

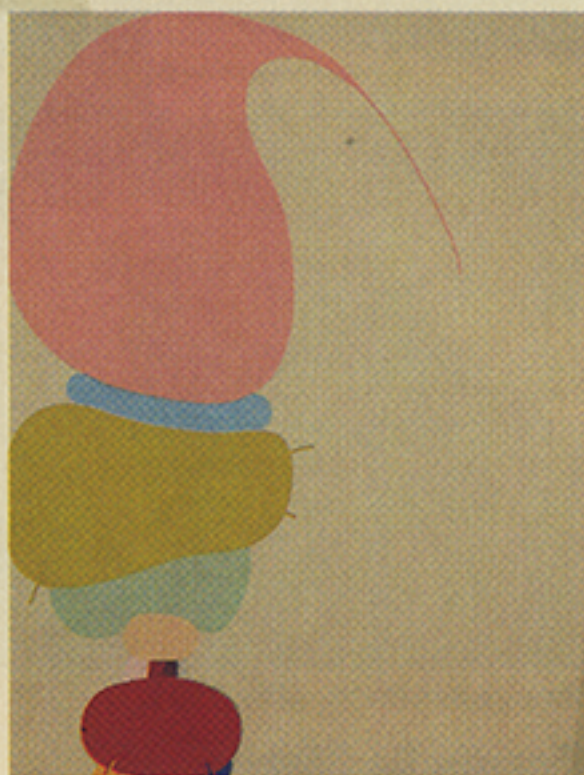
"The Speed of Painting: Laura Owens, Monique Prieto, Steven Parrino and Scott Reeder"

Pat Hearn Gallery, through Oct 13
(see Chelsea).

Donald Judd once said that "painting is like musical theater"—meaning that it's limited by convention. For the past ten years or so, people have agreed with him, charging that painting is too conservative to address the times and declaring it "dead" (yet again). This same period, however, has seen the introduction of new materials and strategies meant to circumvent painting's conventions, so it might be time to revise Judd's notion. Painting may not be the "going thing," but it's not an "already gone" thing either.

This group show attempts to revive a sort of abstract painting, though its title may be the most interesting thing about it. The proposition of "The Speed of Painting" is simple enough: The longer you feel compelled to look at a painting, the better it is. By this criterion, Laura Owens is definitely the "slowest"—and therefore the best—painter here. She contributes a large, mostly white untitled painting suggesting a boxlike interior. At its center floats an image of a starry night sky, around which revolve receding, perspectival views of other paintings. Recalling Jasper John's 1989 *Montez Singing*, Owens's seemingly bland flatness resolves, on closer inspection, into a meditation on pictorial space.

Monique Prieto is the second "slowest" painter of the bunch, contributing



Monique Prieto, *Launch*, 1996.

two canvases on which she stacks cartoony blobs of vibrant color. *Sunset Special* looks Dr. Seuss-ish; *Launch* is like an alchemical diagram done by Ren & Stimpy. They're a little formulaic, but have sauciness and wit.

Scott Reeder's paintings are slightly "faster." Of his two contributions, *All the Boring States* is best—a jumbled grid of pale color blocks evoking the interlocking banality of a map of the West.

Finally, Steven Parrino's paintings are way too fast. These splashy objects—monochrome canvases yanked around stretchers—are the most ironic things in the show. They also feel the most dated. If not dead, they're a dead end.—*Jerry Saltz*