

# The New York Times

ART IN REVIEW; Adam Ross, David Schafer, by Ken Johnson  
(September 21, 2001)

Adam Ross's paintings, in a show titled "Too Far for the Eye to See, Always at the Back of My Mind," are a seductive wedding of Modernist abstraction and sci-fi illustration. On medium-size square canvases he paints vertical tubular shapes like elongated pharmaceutical capsules and vertical streaks of white paint, set against intense blue backgrounds. They give the visionary impression of futuristic cities on the expansive plains of some clean, wide-open new world.

Scumbled, smeared or otherwise brushed on, gestures of painterly abstraction add spacey atmosphere, but at the same time these marks contradict the illusory extension of space, drawing the eye to the glossy, finely striated surfaces.

In his paintings, Mr. Ross cannily conflates two kinds of utopian dreaming -- one aesthetic, one social. There is a subtly satiric mood, yet at the same time romantic nostalgia for a scientifically engineered perfect future that stopped seeming possible decades ago.

David Schafer also meditates on the unrealized promise of modern engineering in his show, titled "A Death in the Family." He presents a solid cast-acrylic model, in one-fifth scale, of a Ford Pinto, the compact family car of the 1970's that was unfortunately prone to exploding on impact.

Mr. Schafer includes slightly altered copies of Pinto magazine ads and a panel with tiny wire-frame blueprints of the car repeated in a grid, but these only add didactic distraction.

The Koonsian model by itself, glowing like green-tinted crystal glass on its polished brass round platform, is a fine, mordantly ironic paean to American industry and consumerism.