

Eleven Rivington

downtown express

Published January 25–31, 2008

OFF THE GRID
New art grows on and near the Bowery

By Stephen Mueller



JACKIE SACCOCCIO
"Interrupted Grid"
Eleven Rivington Gallery
11 Rivington St., btwn. Bowery & Chrystie St.
Wed.-Sat. 1-7 p.m.
Through Feb. 9
212-982-1930

A new civilization of gallery life has sprung up in the immediate vicinity of the New Museum on the Bowery and along the blocks east of Ludlow Street. Reminiscent of the East Village scene of the '80s, the current gentrification,

somewhat less funky, makes a viable alternative to the architectural statement of mega-galleries hugging the Hudson in Chelsea. There is a “back to the roots” feeling about the spaces and a cottage industry look of an earlier time about the art being shown.

A prime example is Jackie Saccoccio's smallish-room, big-painting show at Eleven Rivington. Entitled “Interrupted Grid,” the exhibition is composed of seven sizable works, all oil on canvas. Saccoccio riffs on the adage that all contemporary painting springs from a grid of some sort. She gleefully explodes and otherwise warps the notion of the grid using jumps in scale and color ranging from hyped-up earth tones to just plain hyped-up color in a thick and thin tour de force of painterly technique.

Equipped with an extensive knowledge of the history of Western painting and its mechanics in the modernist movement, Saccoccio proceeds to disrupt the picture plane either by continually contradicting space or by defining it. Her work calls to mind painters from Italian mannerist masters to Joan Mitchell to contemporaries like Louise Fishman, but with a fresher palette with less depictive chroma.

Saccoccio's color can be difficult. Compositionally she uses what Hans Hoffman refers to as “push and pull,” an approach that ties abstract painting to Renaissance spatial conceits. It's fun to watch Saccoccio's work dance around the modernist canon, which denies spatial concerns to abstract painting.

For a long time the grid, which Saccoccio does indeed interrupt, served painters as a way around the formal modernist edict forbidding space. With her, it's as if Renaissance light and space peek through a web of formal gesture and disintegrating flatness. Especially successful in this respect, and a great painting, is “Pistachio Grid.” “Blue Balls” and “I'm Feeling Feelings” are also vital works in the show.

This exhibition bodes well both for Saccoccio and for the future of painting — from the ground up — in this exciting “new” neighborhood for art.