

Lisa Hamilton:
Switchback,
2008, oil on
canvas, 78 by
60 inches;
at Jane Kim/
Thrust Projects.



LISA HAMILTON

JANE KIM/THRUST PROJECTS

Lisa Hamilton's exhibition of four large and seven small-to-medium-size paintings (all 2008), her first solo show in New York, comes as part of a wave of 20- and 30-something artists showing geometric abstraction at un-stodgy galleries on the Lower East Side and in Chelsea. Distinct from the ubiquitous mid-20th-century post-Mondrian versions of the style, Hamilton's, like that of some of her peers (the German painter Torben Giehler, for example), balances stillness and movement, flat shapes and implied spatial dynamics, in a nod to the speed of contemporary visual experience. Though she is American (she received her MFA from Hunter College in 2003), Hamilton's works have a markedly German flavor, recalling such painters as Thomas Scheibitz in their consciously sullied colors punctuated by the occasional pure hue—like bright plastics left outside in the dirt—and in their full-throttle painterliness. Her works convey a feeling of intensity without a trace of grandiosity.

As with many geometric abstractionists today, Hamilton's tendency is to reject irony without falling into earnestness. Her paintings have a handmade quality—edges aren't taped and brushstrokes are visible.

Jam-packed architectonic structures pull us into the space of the painting, and we are aware of the hard-fought quality of the surface. Ridges crisscrossing beneath visible shapes indicate forms that have been covered up; here and there, a few stray drips remain from earlier imagery. There is humor: a dark purple tongue shape pops out from behind a green quadrilateral in the center of *Gooseneck*, while five different pinks in *Switchback* evoke bubble gum, flesh, the sky, Guston and, near the bottom, in a thinned-out, branching brushstroke, streaked fat.

At 6½ by 5 feet, *Switchback* was the largest piece in the show and the strongest for its ability to push contradictory forces as far as they'll go while managing to contain them. Just as, when looking at Sargent's watercolors of Venice, we snap back and forth between the picture plane and the labyrinthine spaces, we feel ourselves zooming into Hamilton's images only to be jolted back to the surface—by the hard painting, the stubborn physicality of the work. In this, Hamilton captures the experience of moving through New York, no mean feat.

—Julian Kreimer