

# Weekend

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By MICHAEL BRENSON

**Bert Carpenter** (Artists Space, 223 West Broadway): This exhibition, sponsored by the Mark Rothko Foundation, provides an overview of 15 years of Bert Carpenter's work. In the late 1960's, Carpenter took still-life subjects, primarily flowers, and tried to find the scale at which flowers cease to be flowers and become objects. Behind his traditional subject matter and technique lay a Formalist esthetic. Carpenter was interested not only in the object-ness of painting, but also in making his forms echo and adhere to the wall.

While he was occupied with these cool works, based on vision, Carpenter was experimenting with more personal, ephemeral works, done on tracing paper and based upon his imagination. These explorations of the irrational, of which there is a good number in the show, are concerned with women, with sexuality and with a play of surfaces that is not formal but related to a comedy of manners.

In his recent large paintings, again based on still-life subjects, the irrationality of the smaller works has begun to make itself at home. The artist's touch seems to have been transformed by its contact with highly charged emotional and sexual content. The reflections in the cans now have a disquieting quality that brings to mind the reflections in the paintings of James Rosenquist. Carpenter's subject matter and technique are now inhabited by something that remains unidentified but that is there to stay. (Through April 6.)