
CRITIC'S NOTEBOOK
BRAVE NEW WORLD

Today's look in more or less abstract picture-making is big, sprawling, and so incredibly busy that a convulsive return to less-is-more may be coming, and none too soon. "Remote Viewing (Invented Worlds in Recent Painting and Drawing)"—the title refers to a high-quack mode of E.S.P.—fills the third floor of the Whitney Museum with excursions in brainy horror vacui by eight mostly local artists, from the overqualified veterans Terry Winters and Carroll Dunham to younger types like Julie Mehretu, Matthew Ritchie, and Alexander Ross. Maps, architecture, computers, and assorted sciences are invoked, along with "virtual reality, the deep



unconscious"—whatever that may be—"nomadic travels, and public space." Sorting out the good (or sincerely wacky) from the bad (or frivolously solemn) is hard work, given the prevailing conditions of information overload, which, like video games, seem geared to road-testing the nervous systems of teen-agers. The colors run to the grim, screechy, and otherwise militantly ugly. The over-all effect suggests frenetic depression, mental energies dedicated to forfending thought.

—Peter Schjeldahl