

"Untitled" 1996 Acrylic on Canvas 67" x 50"



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July 16-August 3, 2002 • Reception: Sat. July 20 4-6 pm



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"Untitled," oil on canvas, 24" x 36"



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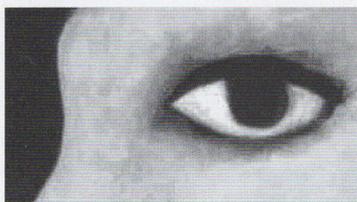
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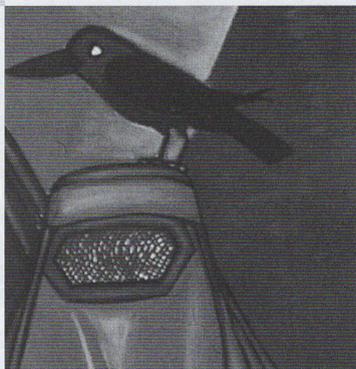
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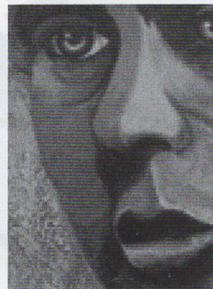
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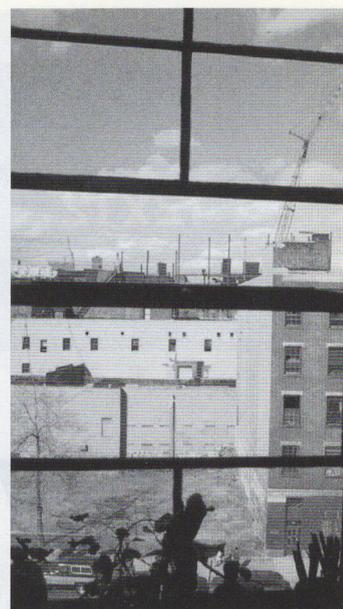
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Group shows are an end of the season ritual in the art world.

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At CFM Gallery: One Man's Canon

Even if Neil Zukerman were never to accomplish another thing in the art world, his place in its history would probably be assured for his professional resurrection of the late Leonor Fini, by far the twentieth century's most important woman Surrealist. As a curator, collector, and gallery director, however, Zukerman has done a great deal more to promote the cause of Surrealism, Symbolism, and figurative art in general.

A richly varied yet thematically coherent Summer group show, presently on view at Zukerman's Soho venue, CFM Gallery, 112 Greene Street, demonstrates how one man's overall vision can influence our individual perception of artists past and present. For by juxtaposing masters like Fini and Salvador Dali with contemporary artists such as Anne Bachelier, Michael Parkes, and Frederick Hart, among others, Zukerman indicates a logical continuum.

One characteristic of the artists that Zukerman collects and exhibits is the shared sense of a counter-reality, of a parallel world in which enigmatic gestures seem to signify a submerged narrative. And no artist is more compelling in this regard than that master of sensual innuendo Leonor Fini.

The central figure in Fini's oil "Heliadora," is a lissome nude with skin of flawless ivory, her head encircled by a halo of scarlet hair (its fiery brilliance hinting that she may be named for helios — in Greek: the sun), her feline features inscrutable of expression. In each hand she clutches a circular bouquet of multicolored flowers, having emerged from a dark doorway into a room where two mysteriously veiled handmaidens stand in attendance, as palpable yet featureless as covered furniture in a summer house off-season. Perhaps they are bridesmaids for the naked nymph's satanic wedding or stoic sentries guiding her through some other profane ritual. As always in Fini's paintings, all is implied nothing is explained.

Not only is this oil especially evocative, it is one of Fini's most sublimely painted, the figure's exquisite pallor appearing as though lit from within, the two bouquets as rich in radiant hues and subtle textures as any of Redon's floral still lifes. In its every stroke and nuance, "Heliadora" bespeaks Fini's mastery as both a weaver of fantasy and a painter of unsurpassed subtlety.

Soon to be the subject of a major solo exhibition at CFM, Michael Parkes paints figures who look like characters from fairy tales—particularly princes and princesses—glimpsed voyeuristically in private moments that the stories omit.

While even Fini's interior scenes seem nocturnal, suggesting assignations spiced

by stealth, Parkes' beautiful people cavort openly in daylight. Whether naked or scantily clothed, they invariably combine a whimsicality reminiscent of Maxfield Parish with an elegant and healthy sensuality.

In "The Secret," a barechested young man in a helmet and tights embraces and whispers into the ear of a slender, long-limbed beauty leaning toward him on tiptoes, nude but for a gold bracelet encircling her upper arm. The graceful neck and head of a white goose peeks in on the right side of the composition, while on the right, a winged, robed, blindfolded Muse with that fetching, full-lipped overbite that is a familiar feature of Parkes' comely female figures holds a tray from which incense smoke curls up, as if to consecrate the union of the young lovers.

The French painter Anne Bachelier is one of Zukerman's greatest discoveries, a retiring native of Grenoble whom he has nurtured like a rare, delicate orchid, not only exhibiting her paintings annually but also conceiving book projects for her to illustrate and realizing them in lavish limited editions through his own CFM publishing imprint.

The sorceress/conjurer of a rarefied realm of mists and clouds, Bachelier is a painter of breathtaking refinement, layering luminous translucent oil glazes to limn an inner world that she has inhabited in her imagination since childhood. Populated by a cast of baroquely costumed characters and hybrid beings most often seen engaged in arcane rituals that have grown increasingly complex and psychologically fraught with each succeeding exhibition, Bachelier's sumptuous oils suggest art historical precedents from Fragonard to Goya.

Once seduced by Anne Bachelier's private world one cannot view any of her paintings as a discrete entity, for all are part of her personal mythology. Even an oil such as the tondo "Judith," its female subject appearing, like many of Bachelier's protagonists, to be a surrogate self-portrait, can only be viewed as a scene in a larger, continually unfolding drama.

Figurative sculptors have fared badly in the traditional Surrealist canon, where Man Ray's tossed-off objects, Duchamp's "ready-mades," and the basically abstract work of Alberto Giacometti, and more recently Louise Bourgeois, have been promoted as the end-all and be-all. Zukerman offers a lively alternative in artists who reintroduce the imaginative element to sculpture: The imagistic scope of Ailene Fields ranges from the poetry of an ethereal moonscape made immutable in illuminated marble to the humor of a princely frog



Neil Zukerman

smugly sporting an actual crown. Lorraine Vail's endearing bronze grotesques appear to defy gravity by virtue of her extraordinary technical finesse. Jo-Ellen Trilling elevates doll-making to high art in pieces that combine humor and humanism. The Venetian glass sculptor Lucio Bubacco updates the "lume" technique to create surreal narratives involving delicate figures in ornate settings. And while the late, great American original Frederick Hart is more accurately termed a Neo Classicist than a Surrealist, dreamlike visions such as his clear lucite piece "Echo of Silence" are very much at home at CFM Gallery, where they have been seen in major solo shows over the past few years.

Also featured are works by Dali, Aleksandra Nowak, Marquis von Bayros, and Manfred Wild, as well as the neglected nineteenth century master of erotica Felicien Rops; the Polish painter Michal Swider, known for his unique combination of allegorical subject matter and formal austerity; the Canadian artist Daniel Victor, who employs nude dancers as models for his darkly dramatic compositions; the late Italian painter Massimo Rao, revered for his Symbolist imagery and Old Master technique; and Steve Cieslawski, whose meticulous paintings of surreal figures in enchanted gardens and landscapes will be featured in an upcoming solo show.

Taken together, these diverse yet related talents attest to Neil Zukerman's singular taste and make a strong case for his alternative canon.

—Ed McCormack

Poetry and Power In Gretl Bauer's Material Metaphors

To embody the ethereal through material means is one of the most daunting and magical of all artistic endeavors. Few contemporary artists succeed in this almost alchemical aesthetic enterprise as dazzlingly as Gretl Bauer, whose exhibition, "Threaded Drawings and Constructions," can be seen at Phoenix Gallery, 568 Broadway through June 15.

In several New York solo shows over the years, Bauer has demonstrated her ability to transform base materials such as derelict bits of wood and metal salvaged from city streets into poetic metaphors. In her most recent work, she effects these transformations by combining such rough-hewn refuse with gossamer lengths of thread that she stretches tautly and often augments with drawn lines. Further enlivened by real shadows, these combined elements create trompe l'oeil effects verging on abstract illusionism. A self-confessed "scavenger," Bauer prefers to preserve the "integrity" of the found objects she incorporates into her pieces by not altering them too much.

In the work entitled "Raga," for example, a rugged rectangle of weathered wood with a rusted metal border, its surface studded with old nails and scarred with all manner of tactile irregularities, serves as the canvas. The basic shape remains as she found it; only now, myriad vertical strands of closely spaced thread cover a good part of its surface. Delicately tinted with blue acrylic, their tonal gradations visually replicate the hypnotically repetitive, rising and fading rhythms of the East Indian musical form for which the piece is named. And indeed, like a raga, the piece seems to induce a state of meditative calm in the attentive viewer.

An infinitely grimmer subject is evoked just as poetically in "Elegy 9/11," a work in cut paper and thread dominated by two stately, ghostly forms symbolizing the Twin Towers. These, too, emerge from minutely spaced lengths of string, here horizontal, set against a somber ground subtly shifting from areas of luminous blue to ashy black.

In its own manner, this relatively modest-sized work is as moving a memorial to the thousands who perished in the unthinkable terrorist attack of that date as the majestic towers of light that recently soared high above Manhattan's nocturnal skyline.

Those of us who have monitored the progress of Gretl Bauer's work of the years, as she has evolved her signature style, regard her 1984 exhibition "Painting into Sculpture" as a landmark

in her career, the pivotal moment when her paintings began to expand to embrace the wide variety of materials that she employs so successfully today. The present exhibition is her most fully realized to date in terms of her ability to counterbalance the qualities of ruggedness and fragility that distinguish her mature work.

In small to moderate sized pieces such as "Spine," "Handle with Care," and "Diana," Bauer creates works which, with their found surfaces partly covered by white acrylic washes and threaded elements, truly do become material metaphors for "time and its grazing shades," to quote a phrase by the poet Eamon Grennan that Bauer finds felicitous. Her physical poetry is at its quintessence in "Moonlight," a work sealed in plexiglass that creates an unearthly shimmer with closely spaced, light-catching silver threads set against a dark ground; as well as in "Smoke," with its roughly circular wooden shape centered like a lunar skull against a brooding, brownish field of acrylic washes.

The interplay between fragile and rugged elements is especially dramatic in the powerful and imposing work called "Night Harbor," which serves as the centerpiece of the present show and marks a major departure for Bauer in terms of sheer scale and ambition.

The piece is comprised of two distinctly different parts: Resting on the floor is a large beat-up door-frame of rusted metal and splintered wood salvaged from the street, where Bauer found it crushed into the triangular configuration that she has left unaltered. Strung with glistening red



Gretl Bauer, "Smoke" at Phoenix Gallery

threads, some of which drip off its edges like seaweed, playing off exquisitely against its brute physical presence, this junkyard pyramid has the poignant nobility of a damaged harp.

Some distance behind it, yet framed in its empty center in a manner that visually unifies the separate components of the work, a tall vertical painting hangs on the wall. Spanning two stacked canvases, its composition of loose horizontal gestural strokes suggests the movement of a murky red sea.

