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Peter Wayne Lewis

Rosenberg & Kaufman Fine Art
115 Wooster Street, SoHo
Troug tomorrow

Peter Wayne Lewis paints in a completely familiar hybrid style that might be called Color Field automatism, or Minimalist Lyrical Abstraction. Its saving graces include an impressively unpretentious and sophisticated ease of touch, a taste for clear, sparkling color and a penchant for self-evident structure. His closest ally among contemporary painters would seem to be Mary Heilmann; one can picture Pollock, but also Milton Avery, among his heroes.

Part of the pleasure of these works is their ease of deconstruction. The perpendicular or repeating bands of color and occasional Tanguyesque squiggles with which Mr. Lewis intrudes upon stark white grounds broach no reworking. This means that, with a little looking, one understands how those marks got there: the order of appearance, the breadth of brush used, the occasional mingling of colors on the brush, even the body English of the artist.

When the compositions get more complicated, the clarity of process declines and another kind does not always take over. An exception is "Strings No. 154," a passage of decorative lyricism in which a scaffolding of blue and black lines is punctuated with dots of blue, green, orange and yellow, applied with fat commalike twists of the brush.

ROBERTA SMITH