

# The New York Times

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## **Martha Diamond**

*Robert Miller Gallery  
41 East 57th Street  
Through June 25*

Martha Diamond's latest paintings begin, as her works have in the past, with urban architecture, or more precisely with a loose grid of building facades. The crucial word is loose. The buildings are only suggested by sketchy, melting lines that make them look like tumbling houses of cards. Above them, behind them, on top of them, Ms. Diamond puts down broad, brushy strokes of paint. The range of colors goes from all somber grays and black to pink, red and sky blue. It's not only these chromatic twists, but also the blending of seeming structure and seeming spontane-

ity, that make the work distinctive.

Ms. Diamond is doing variations on themes in several of the works, and she invents striking riffs. Sometimes the buildings look as if they are consumed in conflagrations; sometimes they turn into plaid cutouts; sometimes they shine in a bright afternoon light. She plays with depth, too: the backgrounds can push in front of the buildings. Above all, one is always made aware of the surface of the canvases, which in the end are lush, pleasure-filled abstractions. There's an unpretentious authority to these works, and a sense of humor about them that is especially appealing.

**MICHAEL KIMMELMAN**