

“Air”



Monya Rowe, through Jul 28 (see Chelsea)

According to its curator, painter Amy Sillman, this group show is “a summer rumination about air.” Though her curatorial statement suggests that “Air” is as much about breezy sensation as it is about the kind of oppressive atmosphere associated with August in the city, the works on view tend toward the latter. Overall, it conveys a post-9/11, summer-of-*An-Inconvenient-Truth* sentiment: The fear of impending social and ecological apocalypse.

Jenny Monick’s purple and painterly *Hidden Idden* looks like an abstracted depiction of a cresting wave and recalls Mary Heilman’s surf-related pictures. But far from being meditative, Monick’s anxious brushstrokes don’t leave the eye a single place to rest. The pastel palette and balanced composition of Benjamin Butler’s gridlike landscape *Forty Trees in Spring* is reminiscent of Fairfield Porter’s Hampton landscapes. Some of the pinks and greens, however, are so acidic that his forest appears almost irradiated. The craggy mountains in Howard Smith’s *Svengali* suggest a collaboration between a Chinese



Jenny Monick,
Hidden Idden

landscape painter and a pointillist on acid.

Flee, a lovely watercolor by Pamela Wilson-Ryckman, borrows the colors of military camouflage. While it looks like an aerial view of a crowd fleeing a rainstorm, viewed in the ominous context of “Air,” one wonders if the figures are running from something more terrifying than weather. Like the air we breathe, the show seems to suggest that terror has become a part of everyday life.
—Bridget L. Goodbody