

Whether in a quick sketch or a detailed composition, Martin transforms the quotidian into the quintessential. He often eschews fine paper for more throwaway supports like notebook pages, cardboard, and tinfoil, as well as tracing and construction paper; he works over these surfaces with pencil, pen, crayon, and acrylic paint. His esoteric experiments with such commonplace materials imbue the work with a poetic sincerity that nonetheless offers up profound observations.

In *Comet* (2004), for example, a few strokes of bright acrylics

turn a midnight blue, polka-dotted swatch of fabric into a starry night sky complete with the glowing tail of a shooting star.

For another piece, *Last Will and Testament* (2002), Martin has taken a page from his legal will and enshrined its stark lines of text with acrylic paint, transforming evidence of the somber finality of death into a psychedelic eulogy.

Influenced by the work of artists such as Alfred Jensen and Forrest Bess, Martin's abstract vision similarly comes from within. It's a

reality subject to his own rules, where pure forms and color meet up with the messy, mysterious, and often absurd aspects of life. Unlike Jensen and Bess, however, Martin explores metaphysical ideas (in art, philosophy, and science) with a pragmatic sense of their place in culture and society, and a seeming self-awareness of his own place as well. When he is at his most playful and irreverent, he transmutes both the theoretical and the practical into extraordinary yet accessible experiences.

—Christine Licata

Chris Martin: Works on Paper at Mitchell-Innes & Nash, New York

Appropriately, the first piece one saw upon entering the gallery was *Seven Pointed Star (Black) (Basel)* (2008)—the fundamental symbol of alchemy—with vibrant red, green, and yellow points radiating geometrically off a lush black background. The painting set the overall tone for this show of small-scale drawings, collages, and paintings made over the past twenty years; most of the work centered around Chris Martin's interest in mysticism and nonempirical sciences, such as numerology and cosmology.



Chris Martin, *Et Greco*, paint, iodine, spray paint, and collage (19 by 13 1/4 in.), 2001. Courtesy Mitchell-Innes & Nash, New York