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Pam Glick

by Julian Kreimer

Pam Glick: *NF Incolor*, 2015, oil on board, 9 by 12 inches; at White Columns.



Bouncy and muscular, Pam Glick's recent large-scale paintings are inspired by the grandeur of Niagara Falls. In many of the works, spray-painted stripes evoke the schematic form of the cataracts, and loosely brushed Rust-Oleum overpainted with thin calligraphic squiggles suggests the dynamism of churning water. Glick lives in Buffalo, twenty minutes from the falls, and in interviews she has described her efforts to imbue her paintings with the mesmerizing emotional intensity she experiences at the site. Such sentiments could easily end up feeling corny, but Glick manages to avoid that pitfall by creating unpretentious works that temper romantic wonder with physical directness.

Little white lines wiggle in *Red, White and Blue Dowser* (2016), a six-foot-square canvas. The lines, which are grouped in bundles and resemble abstract wave patterns, rest atop blocks of drippy blue house paint, which in turn have been applied to a ground of additional spray-painted white lines that dash and leap around the canvas.

Glick's long sprayed marks in her works are evidence of her physical approach to painting, which involves shoulder-joint swivels with the aerosol can. Similarly, her brushed paint has been applied in strokes driven by the elbow, or in shorter lines coming from the fingers and the wrist. The variation in the width and length of the strokes results in compositions that keep shifting

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never settling into fixed images. Throughout the paintings, Glick achieves a canny mimicry of the vertiginous effect, if not the look, of the mighty waterfall.

Glick's first solo exhibition, held in 1980, a year after she received her BFA from the Rhode Island School of Design, was also at White Columns. She had a bright early career in the '80s, but the current exhibition comes twenty-two years after her last New York solo show. Assessing one of Glick's exhibitions in the early '90s, critic Faye Hirsch (now an *Art in America* contributing editor) emphasized the influence of early American modernists like Arthur Dove and Marsden Hartley. The latest paintings have evolved from these figurative roots, but Glick, like her modernist predecessors, manages to translate a sense of awe at the natural world into compositions that approach abstraction.

Lest one think that her work was entirely about reimagining the aesthetic sublime, one wall at White Columns displayed a loose grid of ten small paintings, all with titles that point to humorous moments in contemporary life. In *Bear Skin in Salt in a Blue Suit Case JFK–London Heathrow* (2016), black and copper dots and curves vaguely resembling a teddy bear rest on a light blue sprayed grid and a scribbled background. The rushed feel of these forms parallels the harried mood of an airport.

Life Starts Now—A Page from Marilyn Monroe's Diary (2015), a large painting from an earlier body of work, features a grid of the film star's words as a loose structure. (Language has often been a counterweight to the natural imagery in Glick's work.) The letters shrink in size as they descend the canvas, and Glick has repainted the words in a variety of colors—blues and blacks with a few reds and oranges—until they are mostly illegible. As with her waterfall paintings, Glick imbues these fragments of language with feeling.