

## Art in Review

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### Andrew Masullo

'Recent Paintings'

*Feature*

*131 Allen Street, near Rivington Street*

*Lower East Side*

*Through Dec. 5*

If Andrew Masullo's truculent, hard-won but nonetheless joyful paintings can be said to involve a family of forms — and they can — you could also say that many of its members appear to be adopted. His paintings' familial resemblances reside foremost in size (small), surface (matte, brushy), color (saturated), edges (hard, but unruled) and spatial illusion (not much).

In contrast, the repertory of flat shapes that Mr. Masullo has evolved in the 27 years he has been exhibiting in New York is all over the place. Some motifs have the graphic forcefulness of emblems or flags; others seem derived from letters. Quite a few push the figure-ground relationship in all sorts of very different directions. There are instances of surface-filling stripes and patterns and one work in which the inspiration seems to be an ornate picture frame.

In the brief interview that serves as the press release at Feature, Mr. Masullo says his work is not abstract, but doesn't elaborate. Perhaps he sees his efforts as objects, or as the occasions of intuitive processes so particular and unpredictable that abstraction is beside the point, or as depictions of things that he prefers not to specify.

This is Mr. Masullo's 12th solo show in a New York gallery and first in six years. It is also his first at Feature, where his work seems completely at home. He is due a small museum survey that would tie together his paintings with the quirky books and collages he made in the 1980s, when his work was one of the fresher sights on the East Village art scene. Its freshness persists.

ROBERTA SMITH

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