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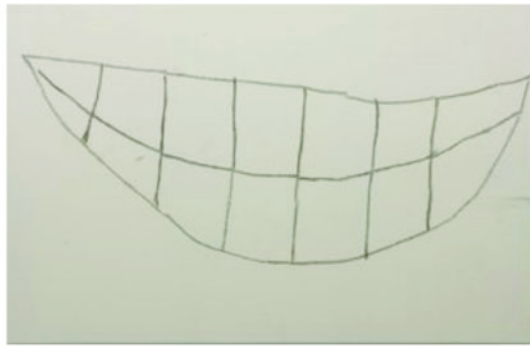
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Review: Joe Bradley at Peres Projects

12:00 PM, April 10, 2009



Joe Bradley may be throwing the baby out with the bathwater. Or he may be making the most bare-boned paintings around.

At [Peres Projects](#), his extremely lean works give blunt form to the tenor of our times, a fear-laced moment when austerity and desperation seem to have made luxury and confidence not only distasteful but also delusional.

Bradley's paintings on large and wall-size canvases couldn't be simpler. Each consists of a handful of unsteady lines drawn in the style of a 5-year-old. They're easy to dismiss. If you care about color, there's nothing to look at. The same goes for atmosphere, touch, compositional sophistication, mystery, facility and workmanship.

But some are better than others. "Smiley" depicts a mouthful of perfect teeth. It sticks in the mind's eye like a song you can't get out of your head. "Gawd," "Schuperman," "Human Form" and "Ecstasy" are also oddly resonant, their barely there efforts suffused with just enough potential for tragic pathos that you ignore them at your own risk.

In contrast, a spiraling line on a round canvas and an asterisk on a square one look unnecessarily decorative.

It's a fine line that Bradley walks. But he does so with more barbed wit than cynicism.

-- David Pagel

Peres Projects, 2766 S. La Cienega Blvd., L.A., (310) 559-6100, through May 16. Closed Sundays and Mondays.

Above: "Smiley." Credit: Peres Projects