

# THE WALL STREET JOURNAL.

## Three Gallery Shows to See in New York

Mike Womack, Alfred Leslie and Salvatore Scarpitta in this week's Fine Art

BY PETER PLAGENS

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Salvatore Scarpitta's 'Tishamingo (for Franz Kline)' (1964) PHOTO: LUXEMBOURG & DAYAN / PHOTO: TOM

### Salvatore Scarpitta, 1956-1964

Luxembourg & Dayan

64 E. 77th St., (212) 452-4646

Through Dec. 23

A Brooklyn-born artist of Italian heritage, Salvatore Scarpitta (1919-2007) traveled to Italy in 1936 to study art in Rome. After a hitch in the Navy during World War II, Scarpitta returned to Italy to live. The dealer Leo Castelli offered Scarpitta a show and a stipend if he'd return to New York, which he did in 1958. The trouble was that Castelli also represented such powerhouses-to-be as Jasper Johns, Robert Rauschenberg, Cy Twombly and Frank Stella; despite a well-received 1959 solo show, Scarpitta went quasi-missing in that crowd.

He shouldn't have, although one can see why he did. Scarpitta's "bandaged paintings"—made by tearing up old pictures and wrapping them around a rectangle

of stretchers bars—probably seemed a bit arch and European, with more in common with Arte Povera painters such as Lucio Fontana (who slashed his monochrome pictures) than with the out-front American boldness featured in both Abstract Expressionism and in that new thing called Pop Art.

Scarpitta's early-work trademarks are his "extramurals," rectangular painting-like objects made by wrapping canvas, with differing tensions and folds, around the stretcher frame. Sometimes Scarpitta would boost this sculptural element with underlying armatures of wire. In 1964, however, he abandoned any connection to painting by turning to the building of sleds and real—albeit eccentric—race cars, some of which he actually raced.

The exhibition is more powerful and moving than you might expect in a time when fooling with the physical structure of painting has become ho-hum. Perhaps the honor due pioneering inventiveness explains my very positive reaction to this show. Time not only heals all wounds, but often deepens works of art.