



Art

Time Out New York / Issue 654 : Apr 9–15, 2008

Art review

Katy Moran

Andrea Rosen Gallery, through Apr 19



Wasabi Without Tears

Photograph: ©Katy Moran, Courtesy Andrea Rosen Gallery, NY

After tantalizing appearances in group shows, Katy Moran's first New York solo affirms the young British artist's talent for evocative abstraction. The paintings are rife with apparent contradictions: They're small in scale yet best viewed from a distance; misty veils of white shroud the subject matter, and titles may mislead more than enlighten. Moran's approach occasionally feels like a self-conscious gambit, but it keeps viewers guessing long enough to come to provocative conclusions.

Most canvases display the artist's brushy, layered style and earthy, cool color palette, yet the mood of each comes as a fresh surprise. *Lucas* is an ethereal cascade of blue and white that could be a waterfall, a hazy beach or a snowstorm. Alarming splashes of blood red dot a dark oval form that might be a boat or an open grave in *Volestere*. Light paint daubed over dark in the show's most dramatic piece suggests a battlefield at night, though the title, *Wasabi Without Tears*, turns the painting into a funny take on highbrow culinary machismo.

Other canvases distill the essence of different moments in the art-historical canon: A cow's head emerges from a patchwork of Futurist volumes; elsewhere, a De Kooning-esque crone is rendered in dark Cubist colors; while in a third painting, a rough sailboat shape in a light-toned setting recalls a Dutch harborscape. Occasionally, Moran's jumble of forms fails to materialize into anything meaningful, and her grungy color schemes can be garish. This is rare. Instead, the work convincingly stakes Moran's painterly territory: historically astute with a dash of humor, making nods to Karen Kilimnik's romanticism and to Cecily Brown's jittery fluidity, while possessing an energy all its own.

—Merrily Kerr