

Lawrence Markey, Inc.

Time Out New York

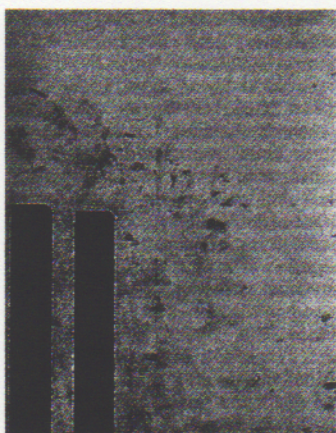
November 22–29, 1995

Robert Moskowitz

"Recent Paintings," Joseph Helman Gallery, through Dec 9 (see 57th Street).

"Drawings," Lawrence Markey Gallery, through Dec 16 (see Soho).

A prominent, if not exactly major, figure of the American postwar generation, Robert Moskowitz has enjoyed a 35-year career consisting of significant exhibi-



Robert Moskowitz, *Untitled*, 1995.

tions punctuated by lengthy absences from the public eye. This strategy (if one could call it that) may partially account for the sustained interest in what is, after all, a staid and rather decorative synthesis of abstract expressionism, pop art and minimalism—an approach that continues in these concurrent shows.

In 1975, Moskowitz gained wide recognition by exhibiting in the Whitney Museum's seminal "New Image Painting," the show which effectively reintroduced figurative painting in the wake of conceptual art—thus setting the stage for neoexpressionism in the '80s. By then, he had worked his way from abstract expressionism through a pop-inflected assemblage painting to the style he's known for today. An essentially flat

and child-like play on the figure-ground relationship, Moskowitz's approach has been to toy with the recognizability of shapes as imagery: the silhouette of '50s-vintage Cadillac tailfins, a Dutch windmill, the Twin Towers (something of a trademark for the artist).

In the past, Moskowitz employed a sort of velvety brushwork that managed to draw a link within his paintings between the painterliness of Clyfford Still and Edward Ruscha's iconography. While an echo of that heavily worked surface remains in the smudgy pastels on view at Lawrence Markey, at Joseph Helman he presents larger paintings (dated 1993–95) in which brushwork is virtually absent or rendered emblematically. With respect to the latter technique, Moskowitz has evidently been paying attention to the likes of Gerhard Richter, Jonathan Lasker and others who have dealt with the paradox of abstract art's representational potential. Still, the emphasis is on games with imagery; Moskowitz once again presents the Twin Towers and comes up with some new configurations, such as craggy cave walls or the nearly abstract *Tsunami* (1995). Covering nearly seven-eighths of a vertical panel in solid black, *Tsunami* tips its hand not only through its title and the wavy line dividing the composition, but also through the artist's signature, a simple "Bob" written in large, rippling cartoon letters which appear to be drowning. It's cute but reveals little; the decorousness of the painting prevents any insight into of the artist's state of mind and ensures we never get too deep.—HH