

## Ecstasy and Eye Candy: Ben Weiner at Mark Moore Gallery

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Ben Weiner's (NAP #56, 68, 80, 98) solo show "MaximumStrengthAgeDefy" at Mark Moore Gallery is eye candy for the soul and soulful drugs for your eyes. The gallery space greets you with bright and tasty looking colors, alluring and welcoming you in. – *Ellen C. Caldwell*



Ben Weiner | installation view of "MaximumStrengthAgeDefy." Image courtesy of Mark Moore Gallery



Left: Ben Weiner | installation view of small works on chromatography paper, left to right: Happiness, Restore Radiance, Maximum Strength Vanitas, Reality, Synergasm, The Line, Everything but the Girl, and Still Life with Fruit Flowers. Image courtesy of Mark Moore Gallery.

Right: Ben Weiner | *The Line*, 2013, Molly and ink on chromatography paper, 4.5 x 5.5 inches. Image courtesy of Mark Moore Gallery.

Delicate and small paintings open the show at the entrance to the gallery. What looks like 4x5" watercolor washes sit behind small glass plates, as if in a petri dish or under a microscope. Here Weiner acts as a scientist might with these petri dishes, beginning the show by exploring and experimenting with the very chemicals that seem to silently chant and illustrate the title mantra of his show: "MaximumStrengthAgeDefy."

In *Happiness and The Line*, molly (or ecstasy) mixes happily with pastel inks on paper; in *Restore Radiance*, *Maximum Strength Vanitas*, and *Still Life with Fruit Flavors*, 5-Hour Energy Drink and darker ink looms heavy on paper; in *Reality*, vodka and ink form a cloudy haze; in *Everything but the Girl*, marijuana and ink create a light and ethereal scene on paper; and in *Synergasm*, viagra and ink create a dramatic and bold scene, as if coming down from a quake on the richter scale.



Left: Ben Weiner | installation view. Image courtesy of Mark Moore Gallery

Right: Ben Weiner | *Body Party*, 2013, Oil on canvas, 60 x 90 inches. Image courtesy of Mark Moore Gallery.

In these landscape-esque swirls of color and vast openness, it is as if Weiner is offering a glimpse into what these chemicals might do to our minds and bodies – as we see them playing out across the delicate paper. Only it is not quite the menacing 1980's “This is your brain. This is your brain on drugs” commercial message. It is much more mildly ambivalent and even playfully detached.



Left: Ben Weiner | *Future Fluids*, 2013, Oil on canvas, 60 x 75 inches. Image courtesy of Mark Moore Gallery.

Right: Ben Weiner | *Future Fluids* - detail. Image courtesy of Mark Moore Gallery.

And these gentle works on paper carry just as much impact and punch (or more) as the rest of the show's louder and much bigger (60 x 90”) canvases do. Physically, Weiner's large oil paintings make up the majority of the show. Here, he paints mundane products in magnified, exemplified, and exalted forms.

We see extreme close-ups of what appear to be paint squeezed haphazardly on a palette, made to look so shiny, attractive, and visually appetizing that it is seductive and almost pornographic. Only this is not paint. Weiner continues to explore consumerism and materialism that interplay with constructions of the self. He paints details of gels, moisturizers, soaps, and makeup on such a large and magnified, macroscopic scale that they are totally obscured. All that is left is the enticing feeling that these products seem to call out, in their bright, seductive, gooey, and playfully organic forms...which of course are anything but organic and natural.

Weiner's show is one of those rare ones – fun to see and experience, but even more fun to think about and digest.

Source: <http://www.newamericanpaintings.com/blog/ecstasy-and-eye-candy-ben-weiner-mark-moore-gallery>