

Lawrence Markey, Inc.

# ARTnews

February 1996

## Robert Moskowitz

JOSEPH HELMAN,  
LAWRENCE MARKEY

Over the past 30 years, Robert Moskowitz's work has veered between paintings that leave no lasting impression and Zen-like images that haunt the memory. This exhibition of new work at Joseph Helman, Moskowitz's first in New York since 1988, contained a number of forgettable paintings—and one masterpiece.

A Minimalist who employs images, Moskowitz has his expressive, sensitive side as well as an aspect that verges on the cartoon—as in the three stark black-and-white paintings here entitled *Tsunami*, meaning tidal wave, where the artist is represented by a computer-generated logo ("Bob") in the lower right-hand corner of each canvas. Cartoonlike stylization often results in a distancing from raw emotion, and in Moskowitz's work—where so much depends on an economy of information—the effect can be rather cold.

The big exception, *The Gate Way*, is a long, narrow, horizontal canvas charged with mystery. The intense brushwork of its white center is faced at either end by identical black abstract shapes which, in the way cloud formations suggest images, can be seen as snarling Chinese dogs. Hovering in the center like a UFO, an elongated ivory-colored blip sets up a certain tension with a nearby planetlike black dot, no bigger than a quarter. This is Moskowitz at his best. Working with just a few enigmatic images, he has created an atmosphere of otherworldliness that is thoroughly engaging. One painting does not make a show, but how often do we see such a painting?

Concurrently, Lawrence Markey exhibited nine recent pastel drawings of the World Trade Center—an image Moskowitz has explored since the mid-1970s. The location was particularly appropriate since the gallery, on the edge of SoHo, has a clear view of the twin towers from its window. Primarily black and white with just hints of red, Moskowitz's simple forms benefit here from his personal touch: smudges, fingerprints, torn edges, subtle color. These are not major statements, nor are they meant to be. But their warm and tactile qualities are charming.

CAROL DIEHL



Robert Moskowitz,  
*The Gate Way*, 1993,  
oil on canvas,  
24" x 132".  
Joseph Helman.