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Mark Flood, Judith Linhares, and Others Who Don't Need Your Darn Network

The badass and the 30-year hallucination

By [Martha Schwendener](#) Wednesday, Mar 9 2011

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A couple of years ago, art historian and critic [David Joselit](#) published an article on contemporary painting in the journal *October*. The article was sort of notable for a few reasons. One is that *October*, the formerly radical art journal whose founders now serve as overlords in [Ivy League](#) art-history departments, hasn't been a big supporter of painting. The essay also straddled the murky divide between art history and criticism—categories presently very much in flux.

Joselit's piece rested on the premise that painting could remain vital if it did more than just "hang on the wall." Instead, it should make explicit the "networks" in which it operates: the social space of the gallery, the world and history of images, its reproducibility. If painting does this, Joselit argued, it could get around being a luxury collectible, stuck over someone's couch or in a museum storage room, and continue circulating and producing new meanings and relationships.

The problem, for many artists, was that Joselit's essay offered only a narrow space in which to operate—or, alternatively, a criterion too broad and vague. It also privileged a particular lineage of conceptual painting. Even before reading the article, one painter I know said, "I can already guess which galleries and artists he mentions." More problematic was the idea that painting in commercial galleries could break the commodity-collectible cycle. You don't need a Ph.D. in art history—or economics—to see the complications there.

If you look around Chelsea right now, though, there are plenty of paintings that happily resist Joselit's manifesto, succeeding on other terms.

And while much of the work "just" hangs on the walls—an element central to his critique—it makes the case for looking at pictures made by artists, in addition to all the mass media images that invade our consciousnesses on the street, subway, computer, smartphone, and elsewhere.

[Josh Smith](#), currently showing at [Luhring Augustine](#) (531 West 24th Street, through March 19), could easily be incorporated into Joselit's instant-canon, since he's adroit at putting networks—art history, installation, artist branding—into play. But the expressionist idiom in which he works depends, like indie rock, on the right balance of irony and earnestness. Smith achieves that, though, particularly in the back-back gallery, where a nearly wallpaper, salon-style display of canvases and panels with colorful, abstract gestures and digitally manipulated images offers a torrent of techniques and references.

Expressionism is taken up differently by Judith Linhares at Edward Thorp (210 Eleventh Avenue,



Courtesy Edward Thorp Gallery

Proper SPF unclear: Judith Linhares's Cove, 2010

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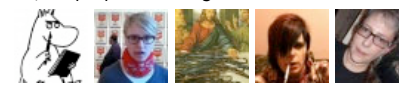
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Expressionism is taken up differently by Judith Linhares at Edward Thorp (*210 Eleventh Avenue, through April 2*). Linhares's pleasingly weird universe of nude women and menacing critters—painted in long, chunky brush strokes and spectral colors—is constantly mentioned alongside the work of Dana Schutz (and I'm repeating the crime here). Linhares is clearly the template, not just for Schutz, but for many younger artists interested in the expressionist lineage of early-20th-century painters like Paula Modersohn-Becker. But it's one thing to have an idiosyncratic art-school hallucination, versus sustaining one for over 30 years, as Linhares has successfully done.

Tomory Dodge at CRG (*548 West 22nd Street, through April 2*) incorporates stripes, which are central to the work of earlier artists like Daniel Buren and Gene Davis, and slabs of paint scraped onto the surface like Gerhard Richter in his abstractions. (A body of Richter work is also on view in Chelsea, at the Flag Art Foundation [*545 West 25th Street, through May 26*])—but enough about him.) Dodge's painting is particularly interesting for the way he re-creates digital effects in an analog language, heightening your awareness of how you "see" digitally, even when you're not in front of a computer.

Returning to the music metaphor, Mark Flood at Zach Feuer (*548 West 22nd Street, through March 26*) is like the Scratch Acid, Jesus Lizard, or Butthole Surfers of painting: a vintage industrial-punk, self-described "art manufacturer" whose fabulously stripped-down canvases spray-painted with texts—and in one installation, corporate logos—are accompanied by stacks of Batman comic books and torn-out Lindsay Lohan magazine images. Flood lives in Texas, where