



New York Times Review  
February, 2004

ATM Gallery  
170 Avenue B, at 10th Street  
East Village  
Through Nov. 23

The nine large-scale graphite drawings in Mike Paré's solo show, titled "Black Light Folk Festival," are in tune with a retro-1960's strain running through New York art. They are based on photographs of mass gatherings of that era, from peace demonstrations to the violence-laced 1969 Altamont music festival, which is often cited as the event that brought the Flower Power high crashing down.

All of this happened before Mr. Paré's time: he was born in 1969, two days after the Altamont debacle and in a neighboring California town. And in his hands, the images from the past are recreated with closely observed immediacy, but also recomposed, jigsaw-puzzle fashion, in blocks of hatched lines with little biomorphic forms, like psychedelic blips, swimming around. The results have an unfocused, broken-up look, as though they were seen through smoke, reflected in choppy water or produced from several generations of mechanical reproduction.

Piece by piece the show -which includes a sculpture titled "The Weight Was So Heavy We Put It Down" - is low on immediate visual impact. But it has interest as a conceptual whole, first because it concentrates on the historical substance rather than the decorative style of the 60's and second, simply because it directly addresses, without cynicism or nostalgia, the period it does, an increasingly important reference point for new American art.

HOLLAND COTTER