

# The New York Times

ART IN REVIEW

BILL RICE: 'Paintings and Works on Paper'

By [HOLLAND COTTER](#)

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*Steven Harvey Fine Art Projects*  
24 East 73rd Street, Second Floor, Manhattan

*Through July 1*

With his large, sad face and deep voice, Bill Rice (1932-2006) was best known to many people on the Lower East Side as a stage and film actor who worked with Gary Indiana, Jim Jarmusch, Richard Kern and Jim Neu. But he came to New York City as a painter in the 1950s and a painter he remained, using his East Third Street apartment as his studio and taking his East Village neighborhood as his subject.

The show of 11 pictures at [Steven Harvey](#) gives a good sense of his style. He painted fairly small, on paper or tabletop-size canvases, in gouache or oils thinned to the consistency of watercolor. A constructivist in composition and a nocturnalist in mood, he depicted the city as a geometric pattern of dark walls and bright windows framing individual figures, often nude dark-skinned men.

Many of his cityscapes were of views from his window. Those seen from street level, like the 1984 "Silks," with its apparitional yellow taxi and indistinct red-shirted figure, look especially impressionistic, as if fleetingly caught.

The catalog for the show is small but a keeper, with wonderful essays by the artist Joe Fyfe, and the Gertrude Stein scholar Ulla E. Dydo, with whom Rice worked as an editor for many years. And by all means sample the DVD of excerpts, compiled by the filmmaker Jacob Burckhardt, from Rice's film and stage performances.

They run from a hilarious freak-out segment, co-starring David Wojnarowicz, from Mr. Kern's 1985 "Manhattan Love Suicides," to a scene toward the end of Mr. Jarmusch's 2004 "Coffee and Cigarettes," which finds Rice and Taylor Mead channeling Mahler and drinking fantasy champagne. The scene is filmed in black and white but, softly lighted, it has the tender intimacy of Rice's late painting, with its luminous, soaked-in warmth, like a banked fire.

**steven harvey** fine art projects

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