

Martha Schwendener, *metal*, in: The New York Times, 2016.

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Heike-Karin Föll, 'Metal'

By MARTHA SCHWENDENER

Every mark on a canvas — brush stroke, drip, fingerprint — tells its own story, and we tend to read these marks almost like handwriting. Heike-Karin Föll, who teaches writing at the Berlin University of the Arts, explores the overlap between art and writing in a series of paintings and works on paper in "Metal," her first New York solo show, at Mathew.

More specifically, Ms. Föll focuses on the sprayed mark, which flourished in street culture and was later adopted by fine-art painters. In several canvases here Ms. Föll isolates the sprayed aerosol mark so that it looks like elegant calligraphy. Other works exhibit the dashed-off casualness of artists like Michael Krebber or Merlin Carpenter, who have pushed the boundaries of painting with ultra-minimal gestures and marks.

And herein lies the crux of the show. For while men can get away with aggressively nonchalant art gestures (Marcel Duchamp is the archetypal example), women rarely can. Ms. Föll makes the gendered aspect of the mark clear in one canvas, which has "total femme" printed on it, and in a series of works on paper that includes a picture of Emmy Hennings, a member of Zurich Dada and a patron saint of the radical European art lineage, who, nevertheless, is often overshadowed by her husband, the artist Hugo Ball.

Underlying any discussion related to the graffiti mark are the African-American and Puerto Rican teenagers who pioneered aerosol art in New York in the 1970s. They aren't mentioned here. But that is another story of marks and their making.

