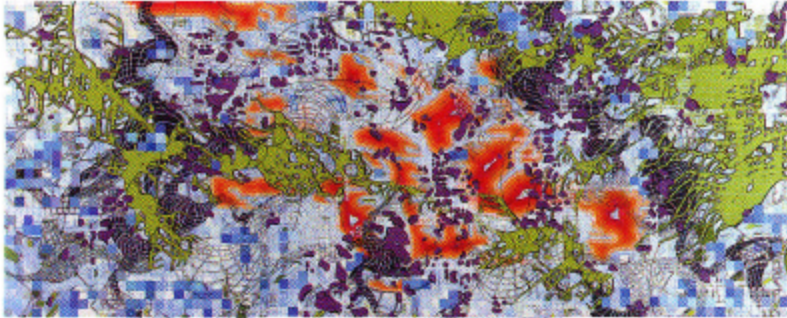


# Art in America

February 2008

## REVIEW OF EXHIBITIONS



Lisa Corinne Davis: *Verifiably Metaphysical*, 2007, oil on wood panel, 24 by 60 inches; at June Kelly.

### **Lisa Corinne Davis at June Kelly**

In paintings resembling multilayered maps with encoded, expansive narratives, New York-based artist Lisa Corinne Davis displays systemic, documentary and fabulist impulses that recall artists such as Julie Mehretu, Mark Lombardi and Matthew Ritchie, to name but a few. The eight mesmerizing canvases that made up “Fact & Fiction,” her recent show at June Kelly, are her most satisfying body of work to date.

While Davis has always been intent on exploring those issues of race and gender that shape the identity of a contemporary black woman, her subjects are more subtly presented in this new group, more finely balanced with formal concerns. The pieces are also more purely painting, dispensing with the collage elements that have characterized her work in the past, although the collage esthetic remains evident in her layering of imagery and the several distinctive techniques that make up these paintings. Consequently, they are visually richer, with the added flash of electronic blues, irradiated oranges, corrosive greens and denatured reds—artificial, eye-catching colors at variance with the more somber earth and flesh tones that dominated her palette in

the past. The colors are seductive but not pretty, and at times emit a kind of poisonous aura, as in the feverish, red-orange smears that resemble burst corpuscles or cellular malignancies in *Verifiably Metaphysical* (2007), one of the show’s densest works.

Each painting—they bear such titles as *Mutant Schema* (2006), *Doodle Verité* (2007) and *Quixotic Gauge* (2007)—consists of a grid overwritten by delicately drawn, proliferating networks or spiraling webs and other, more organic-seeming imagery, as well as paint squeezed or spilled directly onto the surface. These riddled maps seem both familiar and not, suggesting aerial views of enigmatic terrain, details of a landscape in toxic erosion.

More open-ended than some of her other projects, Davis’s new paintings can be variously interpreted, which is part of their appeal: they might be the schema, say, of an updated *War of the Worlds* or a blueprint of our ecological madness. But best of all is the finesse with which they are executed. Davis has given the viewer a visual feast of lines, shapes, colors and textures, with beautifully rendered, accumulating detail that juxtaposes the look of the technical with that of the handmade—a comment in itself about current art and the traditional practice of painting. —Lilly Wei