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Raoul De Keyser: *Steek 2*, 1987/2005, oil on canvas, 34 1/2 by 27 3/4 inches; at David Zwirner.

held over from that artist's exhibition. The sculpture's self-effacing, mirrored surfaces were in perfect emotional harmony with the paintings' washed-out, silvery palette. Of late, De Keyser's method has been to deploy across his surfaces a number of enigmatic shapes, from blandly lumpen to spiky and complex. It is unclear whether these are derived from visual experience or wholly invented; they are usually sketched out and filled in with little sense of their sources or development. In an intimate setting such willful slightness can be winning. In the big white cubes that are Zwirner's main spaces, it looked thin.

A painting need not be large, or loud, to hold its own against an expanse of white wall. In a small untitled painting, a bleary, brushy, bluish-gray cloud hovers on a neutral ground, as dimly seen as shrubbery through a dense fog, with an inexplicable but essential hyphenlike mark at top center. Like many of these canvases, this one is roughly fitted to its frame, with conspicuously imperfect corners and misaligned pencil guidelines. In another, a warm buff ground suffused with peach surrounds bunched and jagged shapes in grays and muted greens. But two hokey, colorful landscapes look out of place here. While De Keyser's method is understatement and lack of finish, a few charcoal-heavy paintings, such as *Wait*—at over 4

feet tall, among the show's largest—look barely begun. Smaller, schematic charcoal-and-oil paintings linger in memory as a group, but not individually.

Also on hand was evidence of the artist's occasional practice of altering old canvases. Dated 1987/2005, *Steek 1* and *Steek 2* are stretched sections cut from *Steek*, which, reproduced in the artist's catalogue raisonné of 2000, was evidently considered finished until sometime last year. Of course De Keyser retains the moral right to his own work, but the viewer is impressed with the decisiveness behind this radical, irreversible act. In fact, questions about

the nature of decision-making underlie the show, beginning with the dubious choice of subjecting these programmatically modest paintings to circumstances best suited to spectacle.

—Stephen Maine

David Row at Von Lintel

The nine luminous new paintings (all from 2006) in this show by David Row, a much respected New York-based abstract painter, have shifted from the analytic approach he previously favored to a more immediate engagement with the expressive, even lyrical qualities of paint and process. In the 1980s and 1990s, in an effort to revitalize nonrepresentational painting, he, as well as several other artists—Stephen Ellis, Valerie Jaudon, David Reed and Shirley Kaneda, to name a few—focused on the formal language of painting to create what was sometimes referred to as syntactical or conceptual abstraction.

Now it seems that Row has come full circle. His signature paintings of alkyd and oil with their calculated technical devices—the scraping, the sanding, the paired canvases—and bold, handsome shapes and colors, have given way to works in oil that seem more integrally the result of his painting process. They are scaled to the body, averaging around 5 by 6 feet, and are surprisingly lovely. I say surprisingly because reproduc-

tions—which we often see before the original—cannot capture their delicate sheen or the nuances of their hues. With the exception of *Cubist Blues*, each painting consists of broad, loosely interlaced loops, bringing to mind post-monochrome Brice Marden paintings crossed with late de Koonings. *Cubist Blues*, on the other hand, pictures a transparent cube in a state of flux, either multiplying or consolidating, outlined by fibrillating deep-indigo lines.

The colors are muted, silvery—reds, blues or greens, and even when most vivid—the untitled bright orange painting, say—they are veiled by paler, sometimes whitened interwoven bands that read as the aura or shadow of the stronger color. These paintings have the diaphanous spontaneity of watercolors—although still fretted and scraped—and the drips and splatters that shower the surface add to the sensation of balletic, buoyant motion. But it is their fragile, shivered light that makes them unforgettable. This radiance suffuses each painting, an understated but gripping phenomenon, and while the paintings are made up of more than one color, the colors are so close in value that the sensation is often that of the monochrome. The reticent *Pastorale*, a fresh green-gold, and *Slipped Glimpse*, frosty white shading into arctic blue, are the two great beauties here, while *Venus Type*, a bitter burnt orange, is more clamorous. This is David Row in a new, more subtle and contemplative mode, one in which the "demons" (also the title of one of the paintings) of the conceptual have been subdued for the moment by the exhilaration of simply painting. —Lilly Wei

Elizabeth Murray at PaceWildenstein

Never one to rest on her laurels, Elizabeth Murray followed last year's MOMA retrospective with an ebullient and celebratory exhibition of paintings and works on paper. The hallmarks of Murray's work have always been fluidity and hybridity—she presents a universe in which everything is on the verge of morphing into something else. Her bold, interwoven compositions make no distinction between animate and inanimate objects because it appears that at any moment one can grow into the other. Instead, she presents a state of shifting but conserved energy that blends the absurdity of Dr. Seuss, the organicism of Miró, the exuberance of Keith Haring and most of all the improvisation of jazz.

While the recent works contain many of Murray's trademark references to the domestic world of mutating coffee cups and recombinatory furniture, this exhibition was also particularly full of references to music. One work, titled *Flight of the Bumble Bee* (2003) after the frenetic orchestral interlude written by Nikolai Rimsky-Korsakov, presents a jittery collection of discrete and possibly recognizable forms (one can make out a pair of windows or perhaps wrapped packages, dog bones and a bowtie) that seem to be vibrating individually as they lightly brush up against each other.

Even more explicitly musical, *Muddy Waters 8:05 A.M.* (2003-04) mingles references to everyday life with aural symbols. Sound waves seem

David Row: *Pastorale*, 2006, oil on canvas, 50 by 66 inches; at Von Lintel.

