

Peter Halley: *Assurgent Capacity*, 2009-10, acrylic and Roll-A-Text on canvas, 80 by 78 inches; at Mary Boone.

factuality of matter and the evanescence of chroma. Installed opposite, *Emptied Projections* expressed the role of light differently, partially obscuring the view through the gallery's door and six plate-glass windows with lengths of milky-white light-diffusion material.

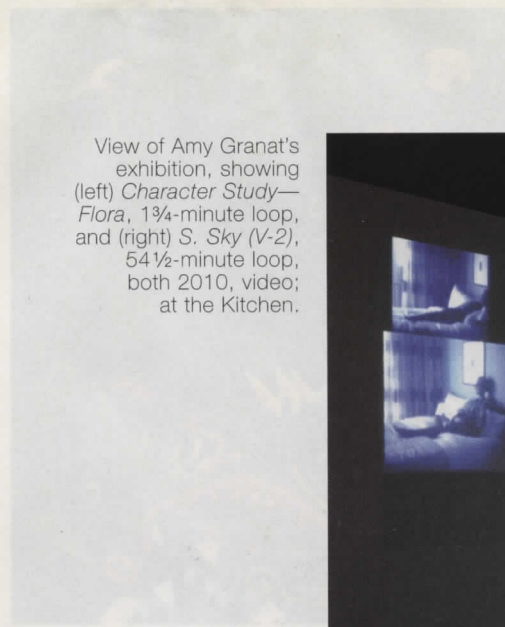
In this charged space, gallerygoers became unwitting accomplices in the installation, as sometimes happens at exhibitions of Richard Serra or Anne Truitt. Coming to grips with the subtleties of this tough and lovely show provided a gentle thrill.

—Stephen Maine

PETER HALLEY
MARY BOONE

Pictorially airless and conceptually uptight, Peter Halley's dismal cell-and-conduit "sociograms" of the 1980s doused that era's Neo-Expressionism like a cold shower. Critiquing modernism's utopian underpinnings, Halley just said no to liberal humanism, and dutifully staked out the concomitant theoretical territory. Twenty-five years later, his dystopian hybrid of Minimalist landscape and Pop-culture color again commands attention, having outlasted its historical moment. Just what is it that makes today's Halleys so different, so appealing?

The artist has pulled back from the excesses of a decade ago, when his paintings, having turned from "cells" to "prisons," sported jazzy, pinwheeling conduits that made them little more than auction-friendly eye candy. Those works send mixed signals: life is a grind . . .



View of Amy Granat's exhibition, showing (left) *Character Study—Flora*, 1¼-minute loop, and (right) *S. Sky (V-2)*, 54½-minute loop, both 2010, video; at the Kitchen.

or maybe a cabaret? Halley's new work retrenches, framing that contradiction more concisely as a paradox. Chromatic variations on the same essential design, each of the eight paintings (2009-10) in this show, 80 inches high and between 78 and 90 inches wide, features two prisons, one over the other, worked up in Halley's customary acrylic and Roll-A-Text, and made to double as air-handling units. (Or "coolers?" Each title uses the initials "a/c.") Positioned so as to confuse figure and ground, two or three right-angled conduits connect the coolers to each other and/or terra firma, the painting's lower region. There ("underground"), a zippy conduit races through from left to right.

As ever, Halley's color is nuts. A hot pink gets into trouble everywhere, notably in *Assurgent Capacity*, where it assumes multiple personalities relative to pumpkin orange, apple green and sky blue. *Analogous Coherence* is limned in two sets of analogous hues, one a range of red-orange and the other blues, with a subterranean magenta conduit. *Achromatic Concretion* involves a similar palette, but the black background that lies between the coolers and conduits curiously shuts down any retinal buzz.

The paint is applied in three layers. The upper backgrounds as well as the coolers' interiors and the underground conduit are painted just enough to obscure the weave of the canvas; the "above-ground" conduits, cooler grate and underground come next; and, finally, the topmost layer is Roll-A-Text. Odd to think of Halley's work in terms of pro-

cess, but what seemed manually remote back in the day now seems assiduously hands-on, even though Halley's studio technique has not advanced much beyond computer sketches, masking tape and paint rollers wielded by assistants. To an overheated era, Halley's anal-retentive precision was an affront; in our time of snot-rag unmonumentality, his procedural rigor is bracing. Halley's commanding new work exudes humor, grace and a funny kind of humility.

—Stephen Maine

AMY GRANAT
THE KITCHEN

Amy Granat's interest in making a silent film version of Paul Bowles's *The Sheltering Sky* seems to have been prompted by the visual atmosphere against which the three main characters' turbulent psychologies commingle. The arid settings described in *The Sheltering Sky* inspired Granat to film her work in the Western U.S., in locations that evoke an air of desolation. Looped projections of Granat's film, which borrows Bowles's title, were the centerpiece of her recent exhibition.

Bowles's novel is a story about love, longing and loss set in the sands and souks of North Africa, but the intentionally languorous pacing of Granat's telling of the narrative makes it difficult to follow. Her version condenses the plot, highlighting certain moments of action. Port and Kit Moresby, the couple at the center of the action, who are based on Paul and Jane Bowles, leave New York on a long journey in an