

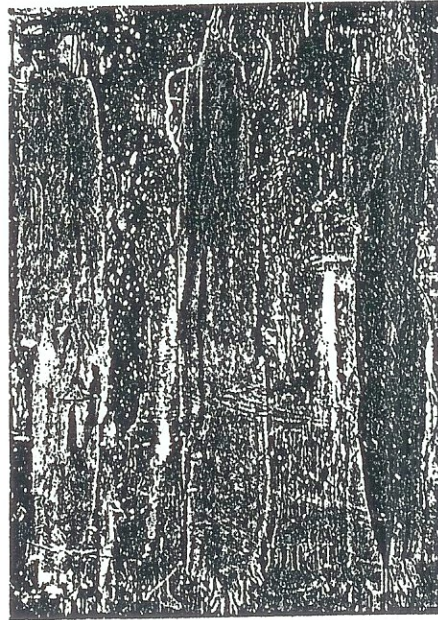
ARTS
THE ART NEWS

Denise Gale

55 MERCER

This exhibition illustrated why Denise Gale has earned a reputation as a strong abstract painter. She creates big, bold abstractions by splashing, stroking, and splattering stratas of paint across the canvas. These layers not only give the paintings literal depth, they pulsate with life.

In each painting on view, Gale followed the same format, and if the results were uneven it was interesting to see her experimentation. Against a thick buildup of pigment, she lays three wide stripes of the same color, stripes that could be read as figures or trees. In some paintings these bars move aggressively into the viewer's space, while in others they dance tentatively across the surface. In one of the most compelling pictures, *Winter Dusk/Manhattan*, the bright stripes of cornflower blue stand out starkly against the dark background. Here the figurative forms are mysterious, as if shrouded in blue, recalling in color and shape the cloak of the Virgin Mary in Renaissance paintings. In *East Ninth* the figure-ground relationship is blurred. Although here, too, bars of color hover free-form, they are covered by a thin skin of black paint that anchors them to the background.



Denise Gale, *Winter Dusk/Manhattan*, 1991, oil on canvas, 101 by 75½ inches. 55 Mercer.

REVIEWS

Oddly, these paintings have a kinship to graffiti. Not the graffiti that moved into the galleries but the painting that exists on bridges and walls in towns across America, paintings to which successive generations are adding their marks. Visually digging through the buildup of blues, blacks, ochers, oranges, and greens, one gets the sense these works have been around a long time. They are rich with a history of paint.

—Sue Scott

