

MATTHEW MARKS GALLERY

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## Art in Review

### Gary Hume

Yardwork

*Matthew Marks Gallery  
522 West 22nd Street, Chelsea  
Through June 27*

In this exhibition, at least, Gary Hume is at his best when painting the motifs he came up with nearly 30 years ago: big, semiabstract images of doors. They punned on the Greenbergian ideal of flatness by depicting things that really are flat, à la Jasper Johns. In addition, like many of the doors they depicted, the paintings had shiny enamel surfaces that are a Hume staple.

In the beginning the doors were the kind you see in restaurants, sometimes double, with round porthole windows, swinging both ways between kitchen and dining room. The new doors, seen in two of the dozen paintings here, belong on barns. They are big, broad and double, and reinforced by diagonal and horizontal blanks that provide Mr. Hume with compositional opportunities.

In "Blue 'n' Cream Barn Door," a light gray with striations that suggest vertical planks is crisscrossed with blue diagonals that form, in essence, two pairs of X's, one above the other. In "Red Barn Door," an ostensible monochrome, the planks form a pair of red-on-red Z's, one the reverse of the other, so that the image is completely symmetrical.

These two paintings, especially the red one, have an implacable formal punch while disdaining formalist purity. The other paintings — similarly reduced and shiny silhouettes of young girls, birds and roses — seem much more tentative and arbitrary. Their liverish colors are intriguing, but they mainly function here as extras, forming a backdrop for the show's two stars.

ROBERTA SMITH