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Casey Cook at Lehmann Maupin
By Matthew Bourbon

Casey Cook is working hybrid forms in her latest paintings. Casey's first one person exhibition in New York has her making use of muted grays, maroons and dull greens to create a familiar visual atmosphere of linear geometric divisions. Encapsulated within the fields of flat paint are multiple pornographic images. Cook uses a seemingly detached abstraction as a counter-point to her stylized fabrications of sexual desire. It's De Stijl meets erotica. Splayed legs and licking tongues are visible throughout the cut and paste structure of boxed segments. The high-heeled sex kittens that Cook portrays, however, reveal little human psychology. Instead we see women physically exposed in the hermetically clean world of Cook's unmodulated grids. Often the women are seen only as their body parts. One wonders if these paintings are only glorified titillation? Or are they instead about bringing desire and objectification to the cool mechanics of Mondrian abstraction? I am left uncertain. What does seem clear are Cook's artistic allegiances. These paintings share a round-about kinship with Lari Pittman's work, minus the abundance and painterly decadence. Cook's work is certainly on the other side of the spectrum in terms of clutter. But Cook, like Pittman, creates an art of painted collage, with overlapping images and flat forms. Cook's images show people that are less people, as they are signs for people. The world they inhabit is the world of first generation computer environments - airless, stark and plastic. With all of Cook's ambitious attempts at grafting different elements into one painted system, I am ultimately left neither enticed, nor bored. And maybe that's the point.