

GAVIN TURK

'Jazzz'

Sean Kelly Gallery
528 West 29th Street, Chelsea
Through May 2

If Gavin Turk's new, imitation Jackson Pollock paintings were shown unlabeled in a museum, I wonder how many people would know that they were not the real thing? Dripped in muted colors on canvases up to 23 feet wide, they are impressive fakes.

Simulating canonical artworks to raise questions about precious commodities like authorship, authenticity and originality is far from new. Elaine Sturtevant, Sherrie Levine, Mike Bidlo and lots of others have done it. Mr. Turk, one of the notorious Young British Artists in the 1990s, has added a fillip to that postmodern tradition: he made the paintings by repeatedly dripping his own signature, which, though it remains illegible, calls attention to the hallowed association of gesture and identity epitomized in Abstract Expressionist painting. He also stars in a series of photographs imitating Hans Namuth's famous pictures of Pollock painting.

Though carried out with suave panache, Mr. Turk's Pollock project seems academic. More intriguing is "The Mechanical Turk," a film in which he acts like a famous 18th-century French automaton that defeated all comers at chess. (A live human was controlling its movements.) Dressed in Turkish garb and staring at the camera with unblinking eyes, he robotically moves a knight around a chessboard. The real Mr. Turk pretends to be a fake mechanical Turk, which itself was a fraud. Deception in art is something to ponder, especially considering what has been happening lately in the world of high finance. KEN JOHNSON