

CULTURED

IN BRIEF THE CRITICS’ TABLE ART

Our Critics’ Picks of the Moment? Chair Sculptures, Skyscraping Abstractions, and an Ode to an Artist Gone Too Soon

Ksenia M. Soboleva’s debut for the Critics’ Table is a reflection on Gordon Hall’s new work at the Kitchen, Johanna Fateman gives a quintessentially New York painter a solid rave, and John Vincler is delighted by a two-part show honoring Jenni Crain.



“Martha Diamond: After Image” (Installation View), 2025, featuring *White Light*, 1986. Image courtesy of David Kordansky Gallery.

Martha Diamond

David Kordansky Gallery | 520 W. 20th Street

Through June 14, 2025

Fifty years after Georgia O’Keeffe painted a blinding sun peeking out from behind the edge of the Shelton Hotel, bleaching the Midtown Manhattan skyscraper’s top floors with its halo, Martha Diamond gave us the similarly glorious canvas *White Light*, 1986. The artist’s high-altitude image of the city—an unidentifiable building transformed by a related exhilarating optical effect—is more abstract, larger, and rendered in a simpler palette (mustard, teal, titanium dioxide) at a very different speed. It’s one of several paintings and studies in the 11-work posthumous show “After Image” at David Kordansky Gallery that feature buttery armatures of brusque wet-on-wet lines over fields or flurries of slashing and arcing gestures. (Diamond, a quintessentially New York artist who died in 2023, moved into her Bowery studio in 1969, and painted there for the rest of her life.)

To read the words "white light" (even as a title on a checklist) is, for me, to reflexively intone "white heat" in response, after the Velvet Underground's 1968 song, that jangling, droning, feedback-y paeon to injecting methamphetamine in Warhol's New York. And maybe between these two reference points—the heady Machine Age modernism practiced by O'Keeffe before she settled in the desert, and the blank wonder of the greatest work of art on the subject of the skyscrapers (Warhol's 1964, eight-hour static shot of the Empire State Building)—we can locate Diamond's own attitude toward the city, if not her style. Her particular, intoxicating ferocity is like a super strain bred from the best of the Ninth Street painters—sort of. In truth, Diamond's dazzling light and bravura brushwork, while they bring countless things to mind, make for a body of work like nothing else.—*Johanna Fateman*

WORDS

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