

The New York Times

Mark Flood

Chelsea Whores

*Zach Feuer Gallery
530 West 24th Street, Chelsea
Through July 10*

Mark Flood's exhibition is so passive-aggressive it could give viewers psychic whiplash. A Texan in his early 50s, Mr. Flood produces works that mock American culture and the contemporary art world, but he also creates paintings that are almost beautiful.

Most of the pieces in this show, his second in New York, are in the form of signs. Some are altered found objects, like an Exxon sign with the words "Take Drugs" crudely stenciled across the bottom. Others, made from scratch on cardboard, bear stenciled messages like "Another Painting" or "2 More Paintings." They make John Baldessari-type fun of the reverence often accorded to painting.

One large piece presents a silhouette of the United States made of silver-painted bubble wrap with blinking red lights marking New York, Los Angeles and Houston, Mr. Flood's home. Block letters spell, "America's Coolest Warts scenes," equating art and dermatology.

In another vein Mr. Flood creates collage portraits that monstrously distort the faces of celebrities like Katie Couric and Anderson Cooper and attaches them to painting stretchers.

These sorts of gestures are familiarly satiric and, after all, eager to please the cognoscenti. In any case, Mr. Flood also makes traditional works by applying paint over old lace and then pulling away the cloth, leaving intricate, multihued, all-over patterns that are visually absorbing if not revolutionary. In the context of the rest of the show, they help position him as an interestingly irascible eccentric. *KEN JOHNSON*