolonged viewing yields a host of such little pleasures, painterly encounters that seem to pulse and hum in vision.

Belag began restricting her practice to the use of vertical and horizontal bands of color in 1996 and seems to have perfected her manipulation of texture and color temperature since then. The marks are spartan and easy to read, though the sense of foreground and background which they create is not. Indeed, pictorial space seems to flicker back and forth. This odd effect (of cool reds, for instance, in the foreground, and warm blues behind) combined with Belag's use of long, uninterrupted strokes, makes for strange perceptual fare. We've been trained to read a horizon where long horizontals prevail. But whether this world we perceive is yards away, poised just before our eyes or in our minds is really hard to say.

—Sarah Schmerler

Dona Nelson at Cheim & Read

Even without the title Dona Nelson gave this group of paintings—"Twelve Stations of the Subway" (2001)—they put me in mind of Barnett Newman, thanks to their scale

(they are all 90 by 60 inches), their ambition and assurance, their bold, straightforward means and their complexity, both individually and as a series. Their story, however, is not that of "man's" sublime journey along life's Via Dolorosa, but that of a painter's travels with her fellow citizens around New York. There's drama enough right here. *Named*, for instance, sets a white swath of circles rising like steam across a uniform, dark blue-gray ground. Through it a charcoal-outlined figure falls, hands outstretched, faceless but with an unruffled hairdo or hat, wedge-shaped skirts flying—a comet, an apparition.

Rock Avenue sets the same sort of white circle-based shape against black and gray—a nighttime cityscape, illuminated by yellow dots (and a couple of splashes). This time the figure, drawn in black on little strips of tape applied to the picture surface to make lines, is upright, with a big hat and a long dress, her body shape sending off circular emanations to the left and right, while her head sends little circles into the air. The mix of disparate mediums—pencil, acrylic, latex enamel, tape—suggest the

Dona Nelson: *Rock Avenue*, 1997, acrylic, pencil, latex enamel on canvas, 90 by 60 inches; at Cheim & Read.





Terry Winters: Installation view of "Set Diagram," 2001; at Lehmann Maupin.

different orders of being that coexist in the urban world.

Figures make their presence felt in other paintings in the set, along with wheels, windows and faces—all seen against a backdrop of streets, the subway system and modern art. But for all practical purposes, these are abstract paintings, constructed (like Newman's) from a vocabulary of shapes, colors, materials and gestures. Sometimes the figure evoked is a painting, as in *Holiday*, in which Mondrian's red, yellow and blue lines and squares escape his vertical-horizontal armature to boogie across town like the marks on a fever chart. The opposite of dogmatic, Nelson still seems—rightly, I think—to take abstraction as setting the modern standard for content when it comes to big pictures.

Nelson's is not a vision of the sublime; it's too full, too concrete, too taken with pleasure as well as dread. *Wheels*, for instance, is covered edge-to-edge with white-and-yellow-filled black circles rising from an eruption of black and white latex loops and splashes, a circular variant on the grid. All this, a closer look reveals, is set against raw unformed energy: long black strokes looping repeatedly through the painting from above and below. "Life's

like that," I thought; what we see is a curtain of order and emotion; what's behind it remains a mystery—one less interesting than the worlds we find, make and live in. —Paul Mattick

Terry Winters at Lehmann Maupin and Matthew Marks

A single painting hung to the viewer's left just inside Lehmann Maupin: a thickly rendered, gray-scaled web of intricately intersecting lines and curves. The work suggests a compelling space in its own right but also recalls space-projecting forebears: the wire constructions of Naum Gabo, the visionary urban designs of Constant or the space frames of Konrad Wachsmann. A technological utopianism, a long-past moment of modernist optimism, seems fossilized in Winters's dense, impacted surface. This ambivalent, perhaps even nostalgic approach to the 20th century's dream of progress announces the theme of his new body of paintings, collectively titled "Set Diagram" (all 1998-2000), a series of 60 works, each measuring one meter by one foot.

They were installed by Dutch architect Rem Koolhaas, who designed the gallery's interior

and who chose to display most of the paintings crowded together on a plywood-covered wall; three were placed on the ceiling. The configuration was meant to remind us of the dynamic installations of 1920s Russian Constructivism. Given Winters's theme and Koolhaas's own nostalgia for the historical avant-garde, this was entirely appropriate. Yet the effort, for a variety of reasons, failed. The Russian installations were spatially more adventurous, with works hanging across corners and in various positions on the walls. Here the paintings hung in regular rows on a single wall, the effect more academic salon than spatial experiment. And, crucially, those historic shows included sculpture, the kind of engineering constructions Winters echoes in his paintings but can't entirely capture in two-dimensional work.

We were given an effective sense of continuity from work to work, a subsumption of the individual painting into the series or set. Questions of quality were elided by sheer overwhelming quantity and a sense of experimentation (which does recall the Russian exhibitions). The paintings display a number of strategies. Many involve looping, centrifugal graphic nets, like electrons that have come unbound from their nuclei, which recall Winters's earlier work.

Some present overlaid webs of torquing lattices, making one think of computer graphics. Still others vaguely resemble computer chips, and a few are reminiscent of Renaissance plans for ideal cities.

All these strategies showed up in the concurrent drawing show at Matthew Marks, which surveyed the past five years of Winters's works on paper. The best of the earlier drawings—large compositions like *Direction Field*, *Temporal Behavior* or *Sequence Loop* (all 1996)—create a shallow box of space that is then densely occupied by rough lines and ellipses. Graphic black predominates, but color plays an important if subtle role, accentuating particular lines and planes. Three smaller untitled drawings and *Stochastic Figure* (all 1999), composed of similar torquing webs, seemed closest to the "Set Diagrams." The space-box is replaced by compositions organized through a loose symmetry. Winters seems to have aimed for a greater surface unity, which reaches its apogee in the series of 18 "Meshworks" drawings (2000). These refer explicitly to complex three-dimensional mathematical models with grids, waves and vortexes colliding in the same shallow space.

To what end has Winters harnessed these various systems?

Mel Bochner: *5' Square (Key)*, 2000, oil and acrylic on canvas, 60 inches square; at Sonnabend. (Review on p. 126.)