Although "Night Harbor" has an insouciance akin to certain works by Julian Schnabel, for all its bulk it does not suffer from the same sense of overblown machismo. Rather, the distinctly feminine aspects of Gretl Bauer's sensibility soften the brashness of its presentation, substituting poetry for chutzpah with a dynamism which suggests that large scale works may provide the next fruitful direction for this greatly gifted and constantly evolving artist.

—Ed McCormack

Regina Noakes Encapsulates the Human Drama

While the truth or falsehood of the old cliché that “one picture is worth a thousand words,” as it applies to visual art and literature, has always been contingent, in each individual instance, upon which particular painter and exactly which writer one happens to be comparing and evaluating, it is equally true that imbuing a picture with narrative content while retaining its aesthetic integrity is an impressive endeavor.

The work of Regina Noakes, an artist born in Singapore, now residing in Australia, who recently exhibited in Soho, at Atelier Gallery, 594

Broadway, is especially successful in this regard. For what distinguishes Noakes’ paintings, above all, is her ability to convey a considerable range of emotions and complex psychological states in figurative compositions that are notable for their pared down power.

Noakes’ paintings are all about relationships and interactions between men and women, adults and children, and even children and their dolls. Her pictures are invariably concerned with intimacy or commiseration of one form or another, and she expresses such connections through a combination of bold forms and colors that are as aesthetically appealing as they are emotionally evocative.

Some of Noakes’ strongest paintings are those that draw from the deep well of childhood experience, the lasting impact of which she amplifies by virtue of her formal bluntness and by simplifying her figures to a degree that could resemble Art Brut. However, hers is a simplicity that springs from sophistication rather than from naivete. Her use of flat surfaces and strong colors suggests not so

much the unschooled approach of an “outsider,” as the savvy appropriations of an artist who has looked closely at Cloissonneism, Romanesque art, and Mughal painting. (The latter reference seems especially relevant, since Noakes is of East Indian origin and, like those in Indian miniatures, the eyes of the figures in her paintings are large and dark, as though outlined with kohl.)

In Noakes’ recent exhibition at Atelier Gallery, an especially striking canvas was the one entitled “The Secret,” which depicts a

young girl confiding in her doll. All of Noakes’ figures are positioned either in profile or frontally, rather than in a three-quarter view, which enhances their iconic quality. Here, the little girl is seen in profile, her oversized head ballooning against a vibrant orange background which, as in all of Noakes’ paintings, appears uniformly flat from a distance but is enlivened up close by a variety of red and yellow hues, applied in juicy, succulent strokes. The child’s huge black eye, however, gazes directly out at the viewer as she whispers to her doll, which

her arm and looks at her questioningly. The woman, however, gazes off in distraction, apparently lost in some private, grown up reverie which can not be shared with a child. It is a moment of drama as subtly laden with emotional undercurrents as a scene in one of Ibsen’s plays. That Noakes can encapsulate it in a single image makes it all the more remarkable.

The drama of the relations between men and women are captured just as succinctly in two other canvases entitled respectively “Lovers” and “Acquiescence.” In the former, a woman, wearing a brilliant red dress, is embraced by an ardent lover against a nocturnal blue ground; in the latter, the conciliatory gestures of a couple profiled against a field of silent yellow suggest

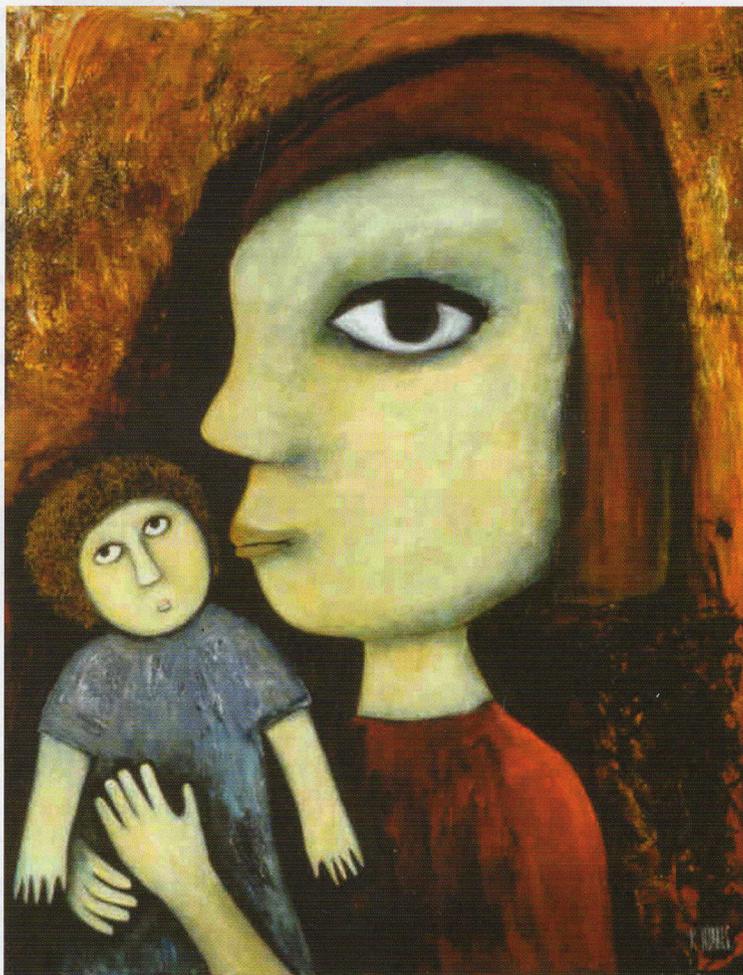
the personal sign language by which men and women reach their silent accords. Both pictures speak volumes about both the joys and the price that we pay for love.

While many of Noakes’ paintings—including “Night Conversation,” an image of two female nudes conversing between the upper and lower tiers of a bunk bed—depict human interactions, others employ a single figure to suggest introspection, as in “Stolen Fruit,” where the pear that the woman juggles seems to symbolize a moral dilemma.

More complex interactions occur more frequently, however, as befits a painter who, according to her personal statement, has her studio in a house that also includes “my husband, 3 teenage children, 2 dogs, 2 cats, and several goldfish and koi.” In this active environment, working intuitively, painting directly onto the canvas without relying on preliminary studies,

Regina Noakes conjures up a rich private world of humanistic visions. Her paintings have won widespread critical acclaim and found their way into numerous public and private collections in Europe, the U.S., and elsewhere, including London, Australia, and Italy, where they were featured in the 2001 Florence Biennale. Indeed, it is the humanity that she captures with such skill, exuberance, and good humor that lends the art of Regina Noakes its universal appeal.

—Maurice Taplinger



“The Secret”

droops limply in her hands, its round face wearing a somewhat woeful look.

Noakes has stated that she sees the doll, when it appears in her paintings, as “a repository and a receptacle for human experiences,” and this assertion is borne out in “The Secret,” where the affecting little human effigy appears burdened by her owner’s whispered revelation. Even more ominous, however, is the mood in another painting, “Story’s End,” where the expression on the face of the woman appears clouded as she closes the book. The little girl to whom she has been reading clutches

Sinisgalli's Oils Draw Spiritual Sustenance from Nature

There is the suggestion of spiritual rebirth in the title of Donna Sinisgalli's recent exhibition, "Emerging from the Dark Months." Whether the title alludes to the coming of Spring after the long bleak winter, the city's recovery from the tragedy of September 11th, the artist's triumph over some personal crises, or a combination of all three, the fact that her show takes place through June 25 in the Living Room Gallery at St. Peter's Church, 619 Lexington Avenue, only adds to the sense of spirituality that enlivened the exhibition.

It also seems auspicious that Saint Peter's is known for its "Jazz Vespers," since Sinisgalli imbues her subjects with heightened coloristic intensities and subtle rhythms in much the same manner that jazz musicians inflect familiar melodies with something unexpected and wondrously new.

In Sinisgalli's oil on canvas "Lush Garden," for example, a variety of flowers enliven verdant foliage, each delineated with the piquant clarity of separate notes in a Miles Davis trumpet solo. Yet, the overall composition flows rhythmically, for Sinisgalli is able to be marvelously descriptive without succumbing to fussiness, suggesting a movement and vitality that we usually encounter mainly in looser painterly modes.

Similarly, in "Tranquil Lake," Sinisgalli orchestrates the myriad small strokes that



"Lush Garden"

describe blades of grass, minuscule flowers, shrubbery, and the movement of light across the surface of the water, to create a sweeping composition that dazzles one with its freshness and immediacy, with the sense of a precise, fleeting moment in time captured and made immutable.

Conversely in the larger oil "Sweet Breeze," Sinisgalli focuses in more closely on dense concentrations of boldly painted flowers and leaves, employing the sensual outlines of vibrant red, yellow, and purple tulips in a field to create strong compositional rhythms. In the curving forms of the

green leaves, delineated in bold strokes, she makes us sense the movement of the unseen breeze in a composition that, while faithful in its details to the actual appearances of the flowers themselves, has an expressive thrust that shows a kinship to predecessors such as van Gogh and Munch. Sinisgalli has obviously studied such masters of Expressionism and she applies their lessons well. It is equally clear, however, that her main teacher is nature itself, which she has observed closely in pictures such as "A Sea of Tulips," a medium sized horizontal composition showing a field of tulips seemingly receding into infinity, and "A Spring Garden," a smaller oil in which tiny flowers appear to parade in orderly rows across a sloping hill enclosed by a rugged stone fence.

Here, as in other pictures in this engaging and exuberant exhibition, Donna Sinisgalli paints with a restrained passion that heightens her natural subjects without distorting them. Indeed, the respect, even reverence, that she shows for each individual element in nature makes her canvases fairly glow with conviction.

—Maureen Flynn

The Sensual Formalism of Wesley Rickert

While it is unusual to encounter an artist who is equally gifted as a painter and a sculptor, the widely exhibited Canadian artist Wesley Rickert is a double threat. In his recent solo exhibition at Agora Gallery, 415 West Broadway, Rickert showed only one painting in alkyd and graphite on canvas and several sculptures in polished metal. But even this sampling of work, skewed as it was toward the three dimensional, revealed the consistency of vision that informs Rickert's oeuvre.

The lone painting on view was called "Yellow Venus." It depicted a classical female nude, albeit expressionistically distorted so that the shape of the figure rhymed rhythmically with the contours of a nearby vase. The figure was conjured up in a sketchy graphite line augmented with fleshy areas of pink alkyd and set against a brilliant yellow ground.

The main difference between how the artist approaches his two mediums is one of emphasis, as he confirmed when he stated, "I paint to explore emotions. I sculpt to explore space."

Indeed, Rickert's sculptures do seem to be a more formal synthesis of themes explored in his paintings, judging from his recent exhibition at Agora. Perhaps the most striking example of how his approach

differs from one medium to the other can be seen by comparing the work in polished metal that he calls "Venus 2000" to the aforementioned painting "Yellow Venus." While the former is decidedly emotional in execution, its flowing strokes and warm colors expressing a spontaneous sensual response, the latter work explores space with fully realized forms that reduce the figure to a single sleek, flowing form. Although not as abstract as, say, Jean Arp's "Figure without a Name," Rickert's piece is both headless and armless. The figure's shoulders and torso are indicated with a gracefully tapered mass with simplified breasts that flows downward to form the legs. For all its formal simplicity, however, the curve of the figure's hips and position of its legs captures a remarkably accurate sense of the female anatomy and feminine attitude.

