

→ Cultural Highlights for March 24 - 31, 2010 by Eric Herschthal

Program



Painting History

Three months after Sept. 11, 2001, *The New Yorker* ran an illustrated cover titled “New Yorkistan,” which gently mocked the city’s self-perceived worldliness. We were no less tribal than the Afghan society we had just invaded: The Upper East Side was renamed “Blahniks”; Murray Hill, “Bulimikhs”; the West Side highway, “Trumpistan.” Maira Kalman and Rick Meyerowitz made the illustration, and ever since Ms. Kalman in particular has become an art-world star. Over the past decade (!), Ms. Kalman’s style has become considerably more painterly, with bright gouache colors holding together whimsical images of bedrooms, parlors, presidents and great books. Her subjects, too, betray her own erudition. Currently on view at the Julie Saul Gallery in Chelsea are 50 paintings Ms. Kalman has made since 2005, and some of the best are the most recent. Ms. Kalman traveled to Washington, D.C., for Obama’s inauguration last year and created a series of entertaining paintings inspired by U.S. history. There’s a Matisse-like flair in her paintings of Thomas Jefferson’s Monticello drawing room and the White House’s Red Room. Even El Greco gets a wink in her saintly Inauguration Angel. Her works will be on view through May 1. [Maira Kalman’s “Further Illuminations” at Julie Saul Gallery]