

# LUHRING AUGUSTINE

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“Richard Pousette-Dart: ‘East River Studio’”  
The New York Times.

Friday, November 18, 2011. Page C28.



ESTATE OF RICHARD POUSETTE-DART AND LUHRING AUGUSTINE, NEW YORK/ARTISTS RIGHTS SOCIETY (ARS), NEW YORK

“Cloud Sign” (1950), by Richard Pousette-Dart, in a show of his work at Luhring Augustine.

## Richard Pousette-Dart

‘East River Studio’

*Luhring Augustine*  
531 West 24th Street, Chelsea  
Through Dec. 17

Whatever your opinion of the Abstract Expressionist Richard Pousette-Dart (1916-92), it should rise precipitously after seeing this extraordinary show of paintings and sculptures. Made between 1948 and 1951, when the artist was based in an old brewery in Manhattan near the Queensboro Bridge, most have not been exhibited since the 1950s. They show him working fast and loose, avoiding the thick, textured buildups that would sometimes cause his later canvases to congeal but releasing the same strange, visionary light. In many instances he breathes hotly down Jackson Pollock’s neck, experimenting with ideas about the all-important all-over composition, which he even pursued into three dimensions in wire sculptures like “Untitled (Web)” of 1950. He adapts from calligraphic sources to create the personages lurking in black-and-white works like “59th Street Ramp” (1947) and “Dragon Head” (1948-50). In “Ossi” (1949) and “Cloud Sign” (1950) he wrestles similar arrangements into abstraction by way of fraught, gritty surfaces full of searing contrasts.

“Night World” (1948) might have been made by Cy Twombly four years later. “Number 19” (1951) suggests a body print. And works like “East River Sun,” “Icarus” and “Angel Forms” combine drawing and painting with astounding freshness and wry (dare I say graffitilike?) self-awareness.

Pousette-Dart moved his studio and his family upstate in 1951 and worked there for the rest of his life, often pushing his paintings to an unyielding opulence. In this Pousette-Dart show, which has been organized by the painter Christopher Wool, who studied with him at Sarah Lawrence College in the 1970s, and Joanna Pousette-Dart, his daughter and a painter in her own right, his work comes across as marvelously flexible and full of possibility. It is enough to make you dizzy.