Another piece in polished metal with the same title, indicating that both are part of a series, takes an entirely different approach to the female figure by combining extravagantly curving shapes in an even more abstract manner. Here, Rickert creates a formal caricature of feminine curvaceousness with baroque contours that flow voluptuously in space like a three-dimensional arabesque. Here, too, the linear abrasions in the polished metal create curlicues that enhance the



"Venus 2000"

work's sense of voluptuousness.

An even more radically abbreviated approach to the nude is dared by Rickert in "Recliner, 2000," where breasts, torso, and legs are encapsulated in a single bimorphically stylized shape that rears back on its base and comes to rest in space, striking a graceful contemporary balance between the abstract reductionism of Bracusi and the expressive sensuality of Henri Laurens.

The piece, like all of Wesley Rickert's work, unites the formal and the expressive in a highly original manner.

—Marie R. Pagano

Marianne Schnell: Abstracting Nature from the Inside Out

At his or her best, the traditional landscape painter is an astute observer, recording and interpreting the moods of nature. Marianne Schnell, on the other hand, is an abstract painter whose work is invariably linked to nature. Schnell's paintings are about being in nature and of nature, as opposed to standing outside of nature and viewing it as a discrete entity. She appears to interpret nature from the inside out, as a sentient being inseparable from the landscape before her, and it is this unique stance—an identification with her subject that verges on the polymorphous—that makes her paintings so compelling.

In her recent exhibition, at Broome Street Gallery, 298 Broome Street, Schnell exhibited several new oils, acrylics, and watercolors, as well as some of the earlier canvases that she characteristically includes to bolster the natural continuum of her oeuvre. Although the majority of Schnell's paintings are untitled, two in the latter category are called "The Mouse that Roared" and "The Dog that Pawed."

Schnell tends to work on her large canvases on the floor, in order to vary her point of attack and to put the full thrust of her body into the composition. In both cases the witty titles arose because small animals happened to scurry across the paintings while they were in progress. Since Schnell's working process is spontaneous and intuitive, she welcomed these intrusions and worked the tracks of the creatures into the paintings. (They are most immediately visible in "The Mouse that Roared.")

Despite its lighthearted title, "The Dog that Pawed" is an especially majestic large canvas, the center of its composition dominated by a large area of yellow: one of those amorphous forms suggesting sunbursts or other manifestations of light which appear in many of Schnell's canvases. Floating above it is an area of blue, complemented by other pale yet luminous hues, all of which are unified by those swift calligraphic strokes with which Schnell tends to pull together the various elements in some of her compositions.

The recent large canvas that Schnell calls "Hampton Bay" is painted in acrylics, rather than her usual medium of oils, yet has a characteristic luminosity and also has that airy spaciousness that she achieves by setting forms limned in translucent washes of color afloat against glowing white grounds. Here, such hues as yellow, blue, green, and violet interact with a fluidity akin to such "stain" painters as Joan Mitchell and Paul Jenkins.

Because her work is invariably more overtly wedded to natural sources than that of her two worthy predecessors, however, Schnell's paintings project a unique sense of the contrasts between the ethereal and

organic aspects of landscape. Between the floral and leaf-like forms that some of her freely brushed color areas suggest are oddly tangible movements of air signifying elusive and mystical qualities of light that she evokes with spare, swift, calligraphic stokes.



"Untitled"

These latter linear elements become the main subject of a recent untitled canvas which is something of a departure for Schnell, in that she forsakes her austere white ground for a subtly modulated field of pale green-blue hues against which she sets into motion delicate strokes of pink, yellow, and blue. While Schnell's "motion" strokes are usually dark linear additions, connecting or lending rhythmic thrust to her free floating color areas, here the colorful lines are chromatically integrated with the green ground in a manner that suggests possibilities for fruitful future exploration on the part of this constantly evolving artist.

At the same time, part of the appeal of Marianne Schnell's oeuvre as a whole comes from her unique ability to create compositions in which tangible and ethereal elements engage in a graceful and harmonious pas de deux. And their dance, if one may take the metaphor a bit further, is considerably enhanced by Schnell's liberal use of the

white space around and between her luminously colored shapes as a contrapuntal element. Against this pristine white ground, her vigorously brushed forms soar rhythmically, as seen in the large canvases included in this solo show, as well as in a photographic documentation of a beautiful painted canopy commissioned by one of her collectors for a traditional Jewish wedding ceremony.

A similar exuberance can be seen in a splendid group of watercolors included in this exhibition, which demonstrate that a sense of airy spaciousness can be achieved in an intimate format as well as on a grand scale, provided the artist is as skillful a visual orchestrator as Marianne Schnell.

Especially striking in this regard are a series of compositions in which Schnell combines delicate linear elements drawn in silver with a fine-pointed felt-tipped pen with flowing aquarelle washes. Here, Schnell's silvery calligraphy delineates intricate shapes that, in concert with her saturated color areas, conjures a sense of light and shadow moving over the dense foliage of a forest. In these mixed media works, as well as in other works on paper composed solely with wet-into-wet watercolor washes, Schnell employs bare expanses of white paper in much the manner of an Asian ink painter, to infuse the composition with a sense of light and vitality. Thus she adds a hint of the metaphysical to her abstract evocation

of natural essences.

Although relatively rare in Schnell's oeuvre, the human figure also puts in an appearance in a group of small studies on paper of male and female nudes. These are characterized by the exquisite economy that distinguishes all of her work. With a few swift lines, sometimes augmented by color washes, she captures a palpable sense of the human body in a manner which suggests that she sees it, too, as an aspect of nature, ripe for abstracting.

Marianne Schnell, who is almost as well known as an activist who makes frequent trips to Washington D.C. to lobby on behalf of the National Endowment for the Arts as she is as a painter, is one of our most consistently engaging exponents of lyrical abstraction. Her most recent exhibition served to solidify this position, while providing more than a few pleasant surprises.

—Ed McCormack

The Unflinching Vision of Pakistani Painter Rauf Khalid

The great American poet of the vernacular, William Carlos Williams, once wrote that while one cannot get the news from poetry, "men die miserably every day for want of what is found there." The same can be said of visual art when it is as powerful in narrative terms as the paintings of Rauf Khalid, which can be seen at World Fine Art, 511 West 25th Street, from June 4 through 29.

Khalid, a noted film maker as well as a painter in his native Pakistan, where he still lives, brings us news from a troubled, war-torn region that has been very much in the news lately. Few news dispatches, however, can give us an intimate story of the suffering that war wreaks on a land and its people in terms quite so powerful and symbolic as Khalid's paintings.

For his direct, humanistic approach to subject matter, as well as for the linear quality of his work, Khalid can be compared to the American Social Realist painter Ben Shahn. Like Shahn, Khalid

often employs bold black outlines in concert with flat, clear color areas to create expressive compositions that go straight to the heart of man's inhumanity to man. In his macabre canvas "Fruit of War," for example, bombs dangle like black, elongated apples from the claw-like limbs of a sinuous tree writhing against a blood-red sky. In the distance the ruins of buildings can be seen, while piles of skulls cluster in the foreground, around the trunk of the tree.

In another powerful canvas, entitled "Suppression," huddled, cowed, cowered female figures dominate the composition. Each figure has a black bird perched on its head, and while the faces of two are hidden behind veils, the central figure has a naked skull for a face. It's mouth is gagged and it is burdened by a necklace of heavy chains. The starkness of the

image speaks for itself. Yet, despite the grim subject matter, Khalid makes the painting succeed in visual terms by virtue of his powerful draftsmanship and skillful use of color.

Another large oil on canvas is entitled "The Departure." It depicts two figures, one presumably male, with a skeletal visage; the other a veiled female. In the distance are the ruins of a bombed city. As the couple sets out in a desolate landscape, under a sky whose unrelenting darkness is only relieved by billowing smoke, large birds of prey swoop down

confronts the horrors of war as unflinchingly as a latter day Goya, he is not entirely pessimistic. Glimmers of hope, even of spiritual redemption in the midst of horror, can be seen in other oils on canvas included in this exhibition. "Freedom of Work," for example, is a painting in which disembodied hands manacled to chains reach out to each other against a clear blue sky and metamorphose magically in the process, turning into white doves. Here, Khalid creates an image at once optimistic and ingeniously surreal.



"Suppression"

around them. It is a harrowing image of beleaguered humanity that one might prefer to look away from. Khalid, however, draws us into the composition by the sheer strength of his painting, forcing us to identify with these spectral refugees in a hellish terrain.

In yet another painting, "Feeding Time," a veiled woman cradles something in her arms, drawing it to one bared breast in a manner that suggests a classical Madonna and Child. Then one looks more closely and realizes that she is nursing a bomb rather than a baby. The perceptual pause that enables the artist to sneak up on the viewer and get across this startling one-two punch is accomplished through Khalid's use of skillful Picassoesque distortions that obscure details and slow the shock of recognition.

While Rauf Khalid is an artist who

Another composition, "Ringa Ringa Roses," depicts a circle of dancing children against a brilliant red background in a manner that appears to be a stylistic hybrid of Henri Matisse and Keith Haring. The picture appears to evoke a carefree scene—until one notices that some of the dancing children are missing one of their legs; presumably, they lost their limbs to land mines.

In other paintings, however, such as "Woman Making a Doll" and "Angel Carrying a Candle," Khalid departs from his characteristic use of bold black outlines and adopts a more impressionistic gestural style. In both works, a heightened palette of luminous hues enhances the glowing, spiritual quality of the imagery.

Rauf Khalid comes to us from a part of the world where death and destruction are constant companions. His work reflects this reality without itself becoming ugly. Rather, he captures the innate nobility that we must draw upon in order to remain human under the most extreme conditions. Thus, for all their starkness, his paintings are oddly uplifting.

—Noah Klein

Best Foot: Noho Gallery's "12 x 12" Invitational

In a recent interview, the poet John Yau spoke of how he has learned from visual artists the value of limiting one's means, prompting him to experiment with poems composed with just a few variously rearranged words, much as Mondrian reduced his formal vocabulary to a handful of hues bracketed between verticals and horizontals.

More recent proof of how resourceful visual artists can be when working within limitations, albeit here established as exhibition ground rules rather than self-imposed, can be seen in the "12 x 12" Invitational Show at Noho Gallery, 530 West 25th Street, from

June 4 through 22. (Reception: Saturday June 8, from 4 to 6 PM.)

For the past 27 years it has been a tradition at Noho

Joe Chirchirillo (named for its original location north of Houston Street, though now relocated to the fashion hub of Chelsea) for each gallery artist to invite a guest to exhibit with them in this annual group show. This year, for the first time, all participants were asked to limit the size of their work to no more than 12 x 12 inches for two-dimensional pieces and 12 x 12 by 12 inches for sculpture.

Consequently, those who normally work large were faced with a daunting creative challenge, while others hardly had to adjust at all. In the latter regard, photographic artists fared especially well: Claudia Henrion, who draws upon Buddhist principles to create photographs that probe beyond mundane surfaces, shows a color print in which with sunkissed raindrops beading a brilliant red auto-body evoke the sense of some unearthly terrain.

With winning chutzpah, Melanie Marin, whose digital photomontages are concerned with inserting great women into the historical record, poses in a nun's habit in "Self-portrait as Hildegard of Bingen," to celebrate the twelfth century Benedictine abbess, physician, poet, and artist whose brilliant illuminations of her spiritual visions languished in obscurity for 800 years.

