

Short List

Chelsea

JENNY LADEN, Cornell DeWitt Gallery: As this show's title suggests, "blink," explores that segment of time within the blink of an eye in which an enigmatic, psychologically closed figure discloses subtly changing facets of itself. The steady reference point in these paintings is the same young woman. Eyes closed, head thrown back, she is depicted as a solitary figure against a pale colored background. Defined by the crisp lines and pastel pools of paint that swirl around the delicate curves of its physiognomy, the figure holds an odd resemblance to Disney heroines, with a perky face beset by large, innocent eyes.

The initial impression of these paintings could be deceptively lightweight. Laden's lines seem to follow short-cuts into depiction; wisps of hair that flow too prettily onto bare shoulders, or a formulaic approach that tends to summarize rather than probe. Upon closer look, however, we see that these paintings obliquely reference cartoon imagery through the use of graphic notations, such as spirals, bubbles and swirling doodles. Scattered across each painting, an irregular circle marks the roundness of the chin or the shadow at the tip of a shoulder, while another circle defines a glint of light in the figure's hair. These circular details become a constant motif in the artist's style that serve to create points of tension throughout the pictorial space. Gestural markings, such as sinuous

lines and broken arcs weave across the surface, transcending the boundaries between the figure and its surroundings.

In an apparent parody of Cubism, spatial volumes are de-constructed into facets, delineated by lines and slight changes in hue. Through the synthesis of line and tonal color, Laden articulates the subtle forms within the figure's body, producing studies of "being." The light filled canvases show portraits of an individual caught alone, each slightly different, yet unaltered by time. One of the strongest pieces in the show, *Zipper* (2002), provides geometric details that serve to create the illusion of unexpected depth. Surrounded by pastel hued, geometric abstractions, the figure is revealed as part of a broken movement delivered through a confluence of interconnecting lines. In some paintings, fragments of text — the words "beauty," "chaos," and "perfect pallendromic moment" — are painted into the background, semi-erased and barely noticeable. The mystery of these figures, rendered in pale flesh tones, blends into the picture plane, leaving behind only traces of a meditative stance in one brief moment. Through 4/13

LILY FAUST



Jenny Laden *Noon*, 2002. oil and watercolor pencil on canvas 36 x 72 inches
Courtesy: Cornell DeWitt Gallery, New York

Time Out

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Pick of the day

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MONDAY 29

Today through May 10, take window-shopping to a higher level by scoping out "Madison Avenue: Where Fashion Meets Art," as artists display their work, such as Jenny Laden's *Pour* (2002, pictured) in swanky storefronts. See [Check Out](#).