

ART IN REVIEW

ART IN REVIEW; Matthew Cusick: 'Diamonds Are Forever'

By KEN JOHNSON

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Sometimes the fine line separating the abhorrent and the attractive breaks down. That's what makes Matthew Cusick's paintings interesting. Mr. Cusick, who is in his late 20's and lives in New York, is a student of modernist residential architecture and James Bond movies. His glossy, hard-edged, sofa-size paintings depicting ultramodern home interiors are hideous, but they are also visually arresting and conceptually provocative.

Using masking tape, knives and enamel paint, Mr. Cusick stencils every detail of a painting as a flat, sharp-edged shape, producing mosaic pictures resembling cheesy 1960's illustrations for Playboy magazine, whose bachelor pad vision is a primary inspiration. (The rooms depicted in these paintings are in a house that once was a set for a James Bond movie and for a subsequent Playboy pictorial.)



Images include a living room that resembles a hotel lobby, with a large indoor rock garden and a golf course visible through the glass walls; a sumptuous bathroom that looks as if it was lifted from Architectural Digest, and an indoor pool containing a couple of generic sexy blondes. As with Jeff Koons, Mr. Cusick embodies a Pop-style sermon on the temptation and soul-starving emptiness of modern consumerism in objects that are themselves luxurious yet strangely empty commodities. To look at these paintings is to be caught between desire and revulsion.

KEN JOHNSON