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Art in Review

Tomoo Gokita

ATM Gallery
619b West 27th Street, Chelsea
Through Oct. 7

The gifted Tokyo draftsman Tomoo Gokita, who is especially adept with charcoal, has taken up painting with promising if facile results. The canvases in his second New York gallery show are done in black and white gouache and range in size from very small to medium. They forsake the control that is often evident in Mr. Gokita's drawings for autonomist doodles, squiggles and swipes.

Sometimes these add up to cartoonish partial figures whose comical deformations bring to mind Sue Williams's early grisaille paintings, minus the sarcastic feminism. In others cases the doodles accumulate in strange piles, as if the contents of several of Yves Tanguy's Surrealist landscapes had been gathered up and dumped in one spot, with results a bit more entrail-like than usual. There is also a foray into Minimalist repetition with a field of egglike bulges and a bemused evocation of a flower still life titled "Drunk Flower" that is reminiscent of Donald Baechler's work.

But the piles are the strangest and the most independent of Mr. Gokita's drawings. Their success stems in part from his surprisingly large vocabulary of terse little doodles and in part from the range of contrasts he coaxes from the black and white gouache. It gives the piles a harsh, almost glittery light that catches the eye, communicating something driven and serious. **ROBERTA SMITH**