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PAINTING'S NEW WAVE By Phoebe Hoban

JANUARY 11, 1999

NEW YORK

**What
Happened
To Kristine
Kupka?**



**Ten weeks ago,
she went off
with the father of
her unborn child.
He came back.
She didn't.**

By Sheila Weller

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THE

Banished to the sidelines during the art world's post-eighties hangover, painting is finally back in the picture. But the new generation of New York painters is smitten with technology, suspicious of hype, and avowedly *sober*. **BY PHOEBE HOBAN**

MOD

SQUAD

On a steamy day late last summer, Charles Saatchi, the British advertising baron and one of the world's preeminent art collectors, spent the morning at Deitch Projects on Grand Street, browsing through the work of several new artists represented by dealer Jeffrey Deitch. Saatchi had already bought some paintings by a young British figurative painter named Cecily Brown, whose work, with its suggestive blur of nude bodies, owes considerably more to



Cecily Brown's images of near-pornographic rabbits were a huge hit when Deitch displayed them.

Francis Bacon than to Julian Schnabel. Now he was scrutinizing canvases by Casey Cook, a 26-year-old recent UCLA grad who blithely mixes abstract and representational elements in her work.

If a single moment suggested that after half a decade of indifference, painting was making a comeback, it was Saatchi's visit to Deitch, a gallery that until earlier this year had prided itself on representing the cutting edge of installation art—from Noritoshi Hirakawa's panty-strewn chandeliers (*Garden of Nirvana*) to performance artist Oleg Kulik's well-publicized residency as a caged dog (*I Bite America and America Bites Me*).

Though it's not yet a full-blown wave, the burgeoning interest in painting first began at 1997's Whitney Biennial, and intensified after a MOMA show of young painters later that year. But Saatchi, whose renowned art collection was built during the notorious eighties, is to the art world what Warren Buffett is to Wall Street, and his newly piqued interest in

these young American artists sent an unmistakable message: After years of critical disinterest and commercial decline, painting was finally back in play.

Deitch, a former Citibank art adviser and sometime critic who promoted many of the eighties' art stars, was one of the first to discover their nineties counterparts. During the past twelve months, he has enthusiastically taken on half a dozen new painters barely out of art school, including Shahzia Sikander, Cecily Brown, Inka Essenhigh, and Damian Loeb. Their work almost instantly garnered both critical and commercial success. While their paintings are hardly expensive, ranging from \$5,000 to \$12,500, it's not every day that a twentysomething artist sells out a show or makes it into Saatchi's collection. Indeed, the market for their work has become so fevered that last month, two of Deitch's hottest painters defected to uptown galleries: Brown went to Larry Gagosian, and Loeb decamped to Mary Boone.

"When I opened up in 1996, most of the art that I saw was created by performance artists like Vanessa Beecroft and Mariko Mori, and installations where artists create their own private world," says Deitch.

"In the nineties, painting was considered dead. But a lot of the performance art and video art and conceptual art was getting a little academic. The freshest art right now is painting. The ambitious younger artists don't want to do the same sort of imagery as the generation before them. The best new painting is not art about art, and it's not about decoration. It's small-scale and personal—about communicating the experiences that define the self. There is a different approach to painting—it's not purely abstract or purely representational. It's both."

WHEN IT COMES TO THE NEW painters, Deitch may have been slightly ahead of the curve, but he's hardly alone. Eager to revive a hibernating art market, a number of galleries, including Pat Hearn, Matthew Marks, Andrea Rosen, Team, Feature, Gavin Brown, and Greene Naf-

tali, have been showing work by painters in their twenties and thirties, including some who came to prominence over the past few years, such as Rita Ackermann, Lisa Ruyter, Elizabeth Peyton, Monique Prieto, Alexander Ross, and Peter Wegner. In late June, Pat Hearn and Matthew Marks mounted a double-gallery show called, appropriately enough, "Painting: Now and Forever Part I." It included some 45 works, from a Kenneth Noland sixties color-field painting to a candy-colored 1998 piece by Sue Williams.

Across the street, Max Protetch countered with a painting show facetiously called "From Here to Eternity: Painting in 1998" that rounded up a number of the usual contemporary suspects, including John Currin, whose tart renditions of women of a certain age have earned him a bad-boy reputation; Lisa Yuskavage, known for her painterly psychosexual dramas; and such "conceptual abstract" painters as David Reed and Jonathan Lasker.

