

# NEW YORK TIMES

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### KEITH MAYERSON: 'MY MODERN LIFE'

by Roberta Smith

Derek Eller Gallery

615 West 27th Street

Chelsea

Through Saturday

Keith Mayerson usually paints from anything but life. Movies and movie stars, novels, comic books, news photos, Shakespeare and the Bible have been his sources. A certain penchant for melodrama and cliché was underscored by a tawdry thrift-shop painting style that was in turn reinforced by cheek-to-jowl, floor-to-ceiling hangings.

But those days are over, at least for a while. "My Modern Life," Mr. Mayerson's eighth show in a New York gallery, contains a mere dozen paintings surrounded by uncustomary expanses of white walls. They focus rather exclusively on the artist himself, although he continues to work, as he often does, from photographs.

This show is in many ways a big pledge of allegiance: to life, love, art, New York and even the United States. (It includes a wonderful green-yellow map of the country, à la Jasper Johns.) One painting portrays the artist in his teens, as a suave young preppy, posing on a rocky coast in a Madras sports jacket. In "Our Wedding, July 22, 2008, Meadowbrook, Ca.," he is a bit older, looking into his lover's eyes in a modest living room. "Me in the Proust Room for Our 40th Birthdays" has Mr. Mayerson, on a celebratory splurge with his partner, standing in front of a portrait of Marcel Proust in a room at the Paris Ritz.

The artist embraces the city in a hallucinatory nocturne of Manhattan's blazing lights as seen from 39th Street and 10th Avenue, and a view of the neon sign atop the New Yorker Hotel. The building resembles a carved block of yellow-ochre oil paint with windows.

As with Mr. Mayerson's previous works, these paintings are part of a larger narrative. But the extent to which each of them stands alone as a painted image, full of smudged intensity, yellow undertones and clear emotion, is something new.