



Ernest Briggs, *Mars and Venus III*, 1972, acrylic on canvas, 70" x 81".

*the village VOICE*, February 8, 1973

New paintings by Ernest Briggs at the Green Mountain Gallery (135 Greene Street) are in acrylic and of a series titled "Mars and Venus." I like them a lot. At a time of Abstract Expressionist revival, it's good to see some of the old energy on display by a neglected veteran. Fashion is fashion, but art will out.

J.P.

## ART NEWS

Ernest Briggs, in his latest show of paintings at *Green Mountain* (to Feb. 15), pulls away from the tight emblematic images that characterized his last show in 1969 at the Alonzo Gallery. There is now a new ease in execution—the big gesture, the supple swoosh of acrylic paint put on with the right amount of transparency. Sometimes there are several layers to a painting. If unsuccessful in finding his image at the first go, he paints over it a second, third, even fourth time. The dried layers of paint have ridged edges: the effect is that

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ERNEST BRIGGS, born 1923, Edward Dugmore, born 1915, and Michael Goldberg, born 1924, are members of the second generation of Abstract Expressionism. They all flourished during the '50s, working out of the pioneering efforts of the first generation of American art pioneers. Briggs and Dugmore were influenced by Clyfford Still, Goldberg by Willem de Kooning. Briggs studied with Still at the California School of Fine Arts and was a close follower of his work. Though his paintings in The Museum of Modern Art's "12 Americans" show

in 1956 have a powerful diagonal thrust and a fractured New York kind of violence that is not characteristic of Still's work, their vocabularies were quite similar. Then, Briggs' oil paint was thick and slablike, applied and shaped with a palette knife. Now it is acrylic paint applied in broad swaths; he scrapes or wipes out the centers of these swaths to produce line by a process of subtraction. Then as now, Briggs' involvement is with process. His image is not nearly so personal as his method of paint handling. The early work was huge and wall-like; currently the paintings are closer to traditional easel size. Conversely, his image has expanded. Whereas smallish, rhythmic units massed forces across the canvas in earlier times, huge, sweeping pathways now show an arm's range of motion. The new paintings are structured in quarters or halves, their internal units frequently repeating the framing edge in a square-within-a-square format. His curving, overlapping, collagelike forms read like undecipherable calligraphy viewed macroscopically. His gestures are intense and forceful; they walk a narrow line between the preplanned and the automatist.

— APRIL KINGSLEY