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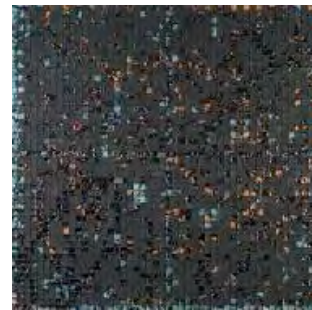
Time Out New York / Issue 629 : October 18, 2007 - October 24, 2007

Review

Jack Whitten

Alexander Gray Associates, through Sat 20

New York is filled with terrific painters who are woefully underrated. Fortunately one of them, Jack Whitten (born 1939), has experienced a renaissance of late, having been included in two recent high-profile exhibitions: "High Times Hard Times," at the National Academy Museum, and "Energy/Experimentation," at the Studio Museum in Harlem. While both shows explored the rich variety of '70s abstract painting, the latter focused on the contribution African-Americans made to the scene. This small survey provides a more complete look at Whitten's work, past and present.



E-Stamp II

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The earliest pieces, four drawings from 1974, are products of Whitten's artist-in-residency at Xerox. Here, smudged toner interrupted by hazy lines appears to float in space, conveying a sense of arrested time and motion. Likewise, *Rho I* (1977)—created by raking a saw across freshly poured acrylic paint—features stripes and smears that crackle with energy. In these works and others, Whitten anticipates Richter's blurred abstractions, transforming gesture into a mechanical act. Yet the pieces still pack a powerful emotional punch.

Article continues



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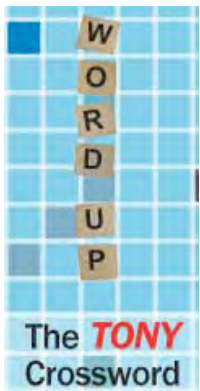
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Recent canvases, though, are harder to decipher. Based on barcodes found on downloadable e-stamps and built from layers of paint that create a colorful mosaic, they pay homage to recently deceased friends, some of whom, like Bobby Short, are well-known. While it's hard to understand the connection between pattern and person, they deserve consideration. Whitten's work has always been forward-thinking, and here he just may be, once again, ahead of the curve.

— Joshua Mack

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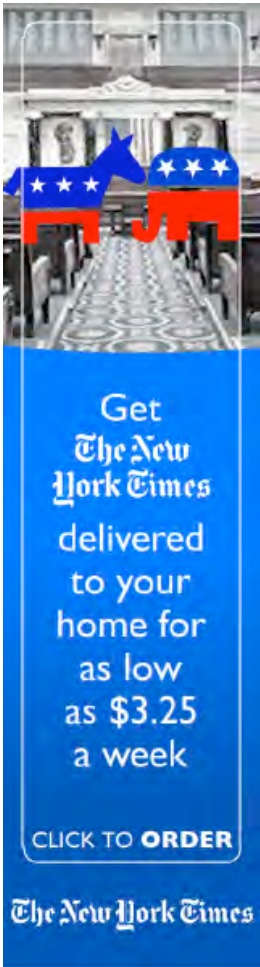
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