



Saltz, Jerry. "Mood Swings." *The Village Voice*, 1 July 1999, <https://www.villagevoice.com/1999/07/20/mood-swings/>.

## Mood Swings

This is the season when the New York gallery scene breaks out in group shows. They come in all shapes and sizes, and with all manner of intent, agenda, and mission. Sometimes dealers want to remind us that their gallery is more than just the sum of its artists, that they have bigger ideas about contemporary art or about where their space might be heading. Sometimes gallerists just want to relax, so they hand over the controls to outside curators, artists, or especially to their in-house directors. This is the directors' big chance to show their stuff—or their friends.

It's great to get to know young artists' work through their inclusion in a flurry of group shows over the course of a season. First the artists are invisible; suddenly they're all over the place, the next big thing (several months ago there was no John Bock; today he's on the cover of *Artforum*). But if group shows are most exciting as springboards for new artists, sometimes they just get stuck in the emerging artist category. Still others look okay in group shows but can't hold down a whole gallery with a solo show. So let's see what's up.

The title of "Overflow," a three-gallery show of 12 mostly unknown artists from several countries, suggests all kinds of fluidity: of liquids, values, and surface. Curated by two gallery directors—Meg O'Rourke of D'Amelio Terras, and Caroline Schneider of Anton Kern—the show has an edgy, scattered, next-generation feeling (no painting, for example). But it is also impressively coherent. Presiding éminences grises are Fischli & Weiss and Rudolph Stingel. The Swiss team is represented at Kern by their endless video trip through the sewer tunnels of Zurich, and at D'Amelio Terras, Stingel contributes numerous small photographs of mingling liquids. In the John Bock slot is Monica Bonvicini, a young Italian phenom, currently living in L.A., who has refloored the Kern space in sheetrock. Crumbling beneath the feet of gallery visitors, it is a surface in constant flux and disintegration (a little like flesh), upon which it is impossible to feel grounded. Initially pristine, it now looks like an exploded postfeminist Carl Andre.

Unwritten rules govern group shows. Every season one artist must be in all of them; it's required. This year it's Gabriel Orozco, who is represented in the Boesky portion of "Overflow" by a hypnotic video of a waterfall that suggests both a lighted beer sign and a Hudson River painting.

With "Mozart on Television: New Painting From Germany," Jeffrey Deitch fires a torpedo that roils the waters, then heads harmlessly out to sea. Deitch, who loves to bring us the new and different (some would say sensational), and rarely shows the same artist twice, floats a proposition: painting is alive and better in Germany. He may be right, but this show of only six artists doesn't nail the case. Indeed, this exhibition barely piques the curiosity.

Monika Baer is responsible for the show's best and worst paintings. On one wall there's silliness—a painting (with a large hole in it) of a head. Across is an untitled work which seems to have inspired the show's moniker: a lurid, green, mural-sized image of the child prodigy Mozart performing in an 18th-century salon before ladies of the court. All the characters are puppets. Grand of scale and theatrical, it feels like a cul-de-sac that might only lead to more Mozart paintings. Another worst-of-show contender is Peter Klare's puffy modular painting mounted over foam. Hung on the ceiling, as well as the wall, it resembles a glitzy cushion designed by Robert Zakanich. David Hockney is showing up in artists' work these days. Here, Dirk Skreber's painting of a large suburban house, rendered in uninflected fields of opaque color, is wholly derivative of this artist.

Bronwyn Keenan casts her net into the sea of emerging artists and comes up with a characteristically kinky mix of wannabes: 18 artists from outside the gallery whose work reinforces this gallerist's reputation for a funky high-low outsidersness. The best things in "Forever Is a Hell of a Long Time" are Katherine Burkhardt's demented portraits of E.T., Mike Pare's primitive pencil drawings—one of happy couples at an outdoor concert, the other of an Evil Knievel-like car jump over a suburban strip glen—and Tracy Nakayama's randy, playgirl-esque nude dudes. Meanwhile, Mari Eastman sets the scene with a romantic little L.A. nightscape that seems just right in this seamy company.

But leave it to an artist to come up with the most incisive, peculiar, and art-friendly group show of the moment—or, for that matter, in a long time. At Matthew Marks, Robert Gober has brought together five artists of wildly divergent styles and generations—playing them off each other brilliantly, on levels both formal and symbolic—to make what is, in essence, a Gober by other means.

Initially perplexing, this unlikely congregation mutates into a disturbing pictograph, a sociopathic rebus that spells Scary American Family. In the front gallery, in a cruciform installation, we first encounter the father in the form of Robert Beck's mesmerizingly gruesome video of a hunter sawing the horns off a slain buck (the incessant sounds of sawing provide a frightening soundtrack to the show). On the opposite wall, a beautiful little weaving, from 1927, by Anni Albers (wife of Josef, and a Bauhaus artist in her own right), stands in for the maternal: home, hearth, and handiwork. Facing each other on the intervening walls is hidden parental sex, in the form of two large nude couples by Joan Semmel (an overlooked figurative painter of the erotic kind). Cady Noland's silver-painted cardboard stock in the middle of the room radiates discipline and violence. The missing children are insinuated in the next gallery by Nancy Shaver's 16 black-and-white photographs of prettily decorated kids' garments.

Gober opens the door to these mysteries a little further in the exhibition's final gallery. Hanging alone is a startling painting by Semmel. A woman gently bathes a young boy, who stands naked in a bathtub of shallow water. He has an erection. Since it's painted from the woman's point of view, we can't see her head, or his, but imagine what they might be thinking. It'll be hard to look at these artists' work the same after this exhibition