In his chromogenic photo-assemblage "Approaching Saint Anthony's, Pedua, Italy," Leon Yost splices views from two conflicting angles to capture a more vertiginous sense of the great cathedral's architectural grandeur than might be possible in a conventional photograph, demonstrating that truth often transcends fact when it

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comes to approximating the actual.

Painter David Deutsch combines semiotic wit with an odd lyricism by stenciling the phrase "Sprinklers Throughout Building" in red acrylic on a white ground, then subtly smearing the letters to "soften" the statement in the manner of concrete poetry.

Small scale plays right into the hands of Hyeon-Seok Lee who claims his artworks "are not superior to mass produced objects" and makes a bar-code a prominent element in the composition of his hard-edged abstraction "Meta-Object" to prove it.

Erma Martin Yost puts intimacy to less ironic purposes in her haunting mixed media work "Silent Chambers," exploring the idea that "at times, even in a full house, the rooms are silent and empty," through her skillful use of delicate stitching, gossamer fabrics, heat transfer, and appropriated imagery to convey a mood of poignant poetic melan-



Joe Chirchirillo

choly couched in an exquisite formalism.

Sheila Hecht accomplishes the impressive feat of suggesting New York School expansiveness, even while staying considerably below the size-limit, in her gestural abstraction "Transitions." Lynne Friedman convincingly evokes the atmospheric sweep of a panoramic landscape on the

same reduced scale in her bravura oil on canvas "Summer Sky III." (As if 12 x 12 were not small enough, both artists upped the ante of miniaturization by downsizing to 10 x 10 inches!)

Dorothy Shaw goes even smaller in her 9 x 9 acrylic painting "Van Gogh's Window at Saint Pauls," inspired by her visit to the asylum, where she looked out Vincent's widow and captured the view in her own detailed yet vigorous Neo-Expressionist style. Diana Freedman-Shea, a painter of cityscapes, shows a characteristically nuanced urban vista from the World Trade Center that takes on added poignancy in retrospect. Rebecca Cooperman, who uses plant

imagery as a vehicle to explore figure-to-ground relationships and merge realist painting with abstraction, normally works on an easel scale, so suffers no debilitating diminution here.

Indeed, one of the most interesting insights that emerges from this show is how undiminished the basic themes and aesthetics of most of the exhibiting artists are by the reduction in scale. For example, while this writer can't claim prior familiarity with the work of Patter Hellstrom, Hellstrom's abstract composition in ink, quink, and watercolor, compromised of concentric circles and more angular forms in washes of vibrant color have an impact akin to the much larger paintings of Knox Martin. The clarity of Akiko Naomura's figurative style, which combines the deadpan sophistication of Alex Katz with faux naïf charm, also benefits from intimacy. And one can always count on Kate Millett, here represented by a small box of white and blue marbles called "Integration," to come up with a witty conceptual solution.

The small format also enhances the whimsical quality of a hand operated kinetic



Melanie Marin

sculpture by Joe Chirchirillo, its spidery steel components expressing the artist's fascination with "how the movement of living things has inspired the creation of mechanical systems".

Another benefit of an invitational such as this one is that it introduces us to artists like Chirchirillo, who come out of left field with quirkily original styles and ideas. At the same time, it is also interesting to see how familiar artists meet a new challenge. Happily, most of those at Noho Gallery do indeed put their best foot forward.

—Ed McCormack

Lauralee K. Harris: Following the Grain of Being

Normally, it is sculptors who talk reverently of discovering the truth in their materials; of letting the wood dictate the form or liberating the figure from the stone. But Lauralee K. Harris, whose solo show was seen recently at Agora Gallery, 415 West Broadway, is a unique kind of painter. A Native American with an intuitive feeling for nature, Harris paints in acrylic on oak or pine panels, letting the grain of the wood determine the flow of her imagery, letting the tree literally tell her what to paint.

"The wood from a tree documents its own growth history, through its life and each one, like us, is unique," Harris states. "The grains become the paths for my brush to follow. There is an ongoing dialogue between the imagery in these grains and how I perceive them."

Given the apparent regularity, even monotony, of wood grains to the untrained eye, one might think that Harris' range of imagery would be limited. On the contrary, it is virtually infinite, for the artist is able to discern a universe of shapes within the whorls of the wood grain, the patterns of which contain all the rich images and rhythms of nature, from landscape to the figure.

"Return" is a painting in acrylic on a large oak panel in a perfectly symmetrical rectan-

gular format. It depicts a mystical vision of human swimmers and migrating schools of fish in spiritual union in a swirling aquamarine sea, under a sky in which benevolent, all-seeing eyes watch over them from the patterns in the clouds. The various elements in the composition are united in perfect harmony by the whorls in the wood surface, which Harris has only to emphasize with her brush in order to bring the hidden essences and patterns to the surface, as though she is literally in touch with some divine force of nature.

Indeed, she seems to comment directly on this act of divining the hidden world from the wood in the painting that she calls "No Need to Hide," in which several standing human figures with the wraith-like appearance of spirits appear to be in the process of being coaxed gently from the especially pronounced patterns in a panel of pine. They play hide and seek with the vertical grain, like graceful ghosts appearing out of fog.

In another painting on oak, "Lessons of a Mother," a Native American woman standing waist-deep in water cradles a baby to her breast while a large turtle swims nearby. Here, the horizontal direction of the wood grain unites the figures and their surroundings in its flow in a manner that conveys with striking naturalness the innate relation-

ship of indigenous people to the land and all of its creatures.

A mother and child in tender communion in a body of water are also seen in "The Whisper," though here dwarfed by the majesty of their surroundings. Swirling patterns of oak grain halo the figures with whirlpools, as angelic Blakean beings soar in the roiling clouds above. Once again the all-seeing eyes of some Great Spirit gaze down



"No Need to Hide"

benevolently. Perhaps this omnipresent being is also the Muse that guides the hand of Lauralee K. Harris along the path of the grain to create these extraordinary paintings.

—Stuart Leslie Myers

A Sumi-E Group Show in a Suitably Bucolic Setting

Since the form of brush painting that the Japanese call Sumi-E actually originated in China, its credentials as a cultural hybrid were well established before the Sumi-E Society of America was formed. The Metro New York chapter of the society demonstrates its own contribution to this ancient, ever-evolving art form in the group show "Sumi-E: The Art of Brush Painting," at Steinhardt Conservatory Gallery in the Brooklyn Botanic Garden, 1000 Washington Avenue, Brooklyn, through June 9.

Curated by Rose Sigal Ibsen and coordinated by Eva G. Mihovich, both of whom are also exhibitors, the show demonstrates how some artists have given an American flavor to Sumi-E, even while adhering to its traditions.

Rose Sigal Ibsen, for example, is equally adept at monochrome bamboo painting and more abstract explorations such as her dynamic composition "Snake," with its bold black calligraphy set against a gold-flecked gray ground. While Eva G. Mihovich's

"Mountain Overlook" shows her ability to capture a timeless Eastern landscape, her realistic cat portraits are more in the mode of Western watercolor.

Steve Wada also adds an element of Western abstraction to his "Celebrate," with its large Chinese character exploding against

a red ground, yet his "Trees" is the soul of simplicity, with blunt black trunks and branches set against white space evoking a whole snowy scene. Marla Pulick Kleinman adds vibrant rainbow hues to the spare swiftness of Zen painting in her brilliant "Iris," a true multicultural tour de force, while handling more complicated composi-



Rose Sigal Ibsen

tions in her paintings of birds perched on bold yellow sunflowers. Carol Itzkowitz Neiman adds her own coloristic intensity to "Yellow Fire," a landscape more reminiscent of Emil Nolde's German Expressionism than traditional ink painting, yet she shows

more restraint in the Eastern manner in her poetic picture "Snow Branch."

In Fumiko Carle's "Plum Blossom" delicate white blossoms and sinuous branches are delineated with an exquisite combination of strength and delicacy in a technique that, while detailed, retains a striking freshness. John Dilgen's large floral composition "Dark Bloom" is equally remarkable for the artist's ability to achieve a balance between the abstract and the real with multicolored

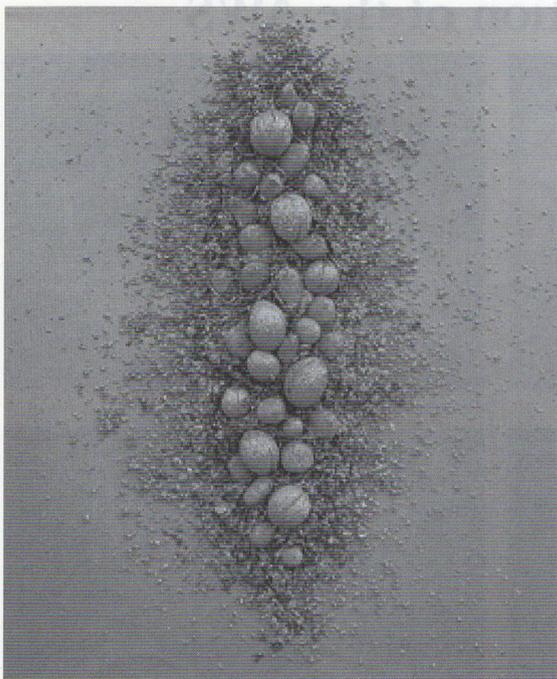
flowers splashed against a gray-washed ground. With winning humor and affection, Sarah Hauser celebrates the tiny creatures, such as mice and pet dogs, in four monochromatic ink portraits of specific critters she has obviously observed closely. Pola Lanzaro focuses in on even tinier creatures in "Springtime Fantasy," in which insects are captured cavorting among flowers with remarkable anthropomorphic clarity.

Animal subjects also come alive with beauty and wit under the brush of Estelle Kuwabara-Bauman, whose "Cat, Interrupted" depicts its feline subject distracted and perhaps a little maliciously fascinated by a hovering butterfly. Marion Archer's paintings of birds are notable for their combination of swiftness and detail, as seen in "Delicate Fragrance," where a small avian figure is juxtaposed with a large pink flower.

Also including excellent work by Christine Abramczyk, Costanza Baiocco, Elizabeth Fairgrieve, Linda Moses, and Marie Schindler that space does not permit describing here, this is a highly enjoying exhibition, especially suitable to the bucolic setting of the Brooklyn Botanic Garden, which readers should make every effort to see in the few days remaining before it closes.

—Marie R. Pagano

Cordula Ehms and Ray Wilkins at World Fine Art



Cordula Ehms, *Backbones*

In order to strike a successful balance, a two artist show should juxtapose artists who are either stylistically very similar or very different. An excellent case in point in the latter category was “Faces of Life - Frozen in Emotion,” by the painters Cordula Ehms and Ray Wilkins, who live and work in Belgium, and were recently featured in a joint exhibition at World Fine Art Gallery, 511 West 25th Street, in Chelsea.

Ehms and Ray Wilkins could be used to illustrate the old saw that opposites attract, since they are a married couple whose work could not be more different, hers being adamantly abstract, his emphatically figurative. Yet, the contrasts that their work presented in context were not only harmonious but highly complementary.

