

# ARTNEWS

## BAROQUE NOIR: DAVID REED AT PETER BLUM GALLERY, NEW YORK

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David Reed, "New Paintings," 2016, installation view, at Peter Blum Gallery.  
COURTESY THE ARTIST AND PETER BLUM GALLERY

**D**avid Reed has put a lot of light and air into his huge, long, segmented painting (actually six canvases), commandeering the east wall of Peter Blum Gallery. The work, titled *Painting*, followed by numbers 650 to 656 (2003–2016), is accompanied by a group of fascinating small studies and working drawings, which hang in the office just beyond, reflecting on and documenting Reed's process. The studies are diaristic, with penciled notes detailing color choices, problems, plans, and the like, and some trial-and-error repetitions.

The horizontal nature of the main installation, and its painterly episodes and pauses between passages, render it at once novelistic and filmic. It could be read as a documentary of a road trip or a passage through the stages of life.

## PETER BLUM GALLERY

Variations in gesture and in the density of the brushstrokes (always central characters in Reed's works) track emotional states, rhythm, and the expressive talents of pigment itself.

Reed has here added to his repertoire of techniques and effects by employing layers of stencils, enabling him to appropriate his own gestures from previous works and to reshape and amplify his story.



David Reed, Painting #653, 2015–16, acrylic and alkyd on polyester.  
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Interestingly, the last segment of the large work hangs behind a door in the back office and appears as a summary or epilogue—a more compact and inclusive composition, more densely colored than the other canvases. It has the posture of a secret—a Hitchcockian behind-the-curtain allusion, perhaps. Speaking of which, Reed has had a long relationship with Hitchcock's work, even inserting his own paintings into appropriated segments of the master's films, establishing a noirish psychological backdrop to his abstract narratives.

Set on the long opposing wall is a large drawing from 1975, *D-1*, composed of acrylic and pencil on photographic backdrop paper. It's a horizontal black-and-white diptych, each part a long black brushstroke set within a lightly penciled outline of a box. The long strokes are seductive with their soft edges—a powerful minimalist comment.

Curiously, but cleverly, the gallery has affixed nails to the main room's back wall so that individual pieces can be viewed on their own.

Reed's work has always been marked by a peculiar lushness manifesting itself in ribbons of variegated color unfolding at a seductive pace. The baroque forms often intertwine in dense configurations against flat solid-tone photo-like backgrounds. Here, though, we have a deconstruction, the parts disassembled and given star turns, and a strong sense of self-consciousness prevails. This is truly art about art, yielding a kind of biography, or the painting's autobiography, and it includes Reed's entire painterly history.

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