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Art in Review: Jason Fox

By Karen Rosenberg | February 12, 2009

JASON FOX

'The Upper Depths'

Peter Blum

99 Wooster Street, SoHo

Through March 7

In this valentine of a show Jason Fox's latest series of paintings use a single color, red, to unite a disparate body of work. Ranging from notebook-size sketches to sweeping gestural abstractions, Mr. Fox's canvases lay a filter over decades of postwar painting.

The color inevitably brings to mind Barnett Newman's "Vir Heroicus Sublimis," particularly in the paintings streaked with white. Newman's "zip" is cleverly reinterpreted as a double helix in "Untitled" (2008) and a daisy chain in "The Upper Depths" (2008). Elsewhere, as in "Diogenes" (2007) and "Landscape No. 1" (2006), touches of milk-chocolate brown bring the palette closer to Philip Guston.

Many other paintings feature ovoid masses that appears to bulge or swell. "Disillusionism" (2007) suggests a convex mirror, "Warsaw" (2008) a large soap bubble. Brains, hearts and other organs figure in the mix, though romance is studiously avoided.

The series also brings to mind recent research about the effect of color on productivity (red for accuracy, blue for creative thought), even if it doesn't exactly justify the findings.

In a few works, like "God Versus Science and Witchcraft" (2007), Mr. Fox overreaches. Still, you have the sense that he is allowing the color red to spark formal and historical associations. It's a deeply intuitive, and liberating, way to paint. KAREN ROSENBERG