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Art in Review

Ron Ehrlich

*Stephen Haller Gallery
560 Broadway, at Prince Street
SoHo
Through Jan. 4*

Scraping, blowtorching, scratching, layering and, yes, even painting, Ron Ehrlich gives the surfaces of his panels a heavy workout. Most of them are inflected by a horizontal line, or parts thereof; that sometimes divides the panels into two colors. Other imagery runs from abstract to referential: goblets, writing, circles, marks and doodles. But the images seem almost incidental, with one or two exceptions. In No. 3 (all are untitled), the shape of a primitive looking horse (shades of Susan Rothenberg!) is clearly visible, its top quarters outlined on white, its long legs atop a stool, reaching down into the dark bottom half of the painting. A less readable horse shape is also seen in No. 5. In other paintings, the cut-off legs of the horse turn into drinking vessels. The horse, apparently, has autobiographical associations for the artist. But it's the hard-worked surfaces, which seem to carry the memories and textures of old walls, that give this show vitality.

GRACE GLUECK