

Thickets of Paint

By STEPHEN MAINE

The gallery Canada's stubborn commitment to painting is unmatched on the burgeoning Lower East Side art scene. It's inaugural exhibition was by Anke Weyer, a German emigrée whose gutsy return engagement, now on view, includes seven works in oil and canvas and one on panel, all dated 2007. In adopting a historically freighted, expressionist approach, Ms. Weyer walks a fine line between irony

ANKE WEYER:
Hogs and Dogs on Fire

Canada

and authenticity, historicism and "inner necessity." In these turgid paintings, the artist hides her ostensible subject amid thickets of paint. Developed from a blend of autographic and pictographic drives, they are

steered by the artist's clear love of process.

The artist is quite at ease with dichotomies, as two small, untitled works attest. One is wholly abstract, broadly worked in alizarin, purple, and yellow-green and topped with a mottled puddle that obscures much of it under runny tints. In the other, a ghostly steppenwolf emerges from a few confident strokes of ruddy charcoal gray and metallic gold, leering at the viewer through narrowed eyes. It looks like it took about five (inspired) minutes.

The other paintings, five feet or six feet on a side, synthesize the two impulses. In "Can You See Now," a tangle of smears, wipes, and scrawls in weak green and dull rose, sparked by vermilion and blue, advances before a shadowy mass that is scraped, scrubbed, and stamped with bubble wrap. A serene, greenish cloud in the upper right recedes into pictorial space. Voila: landscape.

"Eyes" is spatially confounding, translucent yet airless. Dirty pinks and grays laced with lurid green emanate in choppy strokes from the center, where there emerges a pair of canine eyes in hard metallic blue. If Charles Burchfield had worked in early 20th-century Dresden, he might have painted something like this.

Pressing the idea of obfuscation is "Pollen," wherein a sketchy architectural interior is not quite obliterated by brownish washes. It is a bit too indebted to Albert Oehlen. "Piff Paff Puff" is downright breezy in this company, its discrete colors suggesting a recondite symbolism. Fluttering clusters of glittering blue-black and lollipop red play off curling contours suggesting a hand and a hound. The colors go frosty at the painting's edges. It's a grace note in a show that otherwise growls.

Until June 17 (55 Chrystie St., between Canal and Hester streets, 212-925-4631).



Anke Weyer, 'Piff Paff Puff,' (2007).

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