

Anne Doran, 'Christopher Knowles', Time Out New York, January 2013



## Christopher Knowles

### Time Out says

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An autistic poet and artist, Christopher Knowles provided the libretto for Philip Glass and Robert Wilson's 1976 avant-garde opera, *Einstein on the Beach*, while he was still a teenager. His drawings done on typewriter—which include pictograms forming progressions of the letter C (for Christopher), as well as top-of-the-pop-chart lists—were widely shown during the late '70s, their seriality and repetitions dovetailing neatly with the era's minimalist aesthetic. Of late, these works have been turning up in numerous group exhibitions, most recently in a show at Paula Cooper commemorating *Einstein's* revival.

This is Knowles's second solo outing at Gavin Brown's Enterprise (his first was in 2004), and it showcases a different aspect of his art: colorful, figurative oil-marker drawings on canvas. The compositions include Pop-like images of objects, texts, cityscapes, portraits, sporting events and theatrical performances. A pair of still lifes picture pieces of fruit (along with a wedge of pie or cake in one) arranged in regimented rows against watery blue backgrounds. Another work—a knockout reminiscent of 1970s New Image painting—pairs a red Budweiser beer logo with a strange, undulating gray line striped with red, yellow and blue. More complex are a series of football scenes. Collapsing foreground and background into arrangements of interlocking shapes, they recall Malcolm Morley's NASCAR canvases. A drawing of a woman sunning by a pool is similarly constructed and full of wonderful incident, including a line of trees—each reduced to its essential form—marching across the top.

Though not as well-known as Knowles's "typings," these paintings have their own considerable interest. And while they seem quite disparate from the artist's earlier work, they share the same idiosyncratic ordering of spoken and visual information, as well as a characteristic tenderness, directness and wit.—*Anne Doran*