



Army; the silent comedy *The Bell Boy*, starring Buster Keaton, was released; and painter Elaine de Kooning's *Woman in Red* was shown. It's impossible to know precisely what external events spanned the effects that Rossiter's interlocking images had, but it's that sense of time-traveling contingency that makes her work so interesting. The full results of her encounters with the world remain uncertain until the moment of truth. The mechanics of the processing were for the most part hidden, but her darkroom procedures did show through in a series of works, including *Gevaert Gevaluxe Velours, exact expiration date* (1930s, processed 2020 (#1) and (#2)), where the interplay of dark and light suggests a strategic limiting of access to the developer. Large single-panel images like *Portrait of a Woman* (1941), while the smaller and more numerous works are organized into a pair of salon-style suites. At first glance, the presentation might seem like a traditional exegesis of the work. The three-by-three grid *Density 1936, 2020*, with its central square balanced by a single beige rectangle at the top, is a slab of gingerbread awaiting its vanilla frosting. The paintings of Robert Ryman. But most works are on papers of more variegated tones, the range of colors extensive given the generally narrow palette available in various degrees of saturation; grays from light to dark; whites, taupes, and creams. They also bear the marks of time, as in the diptych *Density 1941, 1945*, where light-vision images of a forest, or *Density 1930s*, where two differently sized panels contain a central figure partially swallowed around the edges by a dappled light. Rossiter's recuperative gesture placed two works in a poignant, productive dialogue, evoking the melancholy of time, but also the possibility that something might emerge from what at first seems to be nothing at all.

—Jeffrey Kastner

By Brett's work, around 1990, she was making works that couldn't quite tell how much direct observation they had, but they seemed rooted in reality despite their dreamlike mood. Within a few years, her art had shifted to making figure paintings, steeped in images of memory and metaphor without any pretense. Her last solo show was in 2008. Her reemergence in *Painting and Weaving*, organized by her fellow artist along with Anna Stohart, chief curatorial officer of Lehmann Maupin, evidenced another unexpected return, as the subtitle suggested, to a technical and painterly abstraction.

The term *painterly* describes Brett's small woven works, many by eighteen inches, but most are less than a foot. As it does her more substantial compositions on canvas or wood, though she also uses paper. While some of her weavings incorporate linen, many are made of paper—sometimes specified on the label as "tape" or "newspaper." You can make out bits of text peeking through the top portion of *Funnies with Twill*, 2019. Here, the interaction of warp and weft, one that does not imply a perfectly two-

dimensional plane—like that of, say, graph paper—but depends on allowing just enough space for things to overlap, for them to cover and reveal each other in turn.

Brett uses paint in the same way she uses paper and fabric in her weavings. But paint allows her to employ translucency, not just opacity, in order to disclose and occlude. The recent paintings frequently deploy arrays of squarish or roughly rectangular forms in loose grids, though *Alphabet*, 2019, switches these out for scribbly glyphic marks. The most impressive of the canvases on view was *Under and Over*, 2020, which features sixteen near squares of varying size—in grays and dull greens in a surround that's mostly as low-key in color—with shades of beige and lighter gray and just the occasional flash of red or blue. The forms emerge and recede in a gentle bobbing rhythm. Heavy outlining does not entirely separate these lively units from their environments, however; it's as though the outlines are meant to define inherently nebulous areas. But the implicit planes of the painting's shallow space elude capture, seeming to move *under and over* each other in an intricate weave and to contract and expand, as one's lungs do when one is breathing.

In retrospect, that sense of inhalation and exhalation has been a recurrent signature of Brett's otherwise highly mutable pictorial aesthetic. Thinking back to her landscapes of thirty years ago, I recall that a similar frontality, with no trace of linear perspective, allowed the atmosphere around a stand of trees in several close rows to flatten out and open up. The variegated greens of the trees' crowns seemed to jostle forward and backward in turn, the spatial fabric conjuring, in an image of things motionless, a constant inner vibration.

—Barry Schwabsky

## Adrian Morris

### ESSEX STREET

Three paintings of mullioned windows, precisely rendered but curiously off-kilter, hung in a row at Essex Street as part of the late British artist Adrian Morris's first solo exhibition in the United States. Behind the imaginary glass there was nothing to see but a dim gray haze. The modernist grid and the Symbolist window (the former, per Rosalind Krauss's influential reading, a traumatic displacement of the latter) were here collapsed, their metaphysics stunted by the opaque, abortive view. In *Window Ledge II* and *Window Sill II*, both ca. 1997, fenestration was party to a ruthless abstraction of architectural space, with apertures giving way to implacable corners and unfathomable cavities. Their indeterminacy is reminiscent of Henri Matisse's most recalcitrant, radically unresolved views of Paris and Tangier, their hardness a reminder of Georgia O'Keeffe's anti-picturesque renditions of her adobe house. Even the titular thresholds of *Open Doorway*, ca. 1989, and *Doorway*, ca. 1987, read as impasses.

In *Compound*, ca. 1998, a Brutalist arcade looks out onto a sandy quad bounded by shed- and barracks-like structures, their windows once again grayed out. The canted perspective and astringent Mediter-



Nancy Brett, *Funnies with Twill*, 2019, newspaper, linen, 9 × 7".