

CHEIM & READ

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By Will Heinrich 10/02 3:43pm

LOUISE FISHMAN'S 11 NEW oil paintings at **Cheim and Read** create a unified effect: they all show the same deep but narrow color palette, inspired by a recent residency in Venice, of ultramarines and oceanic grays, the same reliance on broad strokes of paint, and the same tense resistance to curve. But what they most have in common is that each achieves, necessarily in a different way from the canvas next to it, the delicate harmony of disjunction and discord. In *Crossing the Rubicon*, a central figure of red and blue lines that brings to mind not only Caesar's bloody river, but also the Christian cross and the Chinese character for "peace," is steadily dissolved by soft blue fluff, a crosshatching of choppy white scratches, a few sticky clumps of paint, and further strokes in all directions. *Assunta*, right beside it, is a circle to *Rubicon's* cross: it begins with marks made at random, but as each mark made reduces the field of choice, the final goal of covering the whole canvas steadily converts that randomness to order. And *Serenissima* sheds fully formed figurative allusions, as *Moby Dick* casts off symbolic readings, without being altered or reduced. A grayish white geyser in the middle, a red sacred heart, yellow geraniums, roiling waves, sea spume, pigeon shit and an olive-green plastic palette knife all cast themselves against the viewer's eyes before dissolving in the air.