

MATTHEW MARKS GALLERY

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THE NEW YORK OBSERVER

By Grace Glueck

Peter Cain has a boyish fix on high-style cars, or rather the idea of such cars as projected in auto fan mags and sales brochures. In his show of paintings at the Matthew Marks Gallery, 1018 Madison Avenue (through Jan. 28), he concentrates on the Mercedes 300 and 500 SL lines, with one digression into the realm of the Bugatti. All—with the exception of the Bugatti, a fantasy apparition condensed almost to a single Cyclopean wheel—are seen head on; the slick images, in understated showroom colors, are airbrushed to a fare-thee-well on coolly neutral backgrounds. To make them zippier, Mr. Cain has melded the front and back ends of each car into a single icon, a pretty brute with stick-out ears (the sideview mirrors). Sometimes, taking a cue from the German painter Georg Baselitz, the images are upside down, the better to rivet your attention.

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I suppose Mr. Cain also borrows—going back an art generation or two—from Pop and Photo Realism (remember Ralph Goings?). Well, some artists are fascinated by pulchritudinous women; Mr. Cain has his cars.