

Art in New York

OCTOBER '11



Gregory Edwards; *Autumn Litter*, 2010, oil on canvas, 60 x 48 inches; at 47 Canal.

GREGORY EDWARDS 47 CANAL

For his first solo exhibition, Brooklyn artist Gregory Edwards presented a group of nine abstract paintings that take window blinds and leopard prints as their subject matter. Hung in loose groupings, these were accompanied by a clever pun on the artist's name: a Gregorian wind chime, fluttering beside an open window. It was a low-key accompaniment to an exhibition of snappy and colorful striped, dotted, and animal skin canvases. Less in the vein of Zak Prekop or Philippe Decrauzat, then, say, Julia Fish or Roger White, Edwards's stripes and patterns were markedly gestural and decidedly painterly.

With rows of horizontal brush strokes interrupted by two long vertical smudges, Edwards's window-blind canvases feature both a color palette that, on blinds, would be commercially implausible—jarring juxtapositions of red, taupe and peach, or green, orange and gray—as well as very gestural mark-making, which partly obscures their subjects. Their horizontal brush strokes periodically tangle and veer, causing the disciplined surface to regress into spatial disorganization; the surface of *Interior Blinds 1* (2010) is interrupted by gestural stutters, as uniform horizontal lines dip down abruptly, pool into bursts of energy or even disappear completely; *Interior Blinds 4* (2011), meanwhile, features diagonal blank spots resembling slants of light.

Stranded in the Jungle and *Last Season* (both 2010) mime animal-skin patterns one might find on wallpaper or fabric. In *Autumn Litter* (2010), a monochromatic field of orange paint partly obscures tan-brown marks. Other works feature layers of large black circles spaced out evenly across the canvases. Taken together, the works in this show exhibit a seemingly flat uniformity. Up close, however, one notices skilled painterly gestures within the ordered fields. Twitching daubs and swirls form human figures within the animal patterning—they have the appearance of tumbling divers coagulating around dark brown pools of paint. Moreover, the grid of polka dots turns out to be not so even, the circles not so perfectly circular, and *Autumn Litter*'s layer of orange not so evenly applied. Marked by both uniformity and inconsistency, abstraction and representation, these canvases exhibit very painterly middle grounds.

Quoted at length in the press release, Edwards, who graduated from New York's School of Visual Arts in 2003, implores the viewer "to allow paintings to hang back, say nothing," and to "accept their polymorphic nature . . . as dead and alive, in and out of style." This is appropriate, considering the artist's almost holistic approach to the medium.

—David Everitt Howe