

The New York Times

Art in Review

Peter Cain

*Matthew Marks Gallery
1018 Madison Avenue (at 78th
Street)
Through April 25*

Peter Cain loves cars. His paintings of them are big and glossy, but curiously flat. It's a billboard style, like that of James Rosenquist, but Mr. Cain focuses on one motif per canvas instead of piling up seemingly unrelated images as Mr. Rosenquist does. Mr. Cain's preferred motif is a car's rear end, from the back wheel to the bumpers and brake lights. Seen from the back or from the side, flat on the ground or poking into the air, the car's posterior assumes almost iconic status.

Mr. Cain's show includes two photographs: a door in a steel locker and what seems to be a tiny section of a car seat, with a rounded black button floating in an expanse of perforated black vinyl. In both cases, the true subject of the picture seems to be the gleam of light washing across the glossy surfaces. There are also several big line drawings done in thick black pencil: some cars, and three views of the head of a man lying on a beach, rotated so that he's successively prone, perpendicular and upside down. The decisive line, the absence of shading and the microscopic wavering of the pencil point make these drawings more seductive than anything else in the show.

PEPE KARMEL