

Thoughts on the Passing Scene  
by Charlie Finch



**Kevin Landers**  
**Man with Plaid Cart**  
**2002**  
at Elizabeth Dee Gallery



**John Chamberlain**  
**Potawatami Falls**  
**2002**  
at PaceWildenstein



**We stole the title of this piece from the great Stanford economist Thomas Sowell. Thanks, professor.**

Sitting near Thelma Golden at Botino last week, we overheard her companion, a handsome young architect from Cornell, opine, "I spend all my time reading theory, I don't have time for fiction." Seems to us all that he's reading *is* fiction.

There's much talk about Kevin Landers' deft satire of Andreas Gursky, a wall of sneakers, handmade by the artist, at Elizabeth Dee. But for our money, Kevin's real talent lies in his photography. He has the unerring eye for poignant, sly detail common to Roy De Carava or Helen Levitt.

Each of Kevin's shows contains a masterpiece. At his last one, the gem was a chicken peering towards freedom. This time, it's a large colorful celebration of a man with a shopping cart in the East Village. We had to have it, so we bought it.

An elegant Arne Glimcher and a rumpled 76-year-old John Chamberlain greeted visitors at John's opening at Pace downtown. Like every sparkling Pace palace before it, Pace Chelsea grows more beautiful with each visit, and Chamberlain's pieces, wafer-thin bouquets of colored chrome, are among his greatest efforts.

We were all set to write about the show, when the news arrived of four Yale undergraduates dead in a car crash on I-95. We have always lived and breathed Yale blue, and suddenly auto parts didn't seem like art anymore.

Another Yalie, Thornton Wilder, wrote a bestseller long ago, *The Bridge of San Luis Rey*, about timing, randomness and death. The other day, we walked into our bank branch on Lower Broadway just in time to see cops photographing bullet holes in the tellers' windows -- we'd missed a stickup guy by five minutes, the second time this popular branch had been hit in a week.

Especially after 9/11, New York is a world of close calls. Is there a more overrated artist than Raymond Pettibon? Can't David Zwirner afford to frame the petty cartoons, with their always banal clichéd captions, instead of pretentiously pinning them to his walls? All the criticisms our colleague Jerry Saltz justifiably applied to William Kentridge, apply doubly to the lunthead Pettibon -- numbing, pedestrian ordinariness. Tim Gardner, at 303, for comparison, kicks them both upside their heads.