

ART

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Steven Parrino

Team, through Oct 2 (see Chelsea).

Despite their large scale, the three monochrome pieces at Team are marked by a kind of fragility. What seem at first glance like jokey simulacra of “great” painting are in fact suffused with an air of defeat; it’s precisely this suggestion of failure that makes Steven Parrino’s latest show so successful.

Zodiac, a slipshod square of black enamel paint applied thickly to a bunched-up canvas, charts Parrino’s position within the art-star system. *Zodiac* nods to classical drapery, Jackson Pollock’s drips, Oldenberg’s soft sculptures and Minimalism’s love affair with geometry. As if *Zodiac*’s black-and-silver-flicked paint weren’t clue enough, Parrino’s boot print can be found on its raw-canvas border; it seems this Minimalist has been doing some action painting on the side. Here, hard-edge has been softened into something that looks like the flayed skin of a Richard Serra.

The largest work, *Dancing on Graves*, consists of three honeycomb-aluminum panels coated shiny black (one is suspended on a wall; two others are plunked on the floor) plus a videotape dangling from the ceiling. The tape is a continuous loop of a certain Manuela, who, clad in black-leather, dances erotically to industrial/ravey music on one of the panels. At the end of the segment, Parrino cuts the panel in half with a circular saw. The



Steven Parrino, installation view.

piece seems to be as much about unfulfilled desire as it is about the frustrations of an artist forced into a sadomasochistic relationship with the art market.

Perhaps the most evocative thing about *Dancing* is the way it reflects the surrounding space, including Parrino’s other works. From one angle, *Zodiac* trembles in the uncertain light of reflection, as if it were already sinking into obscurity. From another angle, the comically Swiss-cheeselike *Existential Trap for Speed Freaks* (1988–91) casts shaky moons on *Dancing*’s Bladenesque structure. The gallery’s windows and roof beams create square shadows that look like so many headstones.

By the time I left the gallery, I was having difficulty distinguishing between inside and out: Was that the buzzing of a saw down the street or the tool featured in *Dancing*? Well, that may be Parrino’s point: Categories do sometimes fall apart at the seams.—Alex Neef