

Art in America

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Mark Sheinkman: 3.6.98, oil and alkyd on canvas on cardboard, 92 by 32 by 16 inches; at Thomas Healy.

Mark Sheinkman at Thomas Healy

Mark Sheinkman's exhibition consisted of five medium-to-large abstract works completed in the week preceding the opening of the show. All are oil (occasionally with alkyd) on canvas stretched around and between wood or cardboard cylinders.

Sheinkman, a young New York artist who has shown regularly over the past five years, first applies a slick coat of silver, aluminum, light gray or white paint over the entire length of his unstretched canvas, and over large parts of its verso as well. He adds widely spaced darker gray or black diagonal bands, and then drags a wet brush horizontally across both sides of the canvas at regular intervals, pulling the dark bands onto the lighter ground

and introducing sudden and dramatic changes in tone. Cézannesque *passage*, the squeegee exercises of Soulages and the gray pictures and "slippage" of Richter come to mind. The way Sheinkman winds his canvas around the cylinders evokes scroll painting.

The best works in the show were the two monumental horizontal pieces and the single vertical one. 3.4.98 is a particularly powerful work, with one thick cylinder placed dead center, two narrower ones at either side and thinner colonnettes, which vary in width, in between. A metallic tint reinforces the sculptural quality of this relief-painting. The visually weighty cylinders, with oily bands of black paint rolling diagonally over and under them and optically breaking into segments in the process, make one think of rolls of paper on great slippery printing presses. This composition has its fair share of machismo. Its symmetry and quasi-industrial purity recall certain works of Minimal art.

A more delicate work, 3.5.98, offers a wider expanse of stretched canvas upon which the dark bands and overlapping swipes have been significantly multiplied. In this work, the blurred horizontal bands seem to weave over and under the darker ones, so that the effect is that of a dark fabric that has been pulled apart.

Sheinkman's systematic method of picture-making can border on mere decoration, as in one small white and gray work that looks like rolled-up wallpaper. However, his ambition to blend sculptural and architectural features with abstract painting is an important one and deserves close attention. —Michaël Amy