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Coggins, David. "Alexander Ross: Marianne Boesky and David Nolan" Art in America, January 2009, 110 - 111.

**ALEXANDER ROSS**  
MARIANNE BOESKY AND  
DAVID NOLAN

As seen in an exhibition of paintings and collages at Marianne Boesky, and of drawings at David Nolan, Alexander Ross's depictions of mysterious forms create a world that defies logic and classification. Of all artists calling their work "Untitled," perhaps Ross does so with the best justification: he doesn't want to give anything away.

In the canvases, radiant strokes of oil paint describe topographies that are otherworldly and eerily familiar, sometimes sharing a domestic sensuality with Edward Weston's peppers, at other times having a transporting sheen like the surface of a distant planet. One of the best paintings in the Boesky exhibition was also one of the most difficult to read. While a blue background elsewhere gives some sense of perspective, here the depicted topography fills the entire 94-by-78-inch canvas. We could either be looking down on a distant landscape or standing right next to an object of coarse detail. Ross revels in this sort of ambiguous scale.

But these works are not about discomfort—they're too richly painted and there's a clear sense of the pleasure the artist takes in pure invention. There's also a mischievous addition of flat patches of red. A horizontal painting of 2007 is dominated by a green landscape, which has a little triangle of red in the corner that resists perspectival sense—it's like pure optical intensity. Red also arrives in a 51-by-60-inch canvas of 2008, where a series of circular forms floats by in a pale blue sky. Once we realize they're fixed to a patch of opaque red in the corner, they seem to hover between two- and three-dimensional space. Often, Ross introduces some recognizable details, like what appears to be a green olive in a 13-by-11-inch collage of 2007. The olive stands next to related but



Alexander Ross:  
Untitled, 2007,  
oil on canvas,  
88 by 120 inches;  
at Marianne Boesky.

more mysterious objects, on pedestals that have the loosest resemblance to puckered green pea pods or elongated peppers. With works like these, Ross shows how easily objects move from our world into another.

If his paintings take advantage of the seductiveness of oil paint, Ross's drawings are no less atmospheric. An expansive selection of works on paper at David Nolan showcased a draftsman who balances intimacy and an abiding sense of mystery. Many of these works look like they're based on observations from the slides of a microscope. Miniature cells seem to reproduce before our eyes, floating in space in one drawing, covering the surface of what looks like the ocean floor in another. A graphite work in which Ross dispenses with the seductions of color is composed of forms receding into a landscape that could be the surface of the moon.

—David Coggins