

ARTFORUM

CRITICS' PICKS

New York

Ed Moses

ALBERTZ BENDA

515 West 26th Street

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Spanning 1951 to '99, this survey of paintings and drawings by West Coast artist Ed Moses presents a pleasurable mismatch of gestures and techniques. Working horizontally so as to be able to approach his support from all sides, Moses variously sponged, mopped, squeegeed, and rolled paint across canvas, wood, and Mylar. Here, disclosed through an aluminum-colored wash, there, veiled by an accretion of acrylic, these supports treat paint as both a stain and a sheath. Colors and textures mix—soft and matte next to mineral and slick—yielding compositions that seem at odds with themselves. *Wall Layuca #4*, 1989, outfits unprimed cotton in soggy skeins of black and silvery gray. The work is premised on the irreducibly liquid nature of paint, while *Montirr-Aix*, 1999, congeals the same in a gummy skin, freckled with bits of bluish glitter. Such incongruities are typical of Moses's work, which withholds the closure of a signature style.

One of the original Ferus Gallery “studs,” Moses stuck stubbornly to two dimensions. While others in the “cool school” dispatched with painting for plastics and the etherealities of Light and Space, Moses remained committed to the medium, however serious its identity crisis. From 1961 to '68, he turned to drawing as a way to work through the problems of his paintings. First shown at Ferus, *Rose #6*, 1963, surrounds stenciled blossoms with



Ed Moses, *Rose #6*, 1963, graphite and acrylic on chipboard, 60 x 40”.

Fiske, Courtney. “Critics’ Picks: Ed Moses,” ARTFORUM. September 2016.

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serried patches of graphite that resemble Cubist *passage*. Line serves not to figure but to anxiously fill, as if each mark were motivated by a need to erase the emptiness of its ground. Small stretches of blank chipboard interrupt the densely wrought surface, proposing edges and limits as sites of concern. Two-odd decades later, *Ranken #3*, 1992, configures line in purling, pneumatic contours. The resulting image, best described as one floating head engulfing another, offers paint as something grotesque and bodily, its material agency threatening to subsume its maker.

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