"VIDEO AND INSTALLATION ART HAVE BECOME THE LAST REF

Says Marks, "I think there's a sea change: Painting is attracting younger artists who consider it a viable thing. We wanted to do a big group show to try to give a sense of all the different types of paintings made today. One of the characteristics of nineties painting is that it's cooler. You don't see so much expressionistic work. It's a little bit more neo-Pop."

Adds Hearn, "That postmodern thing, up to the eyeballs in emotion and expression, got enervated of meaning. But out of those ashes, painting kind of grew up again with a real energy. These kids coming out of Yale or the School of Visual Arts are doing something that reinvents painting out of itself."

SOME SEE THE CURRENT ENTHUSIASM AS purely a function of economics. Says Marcia Tucker of the New Museum, "For painters, there is no such thing as a return to painting. What we are really talking about is the marketplace—what sells and what doesn't. A good market strategy is based on something new and exciting and different, and this year it's painting."

And Wall Street's boom has been an obvious boon to the market for emerging artists. "There are a lot of new collectors who want to participate," says Deitch. "Painting is accessible. You don't need your own private museum to accommodate it."

Among the new collectors is Dean Valentine, the president and CEO of UPN. "Video and installation art have become the last refuge of artistic scoundrels," he says. "Painting is easier to collect. It's more enjoyable. In classic 1960s terms, the new art would be considered reactionary—reaction against installation art and the overly dry conceptual art of the first five years of the nineties. I guess in my mind, it's a return of the pleasure principle to art. It's okay for people to like the art and want to live with it, and it's okay for the artist to like making it. It's a very heartening development."

But this painting redux is a far cry from the overheated eighties, when neo-expressionism swashbuckled its way into galleries and auction houses, art prices rocketed into the millions, and artists like Julian Schnabel and David Salle became household names.

The new generation of painters are an understated lot whose sensibility has little to do with postmodernism, a word that has itself become passé. If anything, New York's current art scene is not so much a movement as a moment; there is no manifesto. These artists are not mak-

ing paintings about painting, or appropriating their way into art history. They are simply infatuated with paint.

TAKE DAMIAN LOEB, A HIGH-school dropout and former assistant to Alexis Rockman who now works out of a studio-loft conveniently located across the street from Pearl Paint. The 28-year-old artist has already been associated with three galleries; he showed at White Columns in the winter of 1996, where Deitch signed him up, and immediately sold out the work the dealer had planned to show the following December. But when Deitch then appeared to get cold feet about exhibiting Loeb's work, in which he boldly borrows from other artists, Loeb lost no time jumping ship; his much-anticipated solo show at Mary Boone opens on January 7.

Loeb lights up a cigarette. His intense green eyes are focused on a large work-in-progress in his studio. He's making a

painting from a collage he's constructed of Xeroxed found images, most of them loaded—a sort of slick-looking hybrid of violent news items and advertising. The painting depicts a black man with a gun in front of a grocery store; pulling away from him in a car are three white kids with a German shepherd, its teeth angrily bared. "I collect images," Loeb explains. "I'm bombarded by MTV and movies and advertising and fashion, and I'm receptive to just about anything."

Indeed, some think he's just a bit too receptive. But while Loeb's predilection for lifting images raised copyright issues that gave Deitch pause, Boone was eager to take the young artist on. "Mary really had enthusiasm," he says of his decision to switch galleries, "and she was willing to put the emphasis on the work rather than on potential legal aspects."

Though his work could pass for photorealism, Loeb bristles at the term. "I don't like photorealism because it's flat," he says. "I'm interested in *environments*. I am looking to cut holes in people's walls,

Damian Loeb, here in his SoHo studio, is a self-described image collector. "I'm bombarded by MTV and advertising and fashion," he says. "I'm open to just anything."



JUDGE OF ARTISTIC SCOUNDRELS," SAYS DEAN VALENTINE.

but also to make them aware it's a painting. On the other hand, you step back and the pixels disappear, and suddenly you're looking through a window." What you're looking at is usually disturbing: a seductive young girl in the backseat of a car (victim or temptress?); a drive-by holdup with racial innuendos; an exotic Asian odalisque splayed in an Andrew Wyeth-style field.

