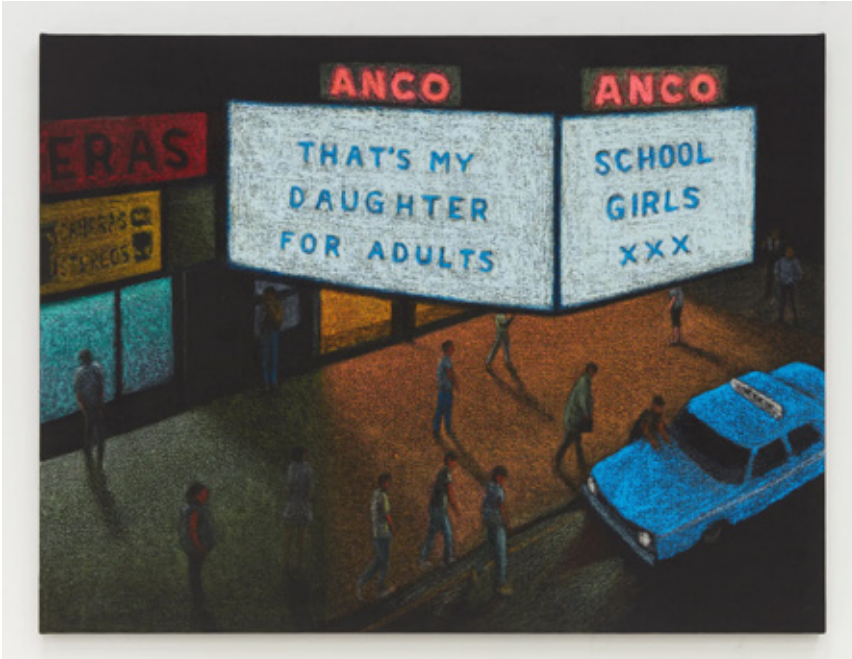


WHAT TO SEE IN N.Y.C. GALLERIES IN SEPTEMBER: JANE DICKSON

by Max Lakin



Jane Dickson, "School Girls," 2023 Credit Jane Dickson, via Karma, New York

Nan Goldin called the painter Jane Dickson “a correspondent from Hell,” a slightly extreme characterization of Times Square, even in its '70s smut den version, which she began depicting while living and working in the neighborhood. The 16 new fluorescent street scenes here revisit a presanitized version of the city, Dickson’s solitary, spectral figures slicing through ink-black sidewalks and floating in and out of pleasure places, vibrating within a gaseous cloud of neon and indeterminate menace.

Much of that effect is thanks to their execution with oil stick or acrylic on linen and felt, a smeary, diffuse quality that translates effectively to oleaginous peep shows and greasy fast food counters as if in a half-remembered dream. Dickson’s high-keyed palette and optical color mixing give an Impressionistic flavor, like Paul Signac did liquor store marquees.

The paintings’ linguistic thrust — each work depicts the come-ons and entreaties of street signage — is reminiscent of a Frank O’Hara poem. The stacked text of “Promised Land 2” (2023), “PROMISED LAND / BOUGHT / ALL CASH” reads like a deadpan obituary for the American dream. Dickson’s work is halfway between cultural preservation and lament, seizing in electric amber a moment when you had to leave your house to get your kicks. But like Hopper, whose lonely New Yorkers roam the streets looking for something they never find, Dickson roots around the national psyche and finds only shadows