

CHEIM & READ

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Art in Review

Jonathan Lasker

Cheim & Read
547 West 25th Street, Chelsea
Through Feb. 13

In the 1980s, Jonathan Lasker minted a type of postmodern Pop-abstraction that slyly parodied Modernist formalism. This terrific show, his first presentation of new works in New York in nearly nine years, finds Mr. Lasker still relying fruitfully on his signature vocabulary of generic forms: grids, squiggly snarls, allover patterns of loosely knit lines, absurdly thick lines in primary colors, and black areas painted with wide brushes. Mr. Lasker combines these and similar motifs into punchy, cartoonlike compositions in which paint itself seems animated by an exuberant inner life.

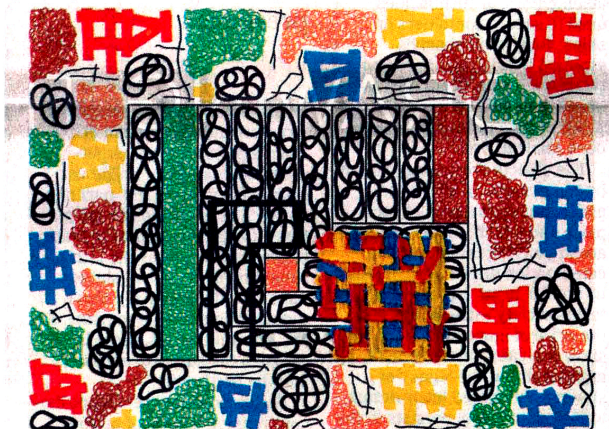
The paintings resemble much-enlarged, spontaneously scribbled doodles. But they also have a certain schematic lucidity, as if they were designed by a computer programmed to mix and match formal dualities like thick and thin, black and white, colored and uncolored, figure and ground, geometric and organic, and virtual and physical.

The show's most complex and, at 8½ by 10 feet, biggest painting, "The Universal Frame of Reference" from 2014, is a knockout. Filling most of the center is a rectangular, cagelike structure of straight, black bands with variously applied and colored passages painted between and over the bars.

Floating on a wide, white border around the cage are glyphlike elements resembling

puzzle pieces waiting to be selected: scrawled lines; blobs of tangled lines; and intersections of wide, colorful brush strokes. The relationship between the containing cage and the surrounding unstructured space suggests an allegory of freedom and constraint, the poles between which Mr. Lasker thinks and paints with infectious panache.

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