

# The New York Times

## What to See in N.Y.C. Galleries in March

**By Roberta Smith**

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*This week, Roberta Smith covers EJ Hauser's solo exhibition of new paintings at Derek Eller, Vija Celmins's "Winter" show at Matthew Marks and Huma Bhabha's sculptures at David Zwirner.*

### **EJ Hauser**

Through March 9. Derek Eller, 300 Broome Street, Manhattan; 212-206-6411, derekeller.com



EJ Hauser's "Golden Ticket," 2023-2024, acrylic on canvas. Via Derek Eller Gallery, New York

EJ Hauser's first five solo shows in New York galleries have always exuded promise and presented one or two terrific paintings but could also leave you wanting more. Now, with Hauser's sixth, which is appropriately titled "Grow Room," the artist breaks through to another level. This time, all the paintings convince and even dazzle, straddling the line between representation and abstraction with new flair.

Many of Hauser's primordial motifs persist — the most frequent being repeating triangles suggestive of mountains, evergreens and ancient pyramids. Also present are the floating spheres of various sizes (reading at once as snow, atoms and Christmas tree ornaments) and the play between naïve and sophisticated and between analog and digital.

Hauser has switched from oil to acrylic, a big difference. Their colors have brightened; see the purple, green and burgundy of "Hawaiian Snow" or the turquoise and orange-on-yellow of "Golden Ticket," which can read as a framed painting. The surfaces are smoother and less worried over. Hauser has always had a great touch, but at times it has seemed so "felt" that it got in the way of everything else. Now it's quick and light (acrylic dries faster), which means that there's a sharper tension between saturated color and their characteristic rough or skipping lines. The latter now can evoke stitches, which introduces analog textiles, as suggested by the title of the black-on-red "Dream Weaver."

Although I was told that nothing digital was involved in this show, the confusion between analog and digital (and printmaking) remains. Related: the different layers of drawing and painting are more transparent and distinct, creating a shallow computer-screen space.