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ART & DESIGN

Art in Review

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'PEANUT GALLERY'

The Journal Gallery

168 North First Street, Williamsburg, Brooklyn

Through Sunday

The snappy young culture quarterly called The Journal maintains a storefront gallery in Williamsburg with a track record of good shows. "Peanut Gallery," assembled by the artist Joe Bradley, is the latest. At least some of the 20 artists tend to migrate between the art world's center and fringes. Mr. Bradley has caught most of them in their fringier mode.

This is not the case with Rita Ackermann, who shows one of her classic nymphets, or Dike Blair with his life-size gouache painting of a photo-realist eye. Keith Mayerson's portrait of Miles Davis is pretty suave; so is Nate Lowman's happy face with shades.

Things turn a little crude with a Dan Colen chewing-gum relief and a swipecy Bill Saylor painting embellished with a torn dollar bill. But messy, in the right hands, can be nice, even refined. A Michael Williams picture with frosting-thick white paint soiled by dabs of brown and gray suggests an image of stars in a snowstorm. And although Leif Ritchey's buttons-and-threads collage is quite a tangle, I like to think of it as cloth coming together rather than falling apart.

Elena Pankova contributes a crisp Constructivist-style abstraction, but anyone can tell that deconstruction, or no construction, is the prevailing group trend. It's amazing the variety you can wrest from thrown-away and falling-apart. Erin Fierst, Otis Houston, Taka Imamura, Eunice Kim and the redoubtable B. Wurtz give a sense of the range. And the ever resourceful Artist Unknown — isn't it time for a retrospective? — is the mother/father of them all. **HOLLAND COTTER**