

CHEIM & READ

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What to See in N.Y.C. Galleries in May

Want to see new art in the city? Check out Michael McGrath's emoji landscapes, Enrique Chagoya's "reverse anthropology" or King Cobra's metaphorical butchery.

By Roberta Smith, Martha Schwendener, John Vinler, Travis Diehl and Arthur Lubow

May 3, 2023, 2:21 p.m. ET

Peter Shear

Through May 13. Cheim & Read, 547 West 25th Street, Manhattan; 212-242-7727, cheimread.com.



Peter Shear's "Door to Door," 2022, oil on canvas. via Peter Shear and Cheim & Read; Photo by Stuart Snoddy

Peter Shear's little paintings resemble terse, challenging poems. Painting and title resonate in the mind and eye. You decide whether these ricochets hold your interest.

Small size is the only constant here; otherwise, variations in color, suggestion, internal scale and style, prevail. "Same Day" (2021), the show's first painting, isolates a short band of meager, wobbly white lines and two narrow horizontal shapes, midway on the right edge of a dark brown field. It could depict outdoor furniture — an earlier a center of lively human interaction — abandoned on a beach as dusk darkens. There's an end-of-summer sadness that's a lot for a painting to sustain, but it does.

Next to it, in "Door to Door" (2022), Shear lavishes loaded brushes of white, blue, brown and green across the surface — for a bit of forest stream, melting snow or rocky beach. Although an end in itself, this work evokes the painting-study genre and its pleasures. And soon thereafter, "Following Sea" — which gives the show its title — is again white on brown but solidly painted — a suggestion of whitecaps at sea or trailed white garments left on the floor.

The paintings in the show's small first gallery are especially strong. In the two larger spaces that follow, you may find that you're able to resist and argue with more of them — at least for a while. Shear's next direction may be signaled by the jewel-like, more solidly structured forms of "Match." **ROBERTA SMITH**