"Up until last year, the worst things I could hear were it's too accessible and a little too narrative," Loeb continues. "And now, because the focus is on painting, I get away with what I really want to do. You know infomercials for starving kids in Africa? Every once in a while if it's shot well enough, you have a plunge in your stomach. That's what I'm looking for."

Loeb, who never went to art school, began painting nine years ago, shortly before the birth of his daughter, Cameron, who he says is one of the positive outgrowths of his "excessive eighties club-hopping."

The week Deitch signed him on, the artist overslept and nearly missed an appointment with Edward and Agnès Lee, collectors who were interested in getting an early glimpse at his work. At the last minute, he and his brother bolted two paintings together and carried them down to the gallery. The Lees bought the pair. That same day, British dealer Jay Jopling offered him a show at White Cube, a well-known gallery in London.

Mera Rubell, who with her husband, Donald, a Manhattan gynecologist (and brother of the late Studio 54 co-owner Steve Rubell), has collected contemporary art on a grand scale since the late seventies, bought two paintings right out of the artist's bare-bones studio (butt-filled vintage ashtray, beat-up couch, industrial-strength sound system). And Saatchi has also taken a look.

Loeb seems a bit amazed by his sudden success; just a few years ago he despaired of ever getting into a gallery. "Craft was shunned," he continues. "The SoHo art world was a huge fortress, and I didn't have the four years at art school that my peers had. Now I'm at one of the trendiest galleries around. It was almost like I was watching something tilt, and right when it was ready my work was also ready. I was very fortunate in the timing.

"Maybe it's because too many people have gone into big, white empty rooms with a dog bone in the corner. They are finally thinking, *What is so different from that? Painting!*" Loeb answers rhetorically, still sounding somewhat surprised.

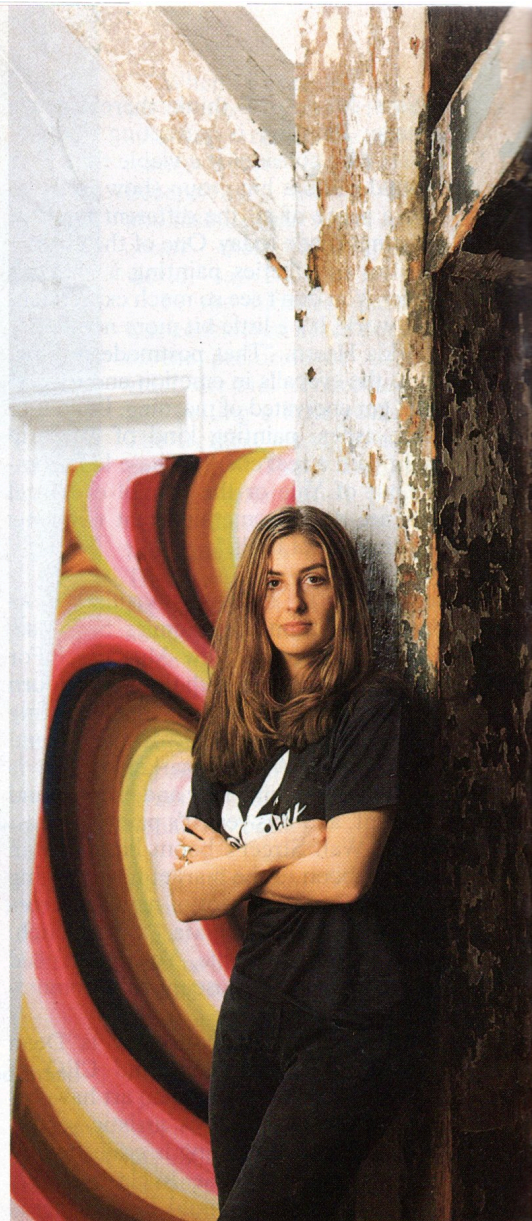
"PAINTING MIGHT GO INTO REMISSION, BUT IT never disappears," declares Mary Boone, who has shown, in addition to Loeb, Wegner, and Ross, a number of other young painters, including Karin Davies, Wayne Gonzales, and Ellen Gallagher. "Art seems to go in ten-year cycles," Boone says. "During the past ten years, we suffered a backlash against the eighties, which translated into a backlash against painting. But that's changing now. Suddenly you've got this whole new exciting generation of artists who are combining the best elements of cyberculture with the best elements of paint. This is a generation fixated by technology."

