

The New York Times

FRIDAY, MARCH 19, 2004

Kamrooz Aram

Oliver Kamm/5BE
504 West 22nd Street
Chelsea
Through March 27

Kamrooz Aram, 25 and just out of art school, has seven semi-abstract paintings in his first solo show, each loosely based on patterns found in Persian carpets. In this case, the symmetrical floral and leaf forms of the originals are expressionistically loosened up and given a Baroque animation. They are also supplemented with other designs. Serpentine Mongol-style clouds lifted from miniature paintings drift around. Military camouflage patterns fill the lower part of several paintings. All of this detail is put forth in complicated ways, with paint laid on thick, streaked and stained, and scraped away.

A result is a kind of Pattern and Decorative painting with new things added, beyond the carpet references. The camouflage patterns introduce an obvious hint of real-politik. Blobs of white paint become illusionistic points of light with mystical and Romantic implications familiar from, say, Ross Bleckner's AIDS paintings, turning flowers and trees into constellations of stars, a pretty idea.

At this point Mr. Aram's painting could use some quieting down; with so much going on, the basic structure tends to get lost. His exquisite ink drawings give a good sense of how a sorting-out might work. At the same time, exuberance has virtues of its own, and they are evident in this promising debut.

HOLLAND COTTER
