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Expect the art of Willem de Kooning to be in the news, as Bay Area collector Thomas Weisel puts several prime examples up for auction this evening in New York.

Bay Area residents who wonder what the fuss is about can get a firsthand look at the highs and lows of de Kooning's painting at the John Berggruen Gallery through Saturday. Berggruen has borrowed the bracing 1977 picture given earlier this year to the Fine Arts Museums of San Francisco. The show also includes a couple of slack, small works from the late '60s and several pieces, such as "Untitled XIII" (1983), from the period when the painter's mental competence began to waver.

Not unlike the San Francisco Museum of Modern Art's 1995 "Willem de Kooning: The Late Paintings," the Berggruen show challenges visitors to differentiate good and weak pictures, mature, late and too-late works.

Even if no firm conclusions can be reached, the exercise is absorbing in itself, and this show is a rare chance to perform it. No one will leave the gallery wondering what all the fuss has been about.

Gallery Note:

Please note that the exhibition also includes three bracing paintings from 1975-1979 as well as four paintings from the late 60's, four paintings from the early 80's and three monumental charcoal works on vellum.