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# Art in Review

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## Jack Whitten

Horodner Romley Gallery  
107-109 Sullivan Street  
SoHo

*Through tomorrow*

Although Jack Whitten encountered the tail end of Abstract Expressionism when he arrived in New York in the early 1960's, his painting has been most obviously affected by the 70's obsession with the material process of art making. His current work is about a physical deconstruction and reconstitution of the painting medium. He begins by producing layered sheets of black, white and sepia acrylic; he cuts these into small squares, then glues the pieces, mosaic-fashion, onto canvas.

Some of the results, like "First Gestalt," with its dark central form reminiscent of a human head, seem to invite comparison with the similarly grid-based portraits by Chuck Close. But in every case Mr. Whitten's primary concern is with idiosyncratic abstract patterns. "Homecoming: For Miles" is the most ambitious of them, its hundreds of white spattered acrylic pieces together suggesting a vaporous expanse of night sky peppered with stars and featuring a wheel-shaped constellation.

In this deeply felt piece, as with others in the show, a close-up view is especially rewarding. Part of the intellectual play of Mr. Whitten's work lies in the way it fragments painterly abstraction into incremental, bite-size units. In the sepia and white "Dark Horizon," the individual pieces bear the marks of the original stirred and mixed acrylic sheet. But since their order has been scrambled, each "stroke" interrupts rather than helps complete the next. The result is a kaleidoscopic version of Expressionist turbulence: an interesting effect in itself and an intriguing bridge between the gestural painting of one era and the Process art of another.

HOLLAND COTTER

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