

art



John Marriott scrapes glass into precise lines and geometric configurations in *Crosscurrent*.

MULTIDISCIPLINARY WORKS

Dysphoria on wry

Marriott makes you laugh and think **By DAVID JAGER**

JOHN MARRIOTT at gallerywest
(1172 Queen West), to November 7.
416-913-7116. Rating: **NNNN**

Consisting of what he calls "middle" works – a reference to being in mid-

career – John Marriott's show *Afterimages* addresses past decades' art movements, from Fluxus to our current age of post-everything. Borrowing cheekily from conceptualism's and minimalism's astringency, he makes work that tempers serious-

ness with dry and dysphoric wit.

Distillations is made with broken glass, arguably a material that evokes riots and chaos. In this series of rigidly formalist paintings, he scrapes the glass into precise lines and geometric configurations that are then glued onto raw brown canvas.

Marriott clearly enjoys going against his own grain, underscoring amusing cognitive dissonances that spring up between materials, cultural eras and art movements.

Crosscurrent, his riff on Smithsonian's *Spiral Jetty*, is a good example. Marriott Photoshops the spiral earthwork created by the deeply process-oriented Smithsonian, the epitome of ecological rectitude, into the @ symbol.

It's less a lampoon of Smithsonian than a larger statement on how contemporary culture freely co-opts and distorts whatever falls within its digital purview. Seeing Smithsonian's magnum opus so glibly transformed makes you chortle and then gives you pause. To emphasize the irony, a tiny spiral @ made in ground glass stands on a plinth before the transformed image.

If Marriott is taking the high seriousness of his borrowed genres down a notch, however, he is not simply going for a dismissive punchline. The wry laugh behind his conceptual deadpan is designed to make you think, not smirk. ©

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