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# The New York Times

## Dana Schutz: 'Piano in the Rain'

*Friedrich Petzel Gallery  
557 West 22nd Street  
Chelsea  
Through June 16*

Dana Schutz's new paintings have a loose, flyaway feeling that on first encounter can seem transitional, but mainly they show Ms. Schutz plunging ahead with her ambitious art. These thinly painted images of people alone, in pairs and in one very large crowd all have a caught-in-the-act air. They depict weird, slightly frantic situations and seem determined to leave nothing out or to let anything settle demurely: not color, light, interpersonal relations, painterly process, feminism, abstraction, physical action, fascinating details or the big picture.

While it is nothing new to combine abstraction and representation, Ms. Schutz, as usual, adds realism to the mix. In "Piano in the Rain" we see raindrops falling on the woman bent over the instrument (and bouncing off the grass) as her hands move over the keys. In "Hop" a woman lifts her leg balletically yet provocatively while standing toe to toe with a man in a bulky sweater of many colors and brush strokes; his bald head is a jumble of bright shapes and, it would seem, mixed emotions in the face of this act of aggression and possession. In "Small Apartment," in which a couple shares some sort of anguish at a table in front of two paintings, their fluid, distorted faces are veritable flip books of feeling.

In "Flasher" the artist opens her trench coat to reveal an elaborate pictorial vocabulary among the purloined watches.

In a seeming reprise of "The Raft of the Medusa" titled "Building the Boat While Sailing," this vocabulary is pushed to the limit by a crowd of characters who work, perform, emote and loll about, a mass of carefully differentiated humanity and accouterments.

More than ever, Ms. Schutz seems to want every stroke and smudge of paint to register separately so that you can see through to the bare canvas and reconstruct her every move as she fearlessly tackles life's flux.

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<https://www.nytimes.com/2012/06/08/arts/design/dana-schutz-piano-in-the-rain.html>