

The New York Times

Art in Review

Ken Price

'Drawings'

Matthew Marks
523 West 24th Street, Chelsea
Through June 25

During his celebrated career as a ceramic sculptor, Ken Price (1935–2012) maintained a sideline of making wonderfully imaginative and funny drawings and small paintings. Many of his works in “Drawings,” at Matthew Marks, depict sculptures he made or might have made, from fanciful cups in the 1960s to blobby works from the 2000s. Most compelling, however, are two sets of pictures from different periods that evoke offbeat senses of place.

The earlier ones pertain to Los Angeles, where Mr. Price was born and spent most of his life. Images of stark modern living rooms with city views through nearly ceiling-to-floor windows have the coolly suspenseful feel of neo-noir film sets. “Car Plunge” (1994), in which a small red car is hurtling off a cliff over the Pacific Coast Highway, looks like a case of foul play.

Later works reflect Mr. Price’s move in 2002 to Taos, N.M., where the rugged environs inspired small, vividly colorful cartoon landscapes that are more hallucinogenic than naturalistic.

Several envision blob sculptures in primordial settings. In “Where Women Rule” (2000), seven naked women dance wildly around a monumental pink blob sculpture, from which rises a towering, tongue-like form. A volcano erupts under a lightning-laced sky in “Eruption and Lava Flow” (2003). “Ocean” (2004) depicts a rippling blue-and-black sea beneath an opalescent sky. With such sincerely goofy images, Mr. Price exposed the Dionysian depths of his own creative mind.

KEN JOHNSON



ESTATE OF KEN PRICE,
MATTHEW MARKS GALLERY

“Ocean” (2004), by Ken Price, part of the body of work this sculptor made on the side.