

# Lloyd Martin: Shift

By John Goodrich

All art is conditioned by its environment, but Lloyd Martin's paintings connect to their surroundings in a particularly direct way. For many years, the fading, peeling walls of the old textile mill that houses his studio have surfaced, semi-abstracted, in the lyrical grids of his canvases. His painting's combination of somber architectural lines and pale, richly textured fields—repeatedly scraped and overpainted, with occasional drips and splatters—ply an evocative vein midway between the concrete and the ephemeral.

At Stephen Haller, his 11 recent canvases (all dated 2009) add some new twists. The light backgrounds are now set off by brightly colored bars, and while earlier compositions were stabilized by bracketing forms, several of the recent paintings are dominated by horizontals that stream almost unchecked by vertical notes; titles like "Scan," "Rake" and "Current" capture, appropriately enough, their effect of scenes whirring past the viewer's standpoint.

The multiplying of movements—speeding horizontals and pops of color, in addition to the familiar,



LLOYD MARTIN, *Current*, 2009, oil, mixed media on canvas, 72 x 144 inches

layered depths—produces varying results. The rushing bars of "Scan" compete equally with the pale background in a satisfying, if not gripping, fashion; intervals are faintly periodic rather than momentous. My favorite paintings preserve the spacious cadences of his earlier work. The 12-foot-wide "Current" vibrates with a hierarchy of pressures; its spare horizontals, gathering in denser and looser sequences, palpably stretch to cover the dominating off-white fields, which in turn show off their layered depths of cool and warm tints over earthy yellows. Particularly intriguing are the "simple" oppositions of "Notch," in which the obtuse note of a single dark "L" at the bottom edge talks across broad expanses to several horizontals lifting above. Hovering in-between, twin ghostly rectangles subtly punctuate the flood of off-white textures. In this prolonged, contained meditation, every call has its response.

February 10, 2010