

The New York Times

ART IN REVIEW

Clare Woods

Cohan Leslie and Browne
138 10th Avenue, near 19th Street
Chelsea
Through Nov. 2

The nocturnal, light-struck close-ups by the young English painter Clare Woods may be doing for Blair Witch-y woods and thickets what Sarah Morris's bright, tilted building-conjuring grids have done for modern architecture: setting them in constant motion between abstraction and representation, and between photographic accuracy and the implacable physicality of paint.

Working from night-time photographs taken with a flash, Ms. Woods uses thick, often poured applications of paint to reconstruct the image branch by branch. Color spots, varying shades of black, dark brown and deep green, alternate with patches of flash-bleached whiteness that sometimes pick out individual leaves or twigs and sometimes flood broad passages.

The all-over compositions vary nicely in pattern, density and suggestion. Also good is the sparkling tautness of the work, and the way the optical instability of the images is constantly belied by their highly tactile surfaces, with the paint's glossiness refusing to take sides. Gary Hume, Alex Katz and Gerhard Richter may figure in Ms. Woods's artistic heritage, but there are several routes to the point she has reached.

Her New York debut is promising; her challenge is to find a more thoroughly personal track on the wide, heavily trafficked highway between painting and photography.

ROBERTA SMITH