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TALKING ABOUT...

EDITED BY  
VALERIE STEIKER

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## House of Games



In the early nineties, painter **Suzanne McClelland** burst onto the scene with alphabet-soup abstractions featuring letters, puns, and idioms. As critic Jerry Saltz wrote in a 1992 review: "They're mysterious and disarming—like you're in for something bigger than you bargained for." Then she disappeared.

"I sort of retreated for eight years," admits McClelland, who moved from Manhattan to upstate New York after 9/11 and the birth of her son Lucas, now seven. Now she's back with a show of kaleidoscopic new work at the Sue Scott Gallery on the Bowery.

Calling a Brooklyn brownstone home these days, the Jacksonville native has been toying with the concept of belonging and "finding a sense of place." Of the 20 paintings on view, five cartoonish abstractions depict Spot (the four-legged critter with the bulbous nose from Robert Lopshire's 1960 children's book *Put Me in the Zoo*), rendered in blind contour, an amateur drawing technique in which the artist moves her eyes along the outline of the subject while her pencil follows suit. Another grouping, titled "Animal Trainer," includes four silk screens of Dan Rice, a legendary nineteenth-century circus clown and an inspiration for the character of Uncle Sam.

The subject matter isn't the only thing that's playful. "I'm playing with the notion of what painting is," she says. "It is a combination of marks and stains and smudges and spills—all those things that can be considered mistakes."

—**Kimberly Straub**