"I think one had the sense that painting had gone underground," says Ross Bleckner, one of the eighties art stars to have survived with his reputation intact. "But painting is always being made when there is the *least* interest in it. In the last nine months, it's started to emerge."

Art is cyclical in nature, so it's not surprising that just as the conceptual and minimal art of the late seventies gave way to the early-eighties big bang of neo-expressionism, what Bleckner calls the "recreo" aesthetic of the early nineties is morphing into a wallpaperlike cacophony of bright young painters. But that's where the parallel ends. The new art is nothing if not eclectic. Its only common characteristics seem to be its total lack of irony, its unabashed embrace of pop culture, and the fact that most of it is based on secondary-source material—from photographs to the Internet. Fashion photography, in particular, seems to have influenced a number of artists. If the painters of the eighties were appropriating images from Janson's *History of Art*, the artists of the nineties seem to be absorbing images from *Vogue*.

There is a smattering of abstract painting, but most new work is unabashedly representational, and many artists are playing with merging the two. Take Blake Rayne, whose dreamy interiors of cars framing landscapes are in a genre of their own. (Rayne had a solo show at Greene Naftali in September.) Or Elizabeth Peyton, who makes pop portraits of "people I love," including Kurt Cobain. Rita Ackermann paints contemporary Lolitas. Lisa Ruyter uses a camera to capture suburban landscapes, then turns them into vividly tinted works that look like paint-by-numbers pictures. Karin Davies's colorful abstracts look like photographs that were shredded through a computer.

Peter Halley calls the new sensibility "pop figuration." "This art is a resurgence of a kind of pop spirit; it's exciting, funny, provocative, and upbeat, with a sort of in-



tangible pop twist—there's the same kind of kitschy cuteness you see in Japanese graphics, although some of the work has a dark underside." Jeff Koons, who has recently started creating "handmade" paintings, calls it "oppy" (as in op art): "There's a certain playfulness, a certain brashness."

Says Robert Storr, curator of painting and sculpture at the Museum of Modern Art, "It's a little bit like new-image painting, a hybrid of abstract and figurative. It avoids a sort of painterly melodrama. People are working very hard and very intelligently and, on the whole, modestly. I think the stakes are in the art itself, and not just what the art is going to get you. It's concentrating on ideas and materials and not trying to conquer the world and then justify the conquests. You're seeing a surrender to the pleasure of painting that we have not had in a while."

"THE ART WORLD WAS SO EMBARRASSED AFTER NEO-EXPRESS

world, and the nineties painters are dealing with the individual.”

THE NEW PAINTING ACHIEVED A SORT OF CRITICAL mass last May, when Cecily Brown, a 29-year-old British artist who moved to New York in 1994, sounded a clarion call in an article she published entitled “Painting Epiphany—Happy Days Are Where, Again?” in *FlashArt*. Brown, who studied art at Slade but left London and its hot-house of YBA’s (Young British Artists), wrote about feeling shame at “my pleasure in painting, my predilection for emotionally charged subjects, and . . . my love of dead painters.” She quoted Currin as saying, “The art world was so guilty and embarrassed after neo-expressionism . . . painting was a laughingstock.”

Brown was so discouraged with the attitude toward painting in the early nineties that she temporarily gave it up. But now, she proclaimed in print, things had changed. “This is an intoxicating time to be painting, and New York an exhilarating and sympathetic climate. The mood is generous and open and eclectic. . . . I don’t think that any of the young painters see themselves as part of a movement, but there is a shared sense of surprise, because in our lifetime painting has been so very sick.”

Maybe that’s why there is no nineties equivalent of the raucous eighties art scene: no clubs that double as galleries, like the Mudd Club, Area, and Club 57. Unlike the last generation of art stars, who spent their nights club-hopping and networking and whose flamboyant behavior frequently landed them in the gossip columns, the new breed of painters are a relatively staid bunch.

“There is no real center,” says Brown, who has tried to remedy that by throwing regular parties in her loft. There is a bit of a music-related moveable feast: Cultural Alchemy, producers of SoundLab, throw a D.J. night called *Abstrakt* at Fahrenheit every Tuesday and draw a number of Lower East Side artists who come to hear D.J. Spooky spin. At last summer’s “Warm-Up” series at P.S. 1 on Saturday nights, thousands of art types came to party in the playground created by an Austrian group called Gelatin. And the roving D.J. group Dark Green has hosted parties at various bars on the last Friday of every month. But these painters tend to socialize at home. “We go to each other’s studios and have dinner,” says Brown. “We gossip about art and each other’s love lives,” adds Loeb.

