

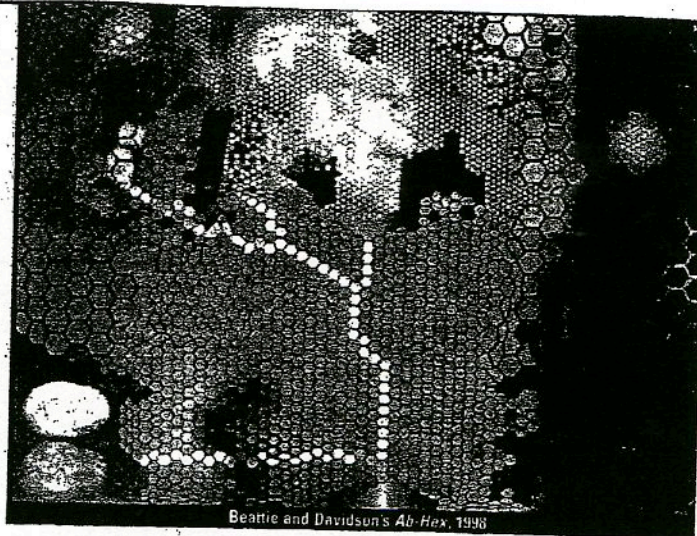
# GLADSTONE GALLERY

Frank, Peter. LA Weekly, Pick of the Week, June 5-11, 1998, p. 159

## BEATTIE & DAVIDSON, DAVE MULLER, MOCA AUCTION

The temptation is to describe a duo like Beattie & Davidson as the visual equivalent of jazz improvisers, but their work (even more than most visual-art collaboration) involves as much calculation, even schematization, as it does inspiration and spontaneity. They're more like scriptwriters, spinning elaborate but (literally) finely drawn, if teasingly opaque, yarns. The New York-based team do cram a mountain of visual info into their paintings; it sometimes seems as if five artists, not just two, had a hand in their work. They keep their paintings lucid, however, and damn if their avalanches of seemingly unrelated images don't tell some woolly and wonderful stories — a skewed comic-strip narrative here, pools of quasi-schizophrenic rambling there, exploded pop-star pictorials yonder. A number of the large canvases are broken up by swaths of honeycomb pattern, which is visually kinda bothersome, but it's a good bothersome, and the painter pair plays wittily with the insistent mesh. Their screwball sense of imagery overload is enhanced by their sure hand(s), and you keep cycling back to many of the pictures not just for the stories, but for the telling of them.

Dave Muller's gambit is a lot less oblique, and rather more inside-art-world cute, but it is no less entertainingly pithy. Muller's paintings and watercolors for the most part replicate or reinvent ads and fliers for art exhibitions — actual, recent exhibitions, often of his pals (including one or two for his own occasional in-studio gallery project, Three Day Weekend). A level of irony enters simply in the translation of ephemeral gallery announcement into artwork, and Muller is game to amp that irony with subtle manipulations of image, verbiage, or even texture. (*Artforum* ads aren't usually this painterly.) The resulting nip is gentle, but is capable of drawing blood — as in *The New York Times* review of Sam Durant's SoHo show,



Beattie and Davidson's *Ab-Hax*, 1998

which Muller first paints veristically, torn newspaper edge and all, then cuts up and rearranges into a ransom note-like paragraph of daffy froth.

This week only, MOCA heads west, installing its annual art auction in one of the hangars-cum-studios in the Santa Monica Airport. The 301 works are thus plopped in the lap of the Westside art crowd; but that doesn't prevent you Silver Lakers and Studio Citizens from scoping the goods (by, among others, Roy Lichtenstein, Cindy Sherman, Sam Francis and John Baldessari) and maybe even bidding on them — 50 pieces will be auctioned live and the rest subject to silent bids.

Beattie & Davidson (with "A Tribute to La Luz de Jesus Gallery") at Track 16, Bergamot Station, 2525 Michigan Ave., Santa Monica; thru June 13. (310) 264-4678. Dave Muller at Blum & Poe, 2042 Broadway, S.M.; thru June 13. (310) 453-8311. MOCA Art Auction at S.M. Airport, Barker Hangar; June 6-12, open daily, 11 a.m.-5 p.m. (Thurs. till 8 p.m.). (213) 621-1772.

—Peter Frank