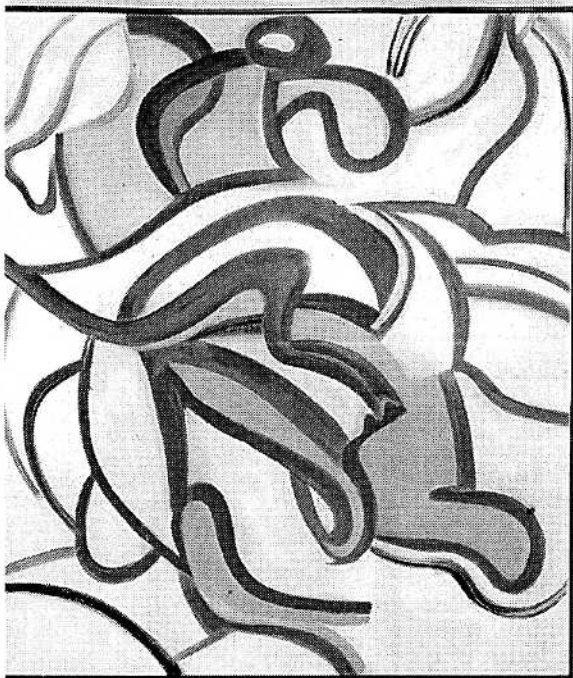


ART IN REVIEW



Matthew Marks Gallery

"Untitled," an oil on canvas, is 80 by 70 inches. It is one of the 12 paintings in the show "Willem de Kooning: 1987 Paintings" at the Matthew Marks Gallery in Chelsea.

builds up many layers of acrylic paint in different colors — some metallic or iridescent — and then winds into them, creating a gravely, pitted appearance and a gorgeous polychromatic complexity. They look as if they were carved out of some kind of exotic semi-precious stone. His sculptures are delightfully zany, but they are also rigorously beautiful.

KEN JOHNSON

MacDermott and MacGough

H.A.G.
10 West 22nd Street, Chelsea
through tomorrow

This show is the first appearance in several years by the artistic duo David MacDermott and Peter MacGough. Its main subject is the fate of homosexuals in Nazi Germany during the Third Reich, put within the context of the Holocaust.

Inside the gallery door is a painting with letters highlighted to makeonyms: Hitler, evil, man, enemy. Another painting depicts the colored badges that Jews, homosexuals, Gypsies and others the Nazis thought undesirable were required to wear; here they are arranged in decorative pattern. On a wall are early two dozen portraits of Hitler, each with the kind of florid written inscription one might find on a celebrity photograph. In this case the

words give biographical data on homosexuals who died in a Nazi concentration camp.

MacDermott and MacGough, like the older British duo Gilbert and George, are conceptual and performance artists, and the exhibition, with its stagey references to period style and its inclination to treat ferociously loaded emblems as kitsch, could, I suppose, be taken as a perverse charade. But the artists' application of a critical intelligence to their material seems unmistakable. This is a show about lifestyle narcissism, about the aestheticizing of masculine power, about internalized and externalized homophobia, about malevolence, blindness and disaster.

HOLLAND COTTER

Allan deSouza

Talwar Gallery
108 East 16th Street, Chelsea
Through Dec. 18

Allan deSouza's photographs alternate between two images omnipresent in recent news: rocky, desertlike landscapes and the Manhattan skyline. In fact, Mr. deSouza's pictures are taken of handmade tabletop studio setups and were, with two exceptions, shot early last summer during an artist-in-residence stay at Art in General in TriBeCa.

The models were assembled

from household materials, found objects and castoff bits of the artist's body. In images of dune-covered terrain dotted with parched-looking vegetation, the earth is made of table salt; the plants are made of nail clippings and eyelashes. Urban factories and industrial parks, apparently seen from the vantage of aerial surveillance, are composed of computer parts and electronic odds and ends.

Mr. deSouza, who was born in Kenya, grew up in England and now lives in Los Angeles, modeled the miniature factories on memories of his first trip to New York City 10 years ago, when he drove from Newark Airport. His first view of the Manhattan skyline is here, too, in photographs of an assemblage of vertical strips of scrap wood.

He does witty things with these images. His factory complexes look both fastidious and funky; his Manhattan skyscrapers are wrapped in a puff of cigarette-smoke smog. But any incipient sweetness is cut by unexpected touches. In one of the factory series, a building explodes into flames. And in the final Manhattan skyline picture, taken after Sept. 11, the wooden assemblage has been altered so that the towers of the World Trade Center are missing.

The last photograph in the show is not part of a series. Right after Mr. deSouza heard news of the terrorist attacks, he swept the floors of his Los Angeles apartment and photographed, in close-up, the accumulated pile of dust, powder, hair and twisted scraps. The picture, like all his work, is a domesticated image of the monumental, which in this case suggests a ruin overpowering and fragile, inorganic and intimate.

HOLLAND COTTER

Karl Hubbuch

Nolan Eckman
560 Broadway, at Prince Street
SoHo
Through Dec. 15

If the German artist Karl Hubbuch (1891-1979) is known at all in this country, it is for drawings and paintings of brazen, semiclad women that epitomize the Neue Sachlichkeit style of Weimar Germany. Such images have a simple majority in the artist's first solo exhibition in the United States. In "Standing Girl" a grinning young woman, possibly drunk, her short bob covering her eyes, shows off her breasts;

she's Sally Bowles before the fact. That she is less than beautiful reflects the subtle class commentary embedded in much of Hubbuch's work.

But as this exhibition demonstrates, Hubbuch was extraordinarily versatile, at ease with different mediums and several gradations of realism, with drawing that is fine and sharp or fast and feathery. He liked to combine material frequently drawing with a lithographic crayon. His penchant for caricature is apparent in two small paintings: "Art Judges," whom he depicts as eyeless, mole-like creatures, and "Dance Bar," which is full of likable gargoyles.

Sometimes his satire is barely perceptible, as in a little graphic drawing of the figures of Schiller and Adolf von Menzel in a Berlin wax museum; it deftly contrasts the windblown demeanor of the Romantic poet with the buttoned-down bourgeois neatness of Imperial Berlin's reigning artist. Meanwhile, an exacting yet gentle realism dominates in his views of Paris rooftops, a fairy-tale German town and a sharply foreshortened pile of luncheon.

A veteran of World War I and an active anti-Fascist, Hubbuch was fired from his teaching post after the Nazis came to power. A forbidden to make or exhibit art after the Nazis came to power. A was the case for many artists who emerged in the heady, frightening vortex between the wars, the Weimar era was Hubbuch's one and only heyday.

ROBERTA SMIT

John Currin

Andrea Rosen
525 West 24th Street, Chelsea
Through Dec. 15

Who is John Currin? He has been hailed as a rejuvenator of contemporary painting, chided by feminists for his naughty images of women and suspected of Duchampian sympathies. With his current mixed bag of a show, he continues to elude definition.

The exhibition includes typically Currinesque paintings of women who seem variously alluring and grotesque. A lovely small circular painting depicts the sweetly smiling head of a "Blond Angel." "The Clairvoyant," with long red hair, naked shoulders and milky eyes, gazes into mystical space. "The Moroccan" has a crazily animate