Standing in her light-filled loft on Allen Street, Brown, make-up-free, looks even

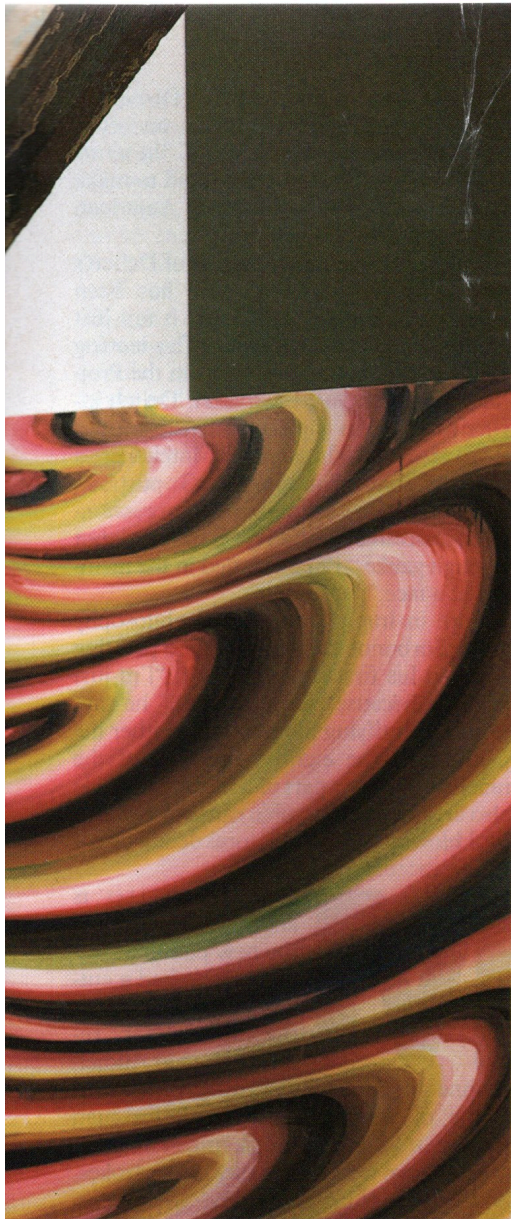
younger than her years. The daughter of Shena Mackay, a well-known British novelist, and David Sylvester, the art critic, she’s not unaccustomed to the limelight. “I always had to explain why I was painting, as if it were slightly immoral,” she says, laughing. “It was like I was a ‘dirty painter.’ I had a painting crisis and stopped working.”

That was then; at the moment, Brown is in the midst of a painting orgy. Slender and unimposing, she doesn’t look physically large enough to have created the canvases that line her walls. Dense and painterly, they are filled with tangled images—many of them turn out to be naked bodies engaged in a variety of sexual acts.

“It was considered the most self-indulgent of all the art forms, and you had to justify why you were doing it,” she says, gesturing at a painting with a central image of huge, billowy thighs. “I was sick of one show after another of cool, cerebral art. People were missing work that was visceral. People want to see color. Finally, I can be unapologetic.”

Brown’s canvases of nearly pornographic rabbits were a huge hit when Deitch displayed them in the storefront window of his gallery in 1997 after seeing her work during a studio visit. “The show was sensational,” says Deitch. “We had four small paintings, and I’d never seen anything like it. People were standing in front of these paintings for half an hour.” This May, she had a solo show of eight large paintings, which immediately sold out to such collectors as Saatchi and Francesco Pellizzi. And last month she left Deitch for Larry Gagosian. Although Gagosian is known for making lucrative contractual offers to artists, Brown insists that money wasn’t the motive. “He didn’t offer me so much money. I’ve just always loved that space,” she says.

BUT DEITCH IS NOT DISCOURAGED. He has big plans for his remaining artists, including Shahzia Sikander, Inka Essenhigh, and Y. Z. Kami. Sikander, a 29-year-old Pakistani artist classically trained in Persian miniatures, first made a splash when her work was shown in the 1997 Whitney Biennial. “It was really bizarre—the day after the Biennial opened, I got calls from ten different galleries,” she says. “But I also do realize it’s very fickle.” Sikander, who left Pakistan in 1993, went to graduate school at the Rhode Island School of Design and lived briefly in Houston before moving to New York this year. Impressed by her work at the Biennial, Deitch gave Sikander her first



Karin Davies displays her swirly abstract works in her new Williamsburg studio.