In her mixed media painting, “Tulip Fields Forever,” Cordula Ehms, originally from Germany, has employed acrylics, dunggrass, and palmseeds on canvas to create a composition that is as compelling in tactile terms as it is visually appealing. Here, an especially intense green hue, suggestive of a verdant Summer field at the height of its beauty, serves as a vibrant ground, highlighting objects affixed to the canvas. These include a dense concentration of dunggrass blades, layered like vertical and diagonal brush strokes, overlaid by several palm seeds painted in brilliant red, yellow, and orange hues.

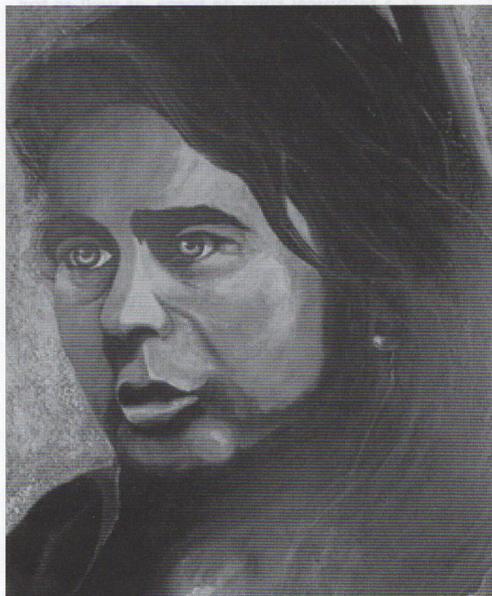
Like “Tulip Fields Forever,” paintings such as “Deep Forest,” and “Lavender Meadows,” employ verdant color fields as a backdrop for other tactile elements to convey an abstract sense of vegetative vitality.

By contrast, in other mixed media works such as “Beach Dream,” “Backbones,” and “Frozen Nature,” Ehms combines natural tactile elements, along with acrylic paints to suggest a variety of other subjects, ranging from a sandy beach, to a fossilized spine, to the virgin beauty of winter snow. The latter painting, which submerges sand and palm seeds in a textural field of white acrylic merges a formal austerity akin to Robert Ryman with a poetic natural allusiveness.

In all of the paintings of Cordula Ehms one gets the sense of nature transmogrified by material metaphors that intensify its effect, giving the viewer a sense of the mysterious forces underlying the visible world. At the same time, Ehms’ paintings can also be read as formal explorations, exploiting the physical properties of various materials and natural substances in the

manner of Tachism or Art Informal. For like the great Spanish painter Antoni Tàpies, Ehms employs texture and “materiality” to suggest a paradoxical sense of numinous and even spiritual phenomena. Indeed, it is her willingness to employ direct and overtly physical means to convey a host of elusive meanings that makes the mixed media paintings of Cordula Ehms engaging on several levels simultaneously.

Australian by birth, Ray Wilkins is concerned with the innate power of the human spirit in his compelling paintings of heroic heads. Wilkins’ large, rugged portraits in acrylics, pigments, and sand on canvas have



Ray Wilkins, *Babaji*

their own uniquely tactile qualities, which enhance their confrontational impact. His canvas “Courage,” for example, is an almost harrowingly powerful composition, focusing on the larger than life visage of a Native American with dark, burning eyes, possibly based on old photographic images of the Apache chief Geronimo. The subject’s craggy features and expression of wounded dignity confront us with an almost accusatory force that Wilkins amplifies by virtue of his expressive use of light and dark color contrasts, casting one side of the figure’s face into shadow. By this device the artist intensifies the psychological drama of the image, as well as its formal power, here as in other monumental heads such as “Warrior,” “Healer,” and “Joy,” each depicting a single individual in earthy terms that convey the stoic dignity of indigenous peoples.

By virtue of his authoritative draftsmanship, Wilkins is able to combine a convincing representational likeness with an expressive heightening that makes his paintings transcend ordinary portraiture and take an iconographic quality. And while such images, when they are filtered through an aesthetic sensibility as astute as Wilkins’ can be likened to certain aspects of Pop, they are in this case refreshingly direct, untainted by irony. Wilkins apparently sees the human physiognomy as an emotional terrain onto which to project a wide range of subtle moods to which the viewer can respond both intellectually and viscerally. His empathy for his subjects, his ability to depict them in powerful humanistic terms, makes his portraits deeply affecting.

Indeed, like the Mexican muralist Jose Clemente Orozco, who just may be his most direct artistic ancestor, Ray Wilkins’ use of bold forms, somber yet fiery colors, and powerfully compressed compositions lends his paintings an earthy monumentality that makes them truly mythic.

Something of a departure are paintings such as “One Tear for the 11th” and “Eye to Eye,” in which fish, underwater foliage, and other elements are combined in compositions, texturally enhanced by crushed shells and sand, that explore the symbolic qualities of a submerged world to convey meanings far beyond their aquatic setting. Although less confrontational than his portrait heads, these compositions are equally distinguished by the evocative powers that make Ray Wilkins a uniquely compelling painter.

—Maurice Taplinger

Defying Stereotypes in the 135th International Exhibition of the AWS

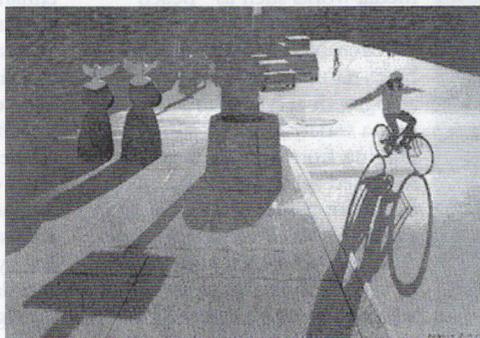
Watercolor is not only unforgiving of ineptitude, in that it does not allow much margin for correcting errors, it is also a much more versatile medium than is generally acknowledged. The latter point was made especially well in the 135th International Exhibition of the American Watercolor Society, which recently took place in the Galleries of the Salmagundi Club, 47 Fifth Avenue.

For example, the misconception that the sparkling freshness of aquarelle, while appropriate for still life and landscape subjects, is unsuitable for social realism is belied by several award-winning works in the show, including two affecting pictures dealing with the tragedy of September 11.

Bob Milnazik's "Untitled" is a dark, brooding picture of a lone rescuer moving through the ruins of the World Trade Center. Surrounded by twisted metal and billowing smoke, the small figure symbolizes the heroism that the attack on America

brought out in countless ordinary citizens. Another powerful watercolor by Charles McVicker, entitled "The Candles' Red Glare," depicts a grouping of the memorial candles that were everywhere in evidence after the tragedy, juxtaposed with the stars and stripes and the slogan "United We Stand."

Both paintings demonstrate that aquarelle can be as substantial a medium as oil for depicting humanistic subjects, as does "Charles," a meticulously detailed portrait by Stan Miller, capturing the lived-in visage



Robert Vickrey



Stan Miller

and strong character of a gray-bearded African American man. The well known realist Burton Silverman also showed an insightful portrait, in this case depicting a young woman seated on a sofa, wearing a black blouse and a pensive expression.

Then there is Robert Vickrey, a veteran artist whose style has been termed "Magic Realism." Vickrey was represented here by an atmospheric composition of two nuns and a daredevil bicyclist passing each other on a starkly shadowed city street.

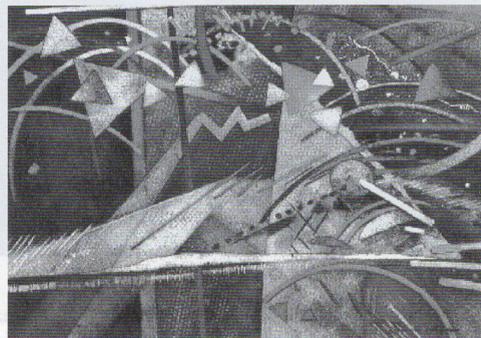
As a technical tour de force, as well as for its evocative qualities, one of the most impressive pieces in the show was Britt M. Francis' "Harmonic Interlace," in which a crystalline sphere is poised on a bulky bedspread whose patterns mirror its own shape. Francis exploits reflections and light and shadow to stunning effect, capturing one of those perfect moments when ordinary objects verge on the surreal.

Tim Gaydos employs a less detailed mode of realism to depict an elderly man with a flag propped up on his shoe shine stand. The title of the painting, "Veteran's Day," as well as the man's old Army surplus overcoat, suggests that he may be a veteran contemplating his fate, as he pauses for a smoke and gazes off into the distance.

Still life has always been a favorite subject of watercolorists, and this exhibition boasts several distinctly different approaches: LaVonne Tarbox-Crone's "Waiting for the Cut" juxtaposes an upright tube of twine and a mysteriously suspended pair of scissors to enigmatic effect. Anne Bagby's "Tea



Charles McVicker



Georgia McGraw

Party" gives a new twist to a more traditional still life subject by virtue of her use of patterning and formal flattening to lend a china pot, a cup and saucer, and a vase of flowers an emblematic quality. By contrast, Kitty Waybright creates a bold composition with sharply contrasting areas of light and dark in her relatively straightforward realist floral composition "Stop and Smell the Roses."

James Michael also reinvigorates a traditional subject in his snow scene "A Look to the South," where clustered pine trees and saturations of cool blue shadows are crisply rendered in a horizontal format. Darnell Jones, on the other hand, employs fiery orange hues, in concert with considerably more grayed-down, subdued colors, to capture another aspect of winter in the vigorously brushed landscape "Beaver Creek."

In recent decades, some artists have been exploring the fluidity of watercolor to create abstract compositions with qualities that cannot be duplicated in oils or other opaque media. Two excellent cases in point are Selma Stern's "The Ancient Mariner," with its brooding colors and dynamically splashy technique, and "Earth Matters," an exuberant composition of lively colors and floating geometric shapes by Georgia McGraw. Pat Dews, Dianne S. Trabbic, Carole Pickle, and Elaine Daily-Birnbaum also exhibited abstract compositions which, through their varying degrees of gestural force and formal invention demonstrated that watercolor is constantly evolving as an exciting and varied contemporary medium.

—Maurice Taplinger
JUNE/JULY/AUGUST 2002

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James Glass: Passion in the Raw

“Outsiders” are given a special dispensation, since time spent in the asylum counts more than a MFA in that lively little bywater of contemporary culture, mainstream artists are increasingly unwilling to risk raw emotion. Fortunately, however, there are still a few like James Glass, who are not afraid to defy the new taboo against passion; even if it means that the work will lack that contrived stylistic consistency that others value so highly.

Thus Glass’ first major New York City retrospective, at Healthy Pleasures Gallery, 2493 Broadway, through June 29, is a somewhat uneven affair, and in the context of today’s timid, slyly self-protective art scene, that is one of its greatest strengths. For the simple fact of the matter is that Glass is not at all concerned with manufacturing a marketable style. He doesn’t seem to care whether or not we like every one of his paintings equally well. Working with oil and/or latex on canvas or wood panels, adding texture to his paintings and assemblages with chunks of Styrofoam or wood, sawdust, joint compound and all manner of other materials, Glass is every bit as adventurous in technique as in his approach to subject matter.

The show is comprised of fifty paintings representing over thirty-five years of work, but one does not see a stylistic progression in the usual sense that we have come to expect in a retrospective. Rather, James Glass has apparently always been more concerned with the specific image than with superficial stylistic concerns. Each piece is about a specific image or effect which, because of the odd relationships between the various elements, creates curiosity and even puzzlement on the part of the viewer regarding its underlying meaning. By virtue of creating visual anomalies, Glass upsets our expectations: We expect things to be in

a certain relationship to one another, but he finds new relationships that, while not quite surreal, compel us to view reality from a new perspective.

