

**TIME OUT NEW YORK**  
**April 20-27, 2000**

Casey Cook at Lehmann Maupin  
By FRANKLIN SIRMANS

I first encountered Casey Cook's work at Deitch Projects in the group exhibition "Painting from Another Planet," in which a number of young painters from L.A. made their East Coast debut. That show, curated by David Pagel, set out to prove a couple of things: first, that the surfeit of top-flight art schools in L.A. had produced a crop of artists who deserved wider recognition; and second, that their aesthetic was by and large specific to L.A.—which is to say, shiny and bright, like in the song "It Never Rains in Southern California." But of course, it does; to a certain extent, the paintings in "Another Planet" seemed a bit too glossy, except for Cook's muted compositions, which looked like distant cousins to the candy-colored offerings by such artists as Kurt Kauper and Ingrid Calame.

At Lehmann Maupin, Cook's large paintings have been given plenty of room to shine on their own, though their palette remains the same challenging spectrum of olive drab, dingy brown, maroon and ochreous yellow that stood out at the Deitch show. Her panels are broken by gridded lines that carry on the tradition of hard-edged abstraction and recall the frame-by-frame format of animation. Here and there, bits of S/M imagery—stiletto heels, rubber-ball gags—hint at some sort of sexual drama.

These narrative bits play out like the old "eight million stories in the naked city"; they also make me think of Martin Wong's views of the Lower East Side. There are differences, of course, beyond the fact that Wong is a sort of magic realist: He tends to concentrate on the relationship between figure and neighborhood, while Cook goes for the story behind closed doors. The gridded architectural structure of her paintings also emphasizes the idea of fragmentation—within the pieces themselves and in her characters' lives. Unlike expressionist renditions of such subject matter, these paintings are cool and signlike, yet they reveal more than just surface bravado.