

The New York Times

ART IN REVIEW

Jim Lambie **'Mental Oyster'**

Anton Kern
532 West 20th Street, Chelsea
Through tomorrow

The Scottish artist Jim Lambie excels at making something memorable out of not much, as his third solo show in New York outstandingly proves. His "Mental Oyster" is the second stunning environmental piece to be seen on West 20th Street lately; the first was Cheney Thompson's recent multi-painting exegesis on trompe l'oeil and one-point perspective at Andrew Kreps.

"Mental Oyster" is a walk-in optical environment, a kind of boutique for the eyes that furthers typical Lambiesque themes: the cultural power of rock 'n' roll, the dangers of commodification and the visual potential of everyday materials and objects.

The floor is covered entirely in black and white stripes — the artist's latest tape piece, coyly titled "Male Stripper." It forms the optical equivalent of reverberating sound; stepping onto it can seem to lift you, as great music does. Jagged lines of black tape wander across the walls, periodically exploding into ganglia of glamorously made-up eyes, cut from fashion magazines. The stripes climb a series of free-standing walls; on their opposite sides, vivid color takes over: a blue and magenta target; a sectioned, glittery square; a wall of mirrored bricks.

On these walls, various forms of extreme merchandise are displayed: car tires printed with bright paisley patterns; jeans, sneakers and purses collaged with shards of mirror (they seem intended for rock stars); and two tall columns covered with sequined tube tops.

What any of this means is open to some conjecture, but the idea that visual pleasure can thrill and sustain you in a way that material goods cannot must be part of the message. It is certainly part of the experience.

Be sure not to miss the accordion-like but rigid solid black doors to the show, each constructed from three doors. They reiterate the bristling eye-cosmos on the walls while opposing the tranced-out vibrations of the floor like dissonant power chords. Blending Dr. Caligari with Robert Gober Americana, the doors form the perfect rabbit holes through which to enter Mr. Lambie's dazzling and liberated yet oddly moral world.

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