

# The New Criterion

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## Gallery Chronicle

*By James Panero*

The title of “Paul Resika: 1947–1948,” now on view at Lori Bookstein Fine Art, should alone provide a burst of excitement. Born in 1928, today Resika remains a consummate painter, with a masterful feel for oil on canvas. Since the 1950s, much of his work has come out of studying the Old Masters, but as a twenty-year-old prodigy in the late 1940s, he was painting in the thick of the New York School under the direction of Hans Hofmann, the influential teacher. The work from this period, now brought together at Bookstein, reveals an artist influenced by Matisse and Braque, but also one striking out on his own, with an edgier style ready to take on his American vision. Granted, some of these period works are more School of Paris studies than independent paintings—often admittedly so, as with the color-rich *Dreaming (Matisse)* (1947). Yet *Motor Shop* (1948) is definitely his own: a grisaille of roughed-out hooks and widgets, vice clamps and fan blades, and a raunchy pinup calendar. For an artist later known for his Italian influences, what surprises here is how rooted these paintings are in mid-century New York—with the Harlem River bridges, scenes of the Hudson, and the rattling doors of the subway. It wasn’t long after this moment that Resika realized there was an entire world beyond the city limits. Soon after these paintings were done, he went looking for it.

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