

KATE WERBLE GALLERY

83 VANDAM STREET NEW YORK, NY 10013

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GARETH LONG: "SECTION MAN" AT KATE WERBLE GALLERY

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Kate Werble
83 Vandam Street, near Hudson Street
South Village
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In an odd coincidence, Gareth Long's show, inspired by the covers of J. D. Salinger books, opened less than a week before Salinger's death. Happily, this young Canadian artist's first New York solo has a lot more than timeliness on its side.

Mr. Long plays with the understated motif of diagonal stripes on the covers of the 1991 Little, Brown editions of Salinger's four published books. The stripes become the main element in a series of large prints made with lenticular technology, which collapses several frames of an animation file into a single image. The result looks like a shifting, unreliable form of Op Art or post-painterly abstraction, yet sparks memories of well-thumbed paperbacks.

Mr. Long has also sanded the text off of vintage copies of the books, leaving just a white background and those telltale stripes. The volumes rest on three pieces of modular plywood furniture. The arrangement is titled "A Place to Sit, a Place to Read, a Place to Sit and Read," though it looks too uncomfortable for sitting or reading.

Mr. Salinger isn't the only author in the show. With a fellow artist, Derek Sullivan, Mr. Long has undertaken the marathon project of illustrating every entry in Flaubert's "Dictionary of Received Ideas." They draw in spurts, during public sessions. It's a clever idea that probably works best as performance; their pictures, which rely heavily on Google Image Search, are no match for Flaubert's acidic prose.

The prints do more, because they seize on an underappreciated bit of visual culture. Those stripes are a Salinger tribute, a bibliophile's badge and a little work of modern art. They also symbolize the optical and tactile pleasure of a well-loved book, something that may or may not translate to our faceless e-readers.

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