Others refuse to categorize the work at all. “We’re beyond isms,” insists Andrea Rosen, whose Chelsea gallery was among the first to support the new painters. “The greatest thing about the nineties is that we don’t need to identify ourselves in such strict terms.”

Don Rubell, who stores his vast art holdings in a former warehouse the Drug Enforcement Agency once used to house confiscated contraband, agrees. “The art today is highly personal,” he says. “It’s not so much the figure as psychopersonal representation, whether you are looking at John Currin or Damian Loeb. If you want to contrast them with the eighties painters, the scale is different. They were dealing with the monumentality of the

ONISM,” SAYS CURRIN. “PAINTING WAS A LAUGHINGSTOCK.”



Shahzia Sikander achieved widespread recognition after the 1997 Whitney Biennial.

solo show in New York last fall. Another solo show of her work is scheduled at the Hirshhorn Museum this year.

Sikander's meticulous style is misleading: She subverts classical images to create a new mythology, giving her material a sharp feminist spin. Recently she has moved from smaller, delicately detailed pieces to larger ones painted right on the wall. "They are more confrontational," she says. "My work may not look similar, but I feel an accessibility with all these other artists. There is a shared sense of history and desire to create narrative-oriented work."

A striking woman who speaks with a gentle lilt, she seems utterly, if quietly, confident in her own abilities. The stunningly intricate framed miniatures against the wall in her enormous loft on Franklin Street look as if they could have been created a century ago. Because of her Eastern imagery and themes, she is often compared to Francesco Clemente—a comparison she resents.

"It only reflects on how people like to stereotype," she says. "My desire was never to subvert or reinterpret tradition but more to play and tease with it. It's removed from all nostalgia. *Miniature* comes out of a word that doesn't mean *small* at all—it means *refinement*," she continues. "By doing miniature painting, I was immediately rejected out of the mainstream anyway, so the question of whether or not painting was exhausted didn't really apply. But I do recognize timing is crucial."

Inka Essenhigh, a 28-year-old artist who will have her first show at Deitch this month, paints carefully rendered, enigmatic, cartoonlike figures that look like a cross between Hokusai and Tin Tin. At first, the images resemble jigsaw-puzzle pieces, but eventually their antic nature is revealed: In one painting, a suburban landscape (*Suburban Lawn*) features two female figures sunbathing, one of whom is about to be removed by a giant spatula, the other melting in the spray of a sprinkler.

"They have a lot of Walt Disney in them," observes Essenhigh, an elfin woman with a dancer's bearing. "In terms of decoration, I've always wanted to make something that was distinctly American and elegant."

Unlike the younger members of Deitch's brood, Y. Z. Kami, 42, who has been painting for the past ten years, is not just jumping on the bandwagon. After leaving Holly Solomon, he had a show in the Project Room at MOMA; soon after, Deitch invited him to do a project. The paintings Kami created for his show in March were a series of sixteen highly realistic portraits that nonetheless had a slightly impressionistic feel, like painterly Gap ads shot through gauze. "I'm interested in the memory of a face," he says.

Born in Iran, Kami studied philosophy at the Sorbonne before turning to painting and had his first show in 1984. "I'm just painting because I love to paint," he says simply, identifying himself with neither the painting of the eighties nor that of the nineties. "I'm not part of a movement." He also creates photographic canvases—beautiful blowups of architectural details.

MASSIMO AUDIELLO IS another champion of the new painting. Audiello, who had a cutting-edge gallery in the mid-eighties, recently opened Audiello Fine Art in Chelsea. His well-regarded stable of young painters includes Juan Gomez, a 28-year-old Colombian abstract artist in love with big, smoky brushstrokes, and 27-year-old Andy Collins, who is currently in the M.F.A. program at the School of Visual Arts.

Gomez, who works in DUMBO, the industrial neighborhood just under the Brooklyn Bridge, says that the tiny dimensions of his studio help inform his work, which has such suggestive titles as *Any Lewd Debt* and *Licentious Chore*. "It's a 100-square-foot space," says the artist. "I set the painting up and see which direction the paint strokes go in. I like to work really close and in your face."

