

# Art in America

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## Jim Richard at Oliver Kamm/5BE

For years, New Orleans painter Jim Richard has articulated an acidic social commentary through unpeopled interiors of the showy sort featured in domicile magazines. Many of his paintings employ an icy, synthetic palette to depict settings over-decorated with contrasting examples of historical and recent art. "These are the places," one critic wrote, "where art goes to die."

In an impressive recent show, Richard expanded his range to include abstract works as well as his collages, which he has not previously shown. These works are rough studies for his canvases, and here he exhibited both mediums together for the first time. While there were no one-to-one pairings, the collages informed the mostly larger paintings, suggesting sources for their uneasy juxtapositions; moreover, these artifacts of Richard's process ably stand on their own.

In the entryway, *Around the Bend* (2006) set the tone for the disjunctions that characterized a number of the works. In this small gouache on paper, a schematic mountain landscape in purple and gray is dominated by the illusionistic depiction of a framed abstract painting that incongruously floats in the foreground at monumental scale and, strangely, is turned at an oblique angle to the picture plane.

Four midsize oil-on-linen paintings (all 2006) continued the tacky-interiors motif. They're dominated by space-flattening

patterns, such as the pink-heavy wallpaper in *Plaid* and the revolting red, pink and peach great-cat-themed wallpaper, which recalls children's bedding, in *Tigers*. Lowbrow art and design abound, such as the bland painting of faceless fashion plates in *Plaid* and the gauche angular light fixture in *Tigers*.

As the late Robert Rosenblum pointed out in a 2000 Arthur Roger Gallery exhibition catalogue, the airless surroundings, marked by cheery colors and graphic, snappy outlines, recall the Simpsons as readily as they do interiors by Lichtenstein.

The small collages (all 2005) and gouaches (all 2006) focus on two or three elements, often with an air of derangement resulting from subject matter or from unsightly combinations of patterns, such as rectilinear geometry overlaid with dainty flowers and Miró-esque curvilinear abstraction in the gouache *Modern Oval*. In the collage *All Smiles*, grinning jesters crafted from bright plastic cups hover around a punch bowl in front of a Klee-like geometric backdrop, resembling stuffed shirts at a gallery opening. In three quietly disturbing gouaches, a cartoonish, centrally placed *Frog*, *Owl* or *Bunny* faces the viewer before a striped or floral background, combining goofy and sinister. In the show's most understated work, *The Collection*, a black-and-white photograph of a living room has all the pictures on the wall blocked out with bright red, like a sketch of Allan McCollum's *Plaster Surrogates* in situ.

Jim Richard: *Tigers*, 2006, oil on linen, 46 by 44 inches; at Oliver Kamm/5BE.

