

Adler, Dan  
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# LUHRING AUGUSTINE

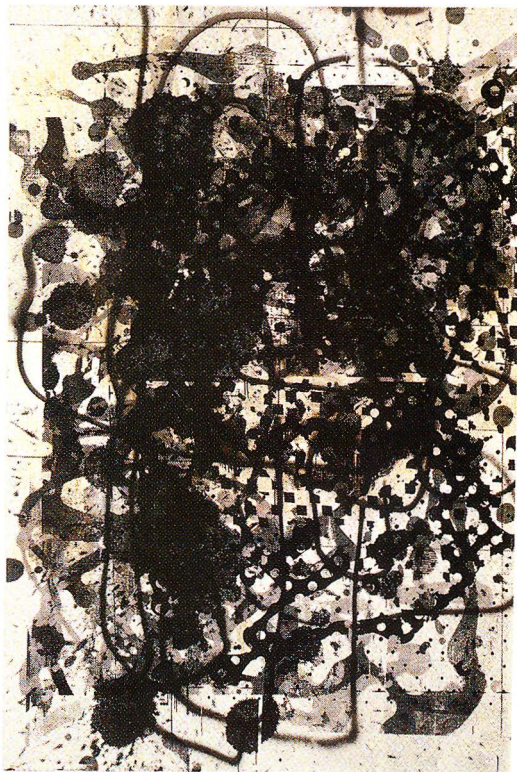
531 West 24th Street  
New York NY 10011  
tel 212 206 9100 fax 212 206 9055  
www.luhringaugustine.com

## Christopher Wool at Luhring Augustine

This was the first exhibition of new work by Christopher Wool since 1997. It included 16 large, enamel-on-linen paintings (each 108 by 72 inches), supplemented by 20 works on paper (each 66 by 49 inches). Daunted by crowded walls upon entering the main gallery, one was attracted at first to simpler compositions highlighting relatively few features of Wool's pictorial vocabulary. One of these, an untitled canvas from 2000, displays wildly sweeping orange spray-painted swirls, applied in a seemingly hasty, graffiti-like manner. Besides their stubborn resistance to signification, these swirl motifs—which in other works may suggest, but not declare, identities such as ovals or spirals—are placed randomly off center. Often leaving trails of drips, they register Wool's broader intention of subverting the conventions of late modernist abstraction and its accompanying mythologies of originality, purity and sublimation.

However, Wool's goals are best served in seven or so of the more visually complex works, where spray-painted sections take on a muted, ghostly appearance in relation to other painted and silkscreened elements. *Nation Time* (2000) contains silkscreened passages of diminutive pixels—effective signs of reproducibility and of the loss of the object's original status—combined with amorphous splotches and circular spots, all in a nondescript black. One spot in the upper left corner

Christopher Wool: *Nation Time*, 2000, enamel on linen, 108 by 72 inches; at Luhring Augustine.



has a comet's tail, reflecting a lyricism noticeable only after the viewer overcomes an initial bewilderment facing the image as a whole.

These wonderfully irreverent works look like the aftermath of an all-out assault on the picture field. Wool is at his best when using his arsenal of pictorial devices to signal basic tensions between the painted and silkscreened, the handmade and the mechanical mark, to effectively present artistic expression as an impersonal and mediated endeavor, subject to the workings of the culture industry. —Dan Adler