It should be understood at the onset, though, that while this can sound like the uninhibited approach of a self-taught painter, Glass is quite the opposite. He has an MFA from Catholic University, in Washington D.C., has studied at the Art Students League, The School of Visual Arts, and Pratt Institute, and has worked as an actor, teacher, production designer and scenic artist for theater, television, and motion pictures. Much to his credit, however, he is able to cast off the constraints that sophistication often confers on the more timid.

Perhaps the most immediate evidence of how Glass refuses to edit his direct emotional responses can be seen in the series of mixed media paintings that he made immediately after the attack on the Twin Towers. In these powerful works, he put aside all aesthetic calculation in order to respond to the tragedy with all the passionate anger and grief and disbelief of an outraged citizen. Yet, such paintings as “God Bless Our Fire and Police Department,” and “These Lights Will Shine Forever”—the former a symbolic crucifixion, the latter an affecting vision of the Twin Towers splayed and bathed in spiritual luminescence—succeeds as much by virtue of Glass’ innate artistry as by the naked emotional power with which he invests them.

For all the guilelessness of some of his titles, Glass has an infallible instinct for recognizing the fine line between true sentiment and mere sentimentality. It is the genuineness of his feelings, rather than any tendency to wear his heart on his sleeve, that enables him to transcend the latter and create pictures that are at once gut-wrenching and oddly beautiful. By the same token, he



© “Black Cat Still Riding a Bicycle”

can be whimsical as well and invest some of his more light hearted paintings with equal interest. One example of Glass’ more light-hearted mode is the large, vigorously brushed 1991 canvas “Black Cat Riding a Bicycle,” its title literally descriptive, originally painted for the film “New York Stories,” directed by Martin Scorsese, in which Nick Nolte played a New York painter. Here, as well as in the smaller “Doggy Sipping on an Olive in a Lily Pond,” dated 2000, a composition every bit as bizarre as its title, Glass mines the mode of expression known as New Image painting, albeit in his own uniquely unironic manner.

Glass’ combination of imagistic eccentricity and painterly panache was evident as early as 1970, when he painted “Big Bird on a Ladder,” an oil portrait of the famous Sesame Street character against a tenement yard, and “Weeping Goat,” which depicts a bizarre conflict between the animal of the title and a serpentine representation of Satan in terms that thwart description but succeed admirably as visual expression.

Indeed, from the evocative, atmospheric romanticism of the large 1967 canvas “Woven Woman in a Marble Salon,” to the antic topical satire of the 2001 painting “Black Cat as CEO at Enron,” James Glass continually surprises us with his fertile imagination and firm painterly command.

—Ed McCormack

ABSTRACTION AS EMPHASIS

JUNE 7 - JUNE 27, 2002

Reception: JUNE 13, 2002 6-8pm

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William Wolf
Zingara Yuli

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June 25, 2002

Kate Millett

An artist contemplates the loss of her studio

Reception: Saturday June 29, 4 - 6pm

A collection of documents, including photographs and correspondence with the City of New York regarding the destruction of 295 Bowery, New York City.

This house was once known as McGurk’s “suicide parlor” where 12 child prostitutes between ages 13 - 18 took carbolic acid and died in year 1899.

Show Closes July 13, 2002

noho
gallery

530 West 25th St., 4th Fl, NY, NY 10001
212 367 7063 Tues - Sat 11 - 6pm

Montague Art Brings International Visions to Tag Gallery

Four artists from Germany are teamed with one artist from Japan in an intriguing survey called "International Group Exhibition," presented by Montague Art @ Tag Gallery, 24 West 57th Street, from June 4 through 15, with an opening reception on Tuesday June 4, from 6 to 8 PM.

Cornelia Hammans and Gabriele Stieghorst, both from Germany, deal with the nude female figure in different yet related manners in their respective mediums of sculpture and painting.

Cornelia Hammans' bronzes capture the flowing curves of her models with a marvelous fluidity. Their sensual contours and copious volumes command space with power and grace. These figures hardly adhere to the anorexic ideal propagated by fashion magazines and advertising campaigns. They are the bodies of real women, unidealized and eternal, as they have existed since time immemorial. Hammans relishes their full-figured forms and fleshy folds as fertile fields for her considerable sculptural gifts, unearthing the true, timeless beauty that transcends fashions. Whether depicting full figures, a torso, or simply a pair of shapely buttocks bursting like ripe fruit, Cornelia Hammans imbues cold bronze with a palpable sense of womanly warmth.

Gabriele Stieghorst conjures up the corpulent female nude with a semi-abstract monumentality akin to de Kooning, in her thickly textured paintings, making the pigment itself a surrogate for the sensuality of flesh. Stieghorst, however, obviously has more affection for the female figures that fill her compositions to bursting with their ample contours. If de Kooning's misogyny made him feel threatened by the hefty female body, Stieghorst's Amazonian figures seem to celebrate feminine strength and empowerment. And Stieghorst finds cause to celebrate other aspects of nature as well, in deliciously tactile abstractions alluding to fiery skies over low-lying horizons that are every bit as evocative as her nudes. In the latter paintings, too, her skills as a colorist come into their fullest flowering, with vibrant yellow and red hues lighting up the sky to an unearthly chromatic intensity. At once Turner-esque and quintessentially German, the paintings of Gabriele Stieghorst demonstrate the ongoing vitality and viability of Expressionism.

Two other German painters, Margret Ott and Eleonora von Poschinger also incorporate elements of Expressionism in their work, but both are concerned with markmaking and the autonomous force of the gesture in a more overtly abstract manner as well.

Margret Ott's compositions achieve an emblematic power by virtue of her ability

to create a compelling composition from one or two bold gestural elements. Practically carving her elemental forms in thick paint on the surface, she imbues her paintings with a striking material presence. In one composition, two brilliant blue vertical strokes are boldly laid down in slabs of acrylic pigment as luscious as cake frosting against a variegated grayish ground. In

calligraphic impulse to create paintings distinguished by a remarkable gestural energy. While comparisons can certainly be made to Jackson Pollock and Mark Tobey, von Poschinger has her own distinctive way with the line. Her lines writhe serpentine, dancing in and among amorphous areas of color, creating a joyous sense of movement. Indeed, in the compositions of

Eleonora von Poschinger, line appears to have a mind of its own, a vital autonomy that brings her paintings to life, lassoing our attention, and inspiring our admiration.

In previous New York exhibitions, Showa Okamura, the sole Japanese artist in this show, was represented by hard-edged black and white paintings in which male and female nudes appeared to merge and morph into all manner of intriguing configurations suggesting how sexual congress can make us one with another.

Okamura is still fascinated by the various possibilities and permutations of the human body. Now, however, he has added a full range of colors that make his once austere compositions come to life in new ways.

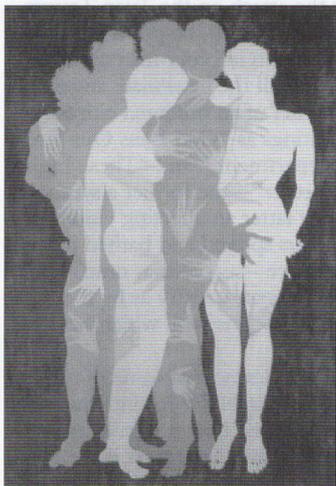
Vibrant red, pink, purple, and blue hues emphasize

the graceful contours of Okamura's slender, Botticelli-like female nudes, which take on more classical qualities now that they are depicted as disparate entities in most of his paintings. Yet the notion of connection is still present in Showa Okamura's vision, as indicated by the silhouetted hands that seem to appear from nowhere to tenderly embrace his sinuously silhouetted nudes.

—Noah Klein



Gabriele Stieghorst



Showa Okamura



Cornelia Hammans



Margret Ott



Eleonora von Poschinger

another work, a visceral red hue is employed by the artist to create a central shape that could allude to an elemental vaginal symbol on a fleshy pink ground. Here, as in all of her paintings, Margret Ott relies on the sheer force of the authoritative painterly gesture, as much as the innate tactility of the materials themselves, to convey a primal power that makes her paintings resonate with a host of possible meanings for the viewer.

Eleonora von Poschinger employs the

Neven Kezich's Color and Structure

Few artists today apply the exacting standards of the Bauhaus to their work, although the teaching strategies of Josef Albers and Lazlo Moholy-Nagy have exerted a tremendous influence on Minimalism and other contemporary art movements.

During its fourteen year existence, before its last director, the architect Ludwig Mies van der Rohe, was forced to dissolve the school in 1933, under pressure from the National Socialists who had seized power in Germany just a few months before, one of the greatest accomplishments of the school was the parity that it promoted between architecture, design, craft, and fine art.

As an architect, trained at the School of Architecture in Sarajevo, Croatia, where he was born, Neven Kezich was naturally attracted to the philosophy of the Bauhaus when he turned to painting, particularly the notion that "in order to understand the creative process, you have to gain knowledge of a trade, whether it is modeling with wood, glass, cement or any other material."

The results of what Kezich refers to as his "research on the 'fluidity' of materials" not only produced excellent results for several design projects but led to some of the ideas explored in his recent exhibition of paintings at Agora Gallery, 415 West Broadway. Kezich's exhibition was entitled "Shaping

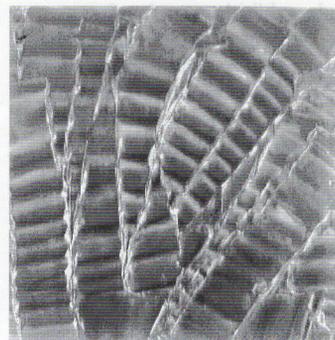
Colors," for one of his primary concerns as an artist is the ideal marriage of form and color. He achieves this by working in monochrome wall reliefs which afford him the opportunity of extending the flat surface into three-dimensional space by what he calls "sculpting with color."

Since each color has its own "frequency," according to Kezich, it can be matched with a particular shape to bring about the chromatic and formal synthesis that he endeavors to create. Texture plays an important role in achieving this synthesis, and Kezich has found liquefied plaster compound to be the ideal substance for achieving the tactile qualities that imbue color with material weight and lend his reliefs their impressive physical presence.

"The motion represented in plaster should comply with a certain hue," Kezich states, so he usually employs only one hue, unless he feels in a particular case that it is necessary to "use shades just to accent the flow."

For the viewer, however, the proof of Kezich's success in such "research" is in the paintings themselves, which are both impressive and imposing, with their vibrant hues and variously ridged and scored surfaces, which emphasize the heft that the artist gives to color to unite it with form.

In one work, the color blue, a favorite hue



"Abyss II"

of Yves Klein, an artist who inspired Kezich early on, is given a powerful physical presence with juicy textured strokes; in another qualities of red are explored through the juxtaposition of tactile vertical and horizontal stripes; In yet another, the succulence of violet is embodied in a surface of mesh-like textures dissected by two bold diagonal divisions.

By bringing a sculptural dimension to color field painting Neven Kezich extends the possibilities of both Minimalism and Color Field painting in a manner that suggests he may play a prominent role in the ongoing development of postmodern abstraction. —Jorge Santiago

Dennis Clive: The Fighter Plane as Fetish Object

Even those who, like this reviewer, had little interest in model airplanes as a child, should find themselves enchanted by the exhibition "The Players: Ceramic Sculpture" by the widely exhibited artist Dennis Clive, at Allan Stone Gallery, 113 East 90th Street, through June 13.

