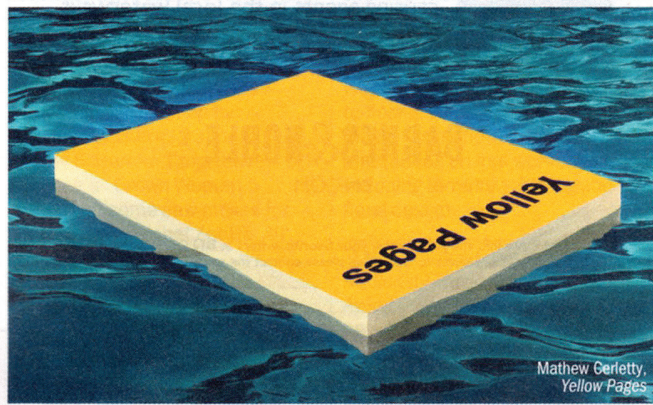




Installation view



Mathew Cerletty,
Yellow Pages



Lisa Beck,
Door to
the West

Art

"The Painter of Modern Life"

A personal selection of painters comes with no theoretical strings attached. By **Howard Halle**

★★★★★

Anton Kern Gallery, through Apr 11
(see Chelsea)

From the moment it opened, MoMA's painting survey "The Forever Now" became an art-world punching bag, thanks to its overweening claim to being the definitive take on the subject today. Which is why it's tempting to think of this group exhibition, organized by Bob Nickas, as a riposte.

True or not, the selection here, unlike MoMA's, isn't constricted by the notion that painting, the most tactile and timeless of forms, must reflect the ever-shifting challenges of our global present in order to be relevant. Nor does it buy into the

idea that the medium, if not dead, must explain itself to justify its existence.

Taking its title from Baudelaire's 1863 essay, the show blends abstraction and representation and emphasizes idiosyncratic vision. But the 21 artists here, a mix of veterans and relative newcomers, hardly ignore the "atemporal world," as MoMA puts it. Rather they concentrate on first principles, knowing that painting will thrive regardless of what direction society takes.

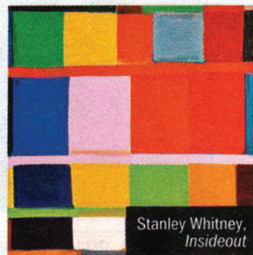
The underrated Lisa Beck paints

what might be described as minimalist nocturnes on mirrors. Equally crepuscular are Ivan Seal's 18th-century figurines trapped on dollhouse stages, David Ratcliff's grids

of Old Glory stars streaming phosphorous trails against pitch-black skies, and Robert Janitz's broad, gestural knots evoking portrait heads. On the opposite end of the tonal spectrum, Stanley Whitney vibrantly channels African textiles through Matisse. Daniel Hesidence floats cellular structures atop algae blooms of blues and greens, while Mathew Cerletty, whose work runs the gamut from crisp realism to crude outline, similarly sets the Yellow Pages adrift on impossibly cerulean waters.

Nickas's choices are as eclectic as they are subjective—true to themselves in a way Baudelaire would probably appreciate. Instead of an argument, the show creates a cumulative effect, making no apologies for painting and expecting none.

THE BOTTOM LINE Artists painting without regret.



Stanley Whitney,
Insideout

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