

October 3, 1997

Art In Review

By ROBERTA SMITH

Paul Feeley

Lawrence Markey

55 Vandam Street

South Village

Through Nov. 1

Paul Feeley (1910-1966) is one of several underappreciated artists who worked against the grain of Abstract Expressionism in the 1950's. His simple geometries of echoing undulating lines and shapes, played out in two or three saturated colors, were far removed from the gestural style of Pollock and de Kooning, while also lacking the philosophical weight of Rothko and Newman.

Feeley's art was playful, almost childlike in its love of color and simplicity. One imagines him looking back to Matisse, Arp and Avery for inspiration. And while his work pointed toward Color Field painting, he never joined up.

The 16 drawings in this exhibition hardly tell the whole story of his achievement, but they offer the first glimpse of it in nearly 20 years.

Dating mostly from 1964, these works on paper show him at the end of his life, sweetening his palette toward hot pastels and expanding his repertory of jacks and Indian club shapes. One of the best works is actually a calendar page from October 1964, its squares dotted with color sketches of paintings and notes of sales or social engagements.

A bigger show of paintings would be better, but even this one suggests an unusual relevance to the quirky personalizations of present-day abstraction. ROBERTA SMITH