In fact, those of us who did not grow up obsessed with the fighter planes of World War II will perhaps be even more surprised by their beauty—at least as Clive introduces them to us in his beautifully crafted, vibrantly colored ceramic pieces.

Although born in Niagara Falls, New York, Clive now resides in northern California, and his work, which merges Pop with West Coast Funk, has been termed "Prop Art." Thus it seems only fitting that the centerpiece of the exhibition is a huge ceramic wall sculpture of a propeller called "The Big Spin," its three black and yellow spokes flaring out dynamically from its bullet-shaped nose cone.

Like the late Robert Arneson, who Clive calls his "spiritual mentor," as well as that other great West Coast funkmeister William T. Wiley, Clive combines obsessive craftsmanship with personal fantasy. For a good part of his career he was obsessed with automobiles, but with the present series he decided that he "wanted to tackle something more serious or meaningful than



P-51/"ACE'S/The EQUALIZER" (detail), 1999, ceramic, 31" x 82" x 70"

cars." The World War II fighter planes seemed a logical subject, since they symbolized to him "the most monumental event of the twentieth century." But even while replicating the flying machines in accurate detail, Clive invests them with subtle avian, as well as avian, characteristics, saying, "I wanted all of them to be the size of raptors, like falcons or hawks, so you can relate to them like real birds of prey."

The degree to which Clive related to the pieces in this exhibition as something more than works of art—perhaps as pawns in an inner war game entertained as an aspect of their creation—is reflected in his working process. For Clive created the series in opposing pairs, working simultaneously on

the Spitfire replica called "Over Dover" and Messerschmitt 109 effigy called "Sanguine Seed," much as a preadolescent baby boomer might have matched up models of those American and German rivals in mock conflict.

As with all significant visual art, however, the final success of the pieces rests on their aesthetic qualities, and these are plentiful. As David Colman pointed out in an excellent essay on Clive's work, he stretches clay "beyond its normal elasticity" to make "these warbirds gestate from mechanical to organic, from detailed to deific."

To which one might only add that the stresses that Clive's methods put on the skin of the clay, with its wrinkles and fleshy puckers, contrasted with the glossy shine on the surface after it is fired, painted, and glazed results in a finish so sensuous as to verge on fetish.

Along with sculptures of planes ranging in wingspan from two to seven feet, the exhibition includes a series of small ceramic wall panels of various military insignia in which finish and fetish come to the forefront and provide sufficient pleasure in their own right. These panels, with their succulent surfaces and deliciously brilliant colors, function as exquisite little paintings, revealing yet another facet of Dennis Clive's art.

—Ed McCormack

GALLERY@STUDIO 15

Jill Sanchia Cowen and Fay Isik-Wyatt: Intimate Visions

Recent solo exhibitions at Artsforum Gallery, 24 West 57th Street, featured works on paper by two gifted artists whose intimate approaches presented refreshing contrasts to much that is overblown and vacuous in contemporary art.

Jill Sanchia Cowen

That Jill Sanchia Cowen is an art historian and has taught courses in architecture and Asian art, and that one of her own teachers was a Chinese master of brush painting, are all relevant factors in the development of specific features of her watercolors. Cowen's semi-abstract compositions show her scholarly awareness of her artistic precursors—particularly Cubism and Mondrian. Clustered city buildings are a frequent inspiration for her compositions, and her brush work is notable for a freshness and freedom not frequently seen in western art.

At the same time, Cowen is very much a western artist in that she eschews the subtle monotonies of classic Chinese ink painting for a full spectrum of vibrant hues more reminiscent of the Fauves. These she employs with exuberant expressiveness in compositions that range freely between the representational and the abstract. Her two distinctly different modes are united, however, by the neo-cubistic structuring that she employs with equal effectiveness in compositions based on architectural subjects, oddly squared off, stylized figures, or luminous, predominantly rectangular color areas.

In "Spring," brilliant color areas suggest a sunsplashed skyline looming over a river

evoked with a few swift blue strokes. Here, as well as in the atmospheric urban nocturne "Lights at Midnight," Cowen's telegraphic take on the city has a vigor reminiscent of that other consummate watercolorist John Marin. Anomalously monochromatic, "Night Fantasy" depicts a row of city buildings in more specific terms, while "The Bride" and "Sir Edward" both conjure witty figures with brilliant blocks of color combined with wiggly strokes.

In paintings such as "Urban Fields" and "Stained Glass," however Jill Sanchia Cowen liberates herself from subject matter altogether to concentrate on compositions in which glowing patches of translucent aquarelle arrive at a transcendent chromatic chamber music, at once intimate and possessed of a modest grandeur.

Fay Isik-Wyatt

Fay Isik-Wyatt works in watercolor, pencil, and technical pen on watercolor paper, creating compositions of an almost compulsive intricacy, in which fragmented figures, often derived from antiquity, are set afloat in delicately stippled fields whose swirling configurations suggest cellular activity.

Indeed, Isik-Wyatt, who is presently at work on a sculptural commission for a medical facility, frequently explores the relationship between art and healing particularly in her "Regeneration" and "Healing Arts" series in her exhibition "Cross-Sections," at Artsforum Gallery. In these exquisitely detailed drawings, partially eroded ancient statues figure prominently. Given their weightless transparency, these images of the incomplete human form, whether

nude or cloaked in filmy garments, appear to signify simultaneously symbols of anatomical debilitation and visions ghostly ephemerality. Thus, the term "regeneration" may be interpreted here as meaning the dispersal and reformation of the body in some more metaphysical form, as much as simply the end result of the healing process.

Either way, the figurative elements in Isik-Wyatt's paintings serve as visual anchors and compositional focal points, and thematic symbols amid a cosmos of swarming organic activity. Her spare use of translucent color also serves to enhance the sense of complex layering that make her labor-intensive drawings so richly evocative. In "Healing Arts II," these take the form of green and vegetative shapes wreathing the ethereal face of a young boy resembling an ancient Egyptian funeral portrait. Suspended in space, his delicate, spectral visage confronts the viewer, as though through layers of time, laureled for all Eternity.

By contrast, in works such as "Trees of Epressus" and "Regeneration IV," the colored shapes that appear tangential elsewhere consume the entire picture space, banishing all figurative elements in abstract compositions as intricately wrought and spiritually suggestive as Australian aboriginal designs. However, that the drawings of Fay Isik-Wyatt spring freely from a sophisticated contemporary consciousness, rather than being ritualized relics of an indigenous tradition, makes them all the more fascinating.

—Maurice Taplinger

MONTAGUE ART @ TAG Gallery

INTERNATIONAL GROUP EXHIBITION

Exhibition: Artists:

June 4 - 15, 2002

Tuesday - Saturday

10AM - 5PM

Cornelia Hammans

Showa Okamura

Margret Ott

Opening Reception:

Tuesday, June 4, 2002

6-8PM

Eleonora von Poschinger

Gabriele Stieghorst

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Freedom and Control in the Ink Paintings of Sogen Hirano

One of the ongoing challenges faced by Japanese artists concerned with preserving aspects of their cultural heritage while making a contribution to contemporary art is how to strike a precise balance between tradition and innovation.

Sogen Hirano, an artist from Tokyo, whose work can be seen at Cast Iron Gallery, 159 Mercer Street, from July 18 through August 3, employs the traditional medium of sumi ink on paper, yet achieves a gestural immediacy which transcends cultural categories. Thus, while those conversant with Japanese painting and calligraphy can undoubtedly uncover deep layers of meaning in Hirano's work, there is certainly much about it that admirers of western painting, particularly Abstract Expressionism, will find appealing as well.

Hirano appears to have achieved his own unique synthesis by virtue of a fusion of line and form that combines elements of eastern and western composition in a manner that can be compared in some regards to how the American painter Mark Tobey turned his study of Chinese calligraphy to his own purposes. Conversely, Hirano adopts elements of western composition as an armature for a more authentically eastern linearity. Rather than working against the austere whiteness of the bare paper, in the familiar Asian manner, he often tints his grounds with pale blue washes to which he adds calligraphic strokes in either black sumi ink or darker blue watercolor.

When working with black ink he often layers and loops his lines to create intricate, net-like configurations of interpenetrating space that can be likened to the dripped forms of Pollock or the sinuous

linear networks in Brice Marden's "Cold Mountain" series. In these works the shapes are generally centered in the composition, while in the pieces composed with blue lines against a paler blue ground the forms tend to billow out to the edges of the paper, filling the composition in a manner more akin to western abstraction.

Also of considerable interest are a series of paintings in which Hirano works with white lines and forms against a black ground. These paintings are characterized by especially buoyant pictorial rhythms and a sweeping lyricism. The lines swerve curvaceously to create sensually flowing shapes, suggestive of the human figure, floral forms, and whatever else the active imagination can conjure from their swiftly sketched contours. Yet no definite meanings can finally be consigned to them that would limit their abstract autonomy or stifle their exhilarating velocity.

More traditional in attack and technique are a series of paintings in which spare shapes are laid down in sumi ink against the white of the paper. Here, Hirano employs the subtle gray tonalities that traditional Asian painters achieve with diluted ink washes. However, the shapes that flow from the brush, while calligraphic, do not appear to be based on existing characters. Rather, they are spontaneous abstract explorations of forms set afloat in space, their bold execution evident in every stroke. These are images of frozen movement, their immediacy enhanced by streaks and splashes that trail from the larger forms, documenting the flight of the artist's hand in the act of creating them.

Like many contemporary painters in the west, Sogen Hirano is concerned with



"Untitled," 2000

the excitement of mark-making as a distinct activity. Indeed, his work is in many ways more similar to the ink drawings of the French poet and painter Henri Michaux than to traditional sumi painting, both in the unpredictable freedom of the compositions and the momentum that the shapes generate. The paintings are frisky and joyous, yet never frivolous, for Hirano invests them with depth and meaning by virtue of his remarkable gestural authority.

For all their spontaneity, nothing about these paintings seems random or reckless. Each stroke is precisely placed and the cumulative effect is exquisitely controlled. At the same time, each line bespeaks a joyous freedom, and it is this dichotomy and the mysterious alchemy by which it is resolved that makes the paintings of Sogen Hirano so exquisitely enjoyable.

—Jeffrey Dalton

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New York Notebook

The View from Kate Millett's Window



We paid a visit to Kate Millett's loft at 295 Bowery the other day to talk to her about her upcoming exhibition at Noho Gallery, in Chelsea, which will be all about her struggle to save the building that houses both her studio and living quarters from the wrecker's ball.

Millett, who was an artist before she became a feminist legend, met us at the top of a narrow, rickety staircase. At 68, she is as striking as she was in 1970, when her first book "Sexual Politics" shook up the best-seller list and Alice Neel painted her portrait for the cover of Time magazine. Her long hair is now gray but her eyes still blaze fiercely under bushy black brows. She

also still has the best set of real teeth we could ever recall seeing on an Irish-American person of her generation, and she grinned carnivorously when we told her so.

Before we rang her bell she had been grading papers for a course that she teaches at NYU and was happy to take a break, she said graciously, showing us around.

Her light-filled studio is a veritable retrospective of her long career. On one wall were a group of large, framed drawings that illustrated her 1977 book *Sita*, a moving elegy for a former lover who committed suicide.

