

# Galleries



THOMAS ERBEN GALLERY

Clockwise from top left: Vera Molnár's "2 Lettres M (du Cycle M Comme Malevich)"; Marcus Weber's "V-Park"; and Beryl Korot's "Babel 2."

## MARCUS WEBER

Through May 19. Thomas Erben Gallery, 526 West 26th Street, fourth floor, Manhattan; 212-645-8701, thomaserben.com.

What's great about George Herriman's much admired early-20th-century comic strip "Krazy Kat" is its nearly unlimited scope for self-awareness. A stripped-down but playfully catholic style — combined with a sturdy, repetitive narrative frame — meant that Herriman could wink at the reader as often as he wanted, without losing his footing or boxing himself in.

In the strip that the German painter Marcus Weber meticulously reproduces in "Kwee

Mokks" (2018), Ignatz Mouse explains to Krazy that the "kwee mokks all ova" (queer marks all over) an old newspaper are writing, and then the two get into trouble with the paper's severely out-of-date weather forecast. It is one of the sharpest of the 16 excellent canvases that make up this exhibition at Thomas Erben Gallery, Mr. Weber's first American solo show.

Held in the hands of a giant blue stick figure with a white head, the strip becomes an extraordinarily mordant comment on the state of painting. But in five small, colorful portraits of pedestrians on the Berlin street where Mr. Weber keeps his studio, his version of Herriman's strategic inconsistency becomes a surprisingly effective way of mimicking the irreducibility of real life.

In "A-Str. 13" (2009), the flat orange stripes on a building wall, the green impasto of a woman's head scarf and the dark, cartoony line of her profile are all different types of painting; their clash is the perfect visual equivalent of street noise. In canvases like "V-Park" (2011), which depicts two cyclists on a rainbow bridge and a masked woman presiding over a gridlike-barbecue behind candy-colored chickadees, stylistic chaos becomes a joyful end in itself.

WILL HEINRICH