

# ARTFORUM

Keith Mayerson  
12.12.04

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11.19.04-12.23.04 Derek Eller Gallery, New York

The suite of 105 paintings in Keith Mayerson's current show depict subjects ranging from Jesus and John Lennon to the first monkey in space, the founding fathers, and the current American president; the undercurrent of homoeroticism comes to the surface in paintings of Keanu and River (circa My Own Private Idaho). Four years in the making, the work crowds the gallery with the kind of cluttered installation found in old European churches, while Mayerson's muddy palette makes the paintings look as if they're tinged with incense smoke. Two abstractions are painted on hanging panes of glass, visually approximating stained-glass windows. The ecclesiastical allusions in Mayerson's almost queasily tender detailing of popular icons, religious and otherwise, invites a consideration of this country's confused attitudes towards homosexuality and the separation of church and state. In light of November 2nd's overwhelming number of votes against gay marriage, these closely related issues seems particularly urgent. And Mayerson is not above a few low, albeit satisfying, blows. The painting of George W., which excellently captures his characteristic quizzical expression, is hung by a screw driven through his (empty) head.