Collins more obviously fits into the idea of pop figuration. He takes images from sources such as fashion magazines and plays with their negative spaces, eventually extrapolating pared-down forms that are neither abstract nor figurative but float provocatively between the two. Like those of Essenhigh and several of the other artists, his acrylic surfaces are so high-gloss that they shine.

"PEOPLE ARE EXPECTING A REPEAT OF THE EIGHTIES," SAYS M

Collins's studio is in a warren of tiny spaces in a School of Visual Arts building on West 21st Street. A transplant from Athens, Georgia, he moved to the city a year ago. Tall and lanky, Collins doesn't use an easel but kneels to paint his canvases, which are stacked up against the walls of his minuscule space. "I go through a convoluted process to make the paintings," he explains. "I work a lot from popular culture and magazines. I take forms and contours from magazines and make abstract paintings from them. I don't invent the forms. I just go find them and piece them together."

Collins points to a painting that looks like a silhouette of an antler. "It's sort of a parody of a dominatrix, an evil woman," he says, reluctantly explaining that the image was originally derived from the negative space in a spread in a fashion magazine featuring a lot of black leather. "My paintings titillate the viewer," he says. Collins's palette is deliberately pale, "wimpy colors," he says. "I want to make something people haven't seen before. I get excited when I come up with new forms."

With the interest in new painting percolating, the inevitable gallery hopping has already begun. Essenhigh left Stux to join Deitch, who is now experiencing his own defections. Wayne Gonzales, 41, joined the Tate gallery when it opened in September but has already left.

Gonzales, who once worked as Peter Halley's assistant, is one of the few to use a computer regularly as a drawing tool in his work. He morphs images, which he then paints: a building, say, or a generic escort ad from the Yellow Pages. Gonzales also likes to play with advertising logos, which he renders in a "sort of *Blade Runner* way." He uses brash, industrial colors and carefully eliminates any hint of his handiwork.

"I don't want you to see the brushstroke," he insists. "I try to freeze the gestures, creating a tension between what is mechanical and intuitive—almost a mechanical-stenciling technique. I think of my work as sort of a misinterpretation of Cubism filtered through Pop Art." The New Orleans-born Gonzales, who had a joint show in October at Mary Boone and at Tate, rents a studio in the Chelsea Arts Building at 526 West 26th Street, a beehive of artistic activity, bustling with ten floors of artists and galleries—a milieu reminiscent of SoHo in its heyday.

THE HYPERINFLATED EIGHTIES STILL CAST A long shadow over the burgeoning scene.

Nobody has forgotten the over-the-top art market that ultimately spun out of control. But for the painters of the moment, the last generation provides, in its own way, a kind of inspiration. Brown, for one, is grateful that she and her peers have been liberated from a certain didacticism: "We're very lucky. They got it out of the way for us. For them, painting was pronounced so dead it was an endgame. We're taking a break from the need to always react to art that came before us. We're not commenting on Salle or Schnabel or Fischl. We've skipped a generation. It's sort of a free-for-all, an expression of lust for life. And not caring about being corny, actually *liking* corniness. That's the biggest freedom, knowing that corny can be good."

"I couldn't be doing what I'm doing if the eighties hadn't happened," adds the 30-year-old Lisa Ruyter, whose new show of paintings opens in March at Pat Hearn. "It sort of brought together what was going on in the decade before—a mixture of

pop sensibility and minimalism. This whole pop-abstraction has been handed down to us to deal with and sort out."

But even the biggest boosters of the new scene warn about escalating the hype. "We're on the cusp of something, but it's not a repeat of the eighties," says MOMA's Robert Storr. "People are expecting a wild-and-woolly scene. That's not going to happen. It's about the ambition of the work, not about the market phenomenon. The one thing that's really different is that nobody I know thinks they know where history is going. There's a general acceptance that art history does not have a direction you can predict. The work is very interesting," he says carefully. "But I have to keep asking myself: Is it *important*?"

"This is obviously a very good time for painting, a *very* important time," adds Massimo Audiello. "But the minute you say painting is back, you kill the goose. That's the way the art world works." His voice drops to a whisper. "The minute you proclaim painting is back, it's over." ■

Wayne Gonzales likes to play with advertising logos, which he depicts in a "sort of *Blade Runner* way," and makes frequent use of computer rendering in his work.



MOMA'S ROBERT STORR, "BUT THAT'S NOT GOING TO HAPPEN."