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ART IN REVIEW; Jo Baer

By HOLLAND COTTER

Alexander Gray Associates
526 West 26th Street, Suite 1019, Chelsea
Through May 12

Jo Baer is best known for her immaculate early Minimalist paintings of white rectangles bordered with colored bands, and for a 1983 Art in America article titled "I Am No Longer an Abstract Artist," in which she which declared that the realities of post-1960s power politics had rendered abstraction irrelevant. By that point she had moved to Europe where, in her 80s, she still lives. And she had started painting the figure, which she continues to do with verve on the evidence of the quietly vehement pictures at Gray.

A large, sketchlike oil painting from 1990 weaves together ballerinas, flamingos and a hanged man. Another from the following year sets dancers, mythical beasts and a giant pair of military boots in violent confrontation. Baseness is undiluted in a 2000 painting of toilet and urinal overlaid with the white-traced forms of intestines and male genitals.

In short, there's a lot going on in this work, with its allusions to history past and present, its references to visionary artists from William Blake to Jasper Johns, and its mood, at once lyrical and apocalyptic. We have more than our share of gallery exhibitions of painting right now. Ms. Baer's, offbeat, subtle and fierce, is one of the best. HOLLAND COTTER