

Mary Heilmann: *Save the Last Dance for Me* / Terry R. Myers.--(One Work).--London, England: Afterall books, dist. by The MIT Press, June 2007.--102 p.: ill.--ISBN-13: 978-1-84638-031-0:\$16.95 (pa.).



Save the Last Dance for Me is the title of a painting made by Mary Heilmann in 1979 during a juncture of several critical points in contemporary art, as well as in her own career and life. In a compelling account, Terry R. Myers describes, interprets, and finds contexts for the painting from its creation to its relevance and inclusion in contemporary exhibitions. Within the stated framework of the series, *One Work*, Myers focuses on this one work with the insistence that a single work can "affect our understanding of art in general." His insistence is convincing, intellectually satisfying, and a pleasure to read.

He begins by describing the deceptively simple painting without considering the somewhat ambiguous title. He describes the painted pink and black, a drip, the question of layers and surface, plus an exploration into the deviance of the geometric shapes themselves. With thoughtful commentary, each aspect is considered in light of the traditions of the time. Once being thoroughly familiar with the descriptive elements of the painting, Myers introduces the title for discussion and begins to build a context for it in Mary Heilmann's work. The context can include biographical details, many relevant and irreverent musical references, and quite a few 'isms,' with *Save the Last Dance For Me* potentially an early example of postmodernism. He quotes the artist, describing her process using a combination of "rigour and being cute." The title of the painting, its colors and amusingly, even the headings for sections of the book, are permeated by the influence of music. The author includes the one negative review of Mary Heilmann's show at Holly Solomon Gallery where *Save the Last Dance for Me* was first displayed, turning the negative account into an interesting discussion of the perception of Heilmann's work at that time and highlighting the reasons for her continued support and influence.

This short book has many high quality, color illustrations of Mary Heilmann's work, installation views, and some work of her contemporaneous peers. The author includes parts of interviews and references to the painter's autobiography, as well as quotes and excerpts from a wide range of sources.

Alicia Ackerman, Technical Services Librarian, Bard Graduate Center for Studies in the Decorative Arts, Design and Culture, ackerman@bgc.bard.edu