

# GAGOSIAN GALLERY

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## Art in Review

### Steven Parrino

Gagosian Gallery  
880 Madison Avenue, at 77th  
Street  
Through Nov. 3

Last spring Gagosian gave over much of its uptown gallery to a coolly anarchistic group show called "Beneath the Underdog," which included many young artists associated with the New York art world's professional demimonde. This fall, in the same space, the gallery has a posthumous survey of work by a father of them all — or maybe a revered older brother — Steven Parrino.

Killed in a motorcycle accident in 2008 when he was in his 40s, Mr. Parrino left behind a quarter-century's worth of art that has only recently taken center stage in the United States. The work still awaits sifting, but from an early point it used many of the elements in circulation now: Minimalism, post-punk music, Warhol, performance, cultural necrophilia, comic books, adolescence, rebellion, trauma, collaboration. Aaron Young's recent chopper extravaganza at the Park Avenue Armory, with the glam quotient extracted, is only the most obvious example of new art that falls somewhere in Mr. Parrino's purview.

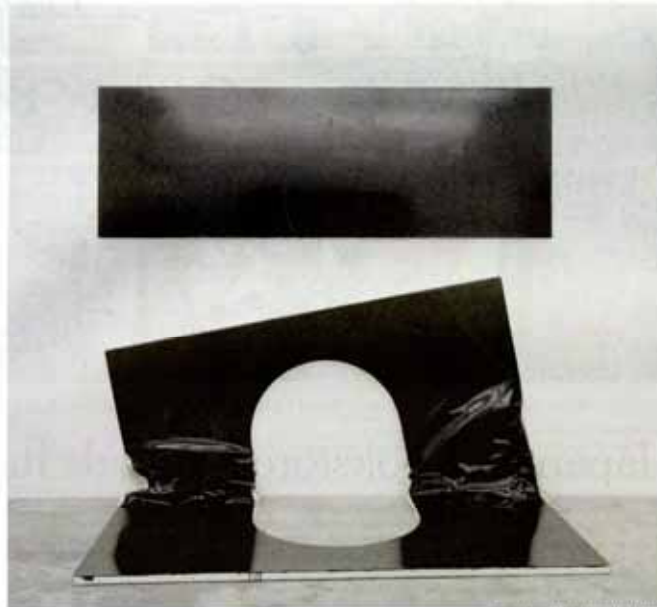
In attitude, he was like Richard Prince without the smirk. Mr. Parrino's spiritual America wasn't a tinkling cymbal. It was a negative sublime. His driving perspective wasn't willful misanthropy but what he called "post-punk Existentialism." In this view the Hell's Angels weren't just specimens in a critique. They were people — artists — you wanted to know.

The Gagosian show covers a fair amount of ground, much of it familiar. It focuses on Mr. Parrino's paintings in black and silver, with the canvas pulled halfway off the stretcher or, in the case of circular paintings, pinched at the center and twisted. The effect is less cruel than comedic, like early Frank Stella's messed up in a friendly tussle.

Of more immediate interest is the wealth of works on paper, from early drawings of words to pop-pornography collages and videos. As an ensemble, it reads like a stream-of-consciousness journal of the artist's interests and concerns, a valuable resource.

Gagosian presents all this with its customary immaculate finish, which is, of course, a problem. Live anarchy is missing. In a 1988 photo about arranging the pickup of work for a European solo exhibition, Mr. Parrino wrote to a dealer: "Nothing needs to be protected. Don't worry about damaging anything. (Damage is good.) Nothing will be for sale. All will be thrown out after the show. Nothing has value. This will be one of my BEST shows." I bet it was. I wish I'd seen it.

ROLLAND COTTER



Steven Parrino's "Self-Mutilation Bootleg 2 (The Open Grave)" (2003), enamel on canvas.

