

The New York Times

Art in Review

FRIDAY, MAY 21, 2010

Eric Wesley

'D'Cartes Blanche and New Paintings'

Bortolami

510 West 25th Street

Chelsea

Through June 19

Meta art — art about art — is pretty tired by now. There is not much about Modernism and the art system that it hasn't demystified. Nevertheless, Eric Wesley's exhibition cleverly invokes some of the basic preoccupations of this narrow, conceptualist genre.

To satirize the myth of the authentic gesture, there are Abstract Expressionist-size, snowy-white canvases, each bearing a wide, brushy, diagonal swath of blue, a drippy blob of yellow and an explosive splatter of red.

On the floor are three mostly white vehicles resembling diminutive golf carts that a big-time art producer might use in his factory-studio. Punning on the name of René Descartes, they are called "D'Cartes." One is upright, one lying on its side and one lifted high by an inner extension mechanism. These positions represent the coordinates of the Cartesian grid, Modernist art's favorite armature. Placed here and there to further metaphorically mark out the boundaries of modern creativity are small traffic cones made of stainless steel and painted glossy primary and secondary colors. Finally, there is this grace note: a slot has been cut into the top of the doorway leading to the rear gallery to allow passage of the biggest paintings and to debunk the fantasy of the gallery as a sacrosanct temple.

The exhibition title, "D'Cartes Blanche and New Paintings," hints at the big meaning: we are imprisoned by an all-pervasive Cartesian grid, a vast, technological web wherein our most soulfully expressive gestures are like the struggles of captured flies. So, Mr. Wesley, how do we escape and where to?

KEN JOHNSON



*Image not printed in The New York Times