Voluptuous female forms evoked with a few spare strokes, they had the swift grace of the best Zen ink paintings. A long work table across the room was covered with large photographs of women bathing nude in a stream on Millett's farm in upstate New York. The pictures were part of a conceptual work with accompanying texts called "Making Paradise."

"I'm fond of these pictures because the women in the landscape remind me of certain paintings by

Cezanne," Millett said. And indeed they did—only here joyously liberated from what art historians refer to as *The Male Gaze*.

Other works were more in the mode of Fluxus—the international avant garde movement of which Millett—along with Charlotte Moorman, Yoko Ono, Nam June Paik, and others—is a member in good standing: a large paintbox filled with marbles, a symbolic portrait of the artist ("since some people have been saying for a long time that I'm losing my marbles"); small woolen sweaters draped over saw-horses with their arms outstretched as in a crucifixion, commemorating children who died in the Great Irish

Famine; a tabletop juxtaposition of dainty, domestic teacups with a group photograph of soldiers that call to mind such memorable Millett pronouncements as: "The rationale which accompanies that imposition of male authority loosely referred to as 'the battle of the sexes' bears a certain resemblance to the formulas of nations at war, where any heinousness is justified on the grounds that the enemy is either an inferior species or really not human at all."

Now the forever embattled artist/activist, who obviously relishes a good fight, is at war with the forces of real estate, greed, and gentrification. The city, in cahoots with a big developer, wants to knock down her home and studio, displacing her and two other families of artists who inhabit 295 Bowery, as part of an insidious widespread plan to put up mostly market rate housing—presumably for the yuppies who are rapidly turning the entire Lower East Side into their own affluent playground.

Millett snorts gleefully at the inept bureaucratic buffoons sent by the city who "have not yet been able to serve me with papers properly, although they've tried several times, because they can't seem to find me!"

Despite her humor, however, this is a serious battle for the artist who says, "People think that I'm rich just because I'm famous. But my only real income is from teaching two lousy classes at NYU and selling the Christmas trees that I grow on my farm to my neighbors upstate. I stand out on the street and sell them one by one. They come by and say 'Hi, Kate, how's the crop this year?' And I listen to their troubles, cheer them up, and if I'm lucky they buy a tree."

While her own work and well-being hangs in the balance, Millett says it would also be a tragedy for the city and for women's history if she and her neighbors just stood by and allowed them to level 295 Bowery, since this is the building that once housed McGurk's Suicide Parlor, an infamous saloon and brothel where, in 1899, twelve teenage prostitutes killed themselves by drinking carbolic acid purchased from a nearby pharmacy. They did so, Millett says, in protest against their virtual enslavement by the dive's proprietor John McGurk, a member of the Tammany Hall General Committee. To commemorate the deaths of these unfortunate young women, and because it is believed that Eugene O'Neil based the setting for his most famous play, "The Iceman Cometh," on McGurk's saloon, many believe that 295 Bowery should be preserved as a landmark.

Kate Millett's exhibition will include detailed historical information about the site, as well as documents, photographs, and correspondence with the city of regarding its proposed destruction. Entitled "An Artist Contemplates the Loss of Her Studio," it can be seen at Noho Gallery, 530 West 25th Street, from June 25th through July 13th with a reception for the artist on Saturday June 29th from 4 to 6 PM.

Even as she fights for her home and studio, however, Kate Millett has not lost sight of the larger picture. Showing us another conceptual work in which two rows of old fashioned apothecary bottles arranged on a table represented

opposing armies, she spoke with dismay of how modern weaponry has changed the nature of warfare, saying, "Once it was men killing one another, but now women and children are the main casualties."

Yet the American people seem to have lost the will to protest, according to Millett. Where, she asked rhetorically, are the protesters today?—not the flag wavers, but the true patriots, like the ones who took to the streets in the 60s and 70s to protest against the Vietnam war, racism, sexism, and other problems in American society because they loved this country and wanted to make it better?

As she approaches her seventh decade, Kate Millett has not mellowed. She is still every inch the feisty activist, angered by how the mass media still objectifies, manipulates and enslaves women no less than John McGurk did, and scornful of the conformity that would make so many of her fellow citizens follow a bumbler of a president who was not even properly elected to the brink of destruction.

At the same time, in social relations she is gracious, a trait she traces to her conventional Irish Catholic upbringing in Minneapolis, and insisted over our polite protests that we take home some of the surplus silverware she had salvaged from the rubble of one of the many restaurant supply companies on the Bowery.

At least one of us was not sure of the politically correct etiquette—does a gentleman offer to assist a lady feminist with heavy lifting?—when Millett rummaged in her kitchenette and dragged out a big box cardboard box of silverware.

When we continued to assure her that we already had plenty of knives and forks, she said, "Well, at least take this little coffee pot. It's the perfect size for making two cups."

And we gratefully accepted the found object. Who could refuse an original Kate Millett?

Recycling Art Povera

We have always been impressed by the industry of those homeless people, as well as those domiciled but desperate individuals, some quite elderly, who eke out a marginal existence collecting and redeeming empty bottles and cans. Seeing them around the city, hauling their bulky hoards through the mean streets in rattling bags on their backs or in rickety shopping carts, we have often wondered if we would be quite so spirited and resourceful in the same situation. One thing is certain: No one can call these people lazy; no one can say that they are unwilling to work for a living.

Thus we find it despicable for more reasons than one that our new mayor, Bloomberg—the same cavalier billionaire who also wants to limit library services, though he himself has never suffered for want of a book or a buck—plans to do away with this cottage industry of the destitute by cutting back on recycling.

By the same token, we can only commend the example of aesthetic ecology set by the participants in the excellent exhibition "Art from Detritus, 2002," which took place recently at John Jay College of Criminal Justice, 445 West 59th Street. The show was curated by the estimable Vernita N'Cognita (aka Vernita Nemecc), an artist who attended her first recycling conference in 1993 and was inspired to found the movement by staging the first Detritus Art exhibition in Portland, Oregon, the following year. Since, she has mounted more than a dozen exhibitions of "art created from trash," as she puts it with a refreshing lack of euphemism, in Kansas



Detritus Art mover and sbaker Vernita N'Cognita

City, Pittsburgh, and New York City. A self-confessed pack-rat who claims that she cannot bring herself to discard anything, N'Cognita works in a studio in lower Manhattan piled high with "security envelopes with patterned insides, dead roses, cat food cans, broken goblets, plastic packaging forms" and all manner of other...well, garbage that she transforms through her peculiar form of aesthetic alchemy into lyrical, even beautiful, works of art.

Perhaps because she is also a dancer and a performance artist, Vernita N'Cognita's pieces are especially graceful and poetic. Her contribution to the most recent Detritus exhibition, for example, took the form of a long, vertical collage created from pasted-together sections of patterned security envelopes onto which she had inked fragmented images of mountains, birds, and human figures, creating the effect of a rumpled Chinese scroll. Like all of N'Cognita's work, it was simultaneously elegant and funky.

William J. Whalen's large assemblage "Serve Yourself Jesus" was another high point of the show, comprised of a gallon wine jug affixed to an auto radiator containing a crucified heart, a goblet, and a plate of communion wafers. Like such California beatnik funk assemblageists as Edward Keinholtz and Bruce Connors—who were, in fact, precursors of the Detritus movement, along with the Art Povera artists of Italy—Whalen's found object pieces are marked by an iconoclastic wit. Here, the piece de resistance is the spigot which, if the gallon jug were filled, one could presumably use to serve oneself a cup of wine symbolizing the blood of Jesus.

Even a partial listing of some of the works in this show reveals the wide variety of materials that Detritus artists transform in innovative and vital works of art:

Briana Babani showed an amazing untitled structure created with myriad bits of tightly rolled tape combined to create a uniform, cell-like surface as intricate as a honeycomb that bowled

us over for its sheer compulsiveness.

May DeViney juxtaposed shoe forms, their bottoms covered weirdly with astro turf, a badge hanger, and feathers to create a whimsical configuration called "Digital Vision."

Marlene Bremer titled her piece "Brassiere," since it was created with recycled bras. The literalness of the title, however, belied the mystery of the piece, with its poetic suggestions of a lacy, exotic flower—perhaps of the man-eating variety?

Cathy Hunter celebrated a well known woman sculptor of the 1960s who opted out of art world stardom to pursue her unique vision in seclusion, in an impressive work in corrugated cardboard entitled "Homage to Lee Bontecou."

Fred Gutzeit used a discarded work glove as the canvas for a meticulously painted neoclassical fantasy entitled "Work Glove Dreaming."

Alan Rosner played off the kinship between barbed wire and cactus thorns to create a striking visual/material metaphor in his found metal sculpture "How the West was Won."

Ed Herman put together random objects, including steel pipes, a plumbing piece, and a large clamp to create a ruggedly impressive wall sculpture called "Ecco Homo XIX." In her piece entitled "Nesting Habit," Stephanie Rose Bird evoked the sense of an alternative ecosystem in her fancifully fragile assemblage of vegetable stalks, gum wrappers, letters, shredded paper, and shells.

And Kazuko Miyamoto made what could be construed as the quintessential Detritus statement (albeit with shades of Neo-Dada) in "Homemade," a three part sculpture created exclusively with crumpled and tied plastic garbage bags.

"Artists have always recycled, but now they do so with a greater consciousness of the public message conveyed by their choice of materials: paper, plastic, glass, steel and aluminum—materials we used to throw away," Vernita N' Cognita has stated.

But that our elected officials could be half as creative—not to mention public-spirited—when it comes to solving some of the environmental and human issues that plague our city.

Cast Iron Reveries

Before the real estate interests began to divine dollar signs in the graffiti on its crumbling walls and gave it a chic new name, Soho began its rebirth as a neighborhood created by artists in a district of littered, truck-choked industrial streets and failing factories. When artists in their eternal search for large, cheap lofts—a term that has become a laughable oxymoron in recent years—started moving into the area in the sixties, they were not displacing anybody. Rather, they were intrepid pioneers, roughing it, carving makeshift living and working spaces out of often even haz- ardously decrepit old manufacturing buildings in an out-of-the-way area of the city, where not only did nobody else live but nobody else wanted to live. Far from being filled with fancy restaurants and gourmet health stores and elegant boutiques, as it is today, Soho back then was a desolate place where one could not buy a quart of milk or a loaf of bread. For that matter, there were hardly even any galleries back then, just a few scattered artists and their families, who had to go out of the neighborhood to stock up on everyday necessities, even as they brought new life to a once dying place.

By now, of course, its an entirely different story. In the intervening decades an entire generation of artist's children has grown up in Soho, some becoming artists themselves themselves, with a unique view of their old neighborhood. Among them is Himiko Joseph, who has exhibited her work at the Brooklyn Museum, among other venues, and is also the director of Cast Iron Gallery, located at 159 Mercer Street, the building in which she grew up.

Joseph, whose painter father Ichiro Ohta and haiku poet mother Fusako Ohta, were among the original Soho pioneers, recently mounted an exhibition at the gallery as an affectionate affirmation of her old neighborhood and in the city at large in the wake of the September 11 terrorist attack, which affected the entire downtown area directly because of its proximity to the devastated Twin Towers. Entitled "Native New Yorker," the show featured the work of Kirsten Mogensen, Ingrid Cusson, and Ari Patz, three neighborhood photographers whose families Himiko Joseph has known since childhood, spotlighting each artist's "personal relationship with New York City and its inhabitants."

Ari Patz, for example, focuses in on what Joseph refers to as "the old Soho," the one that both he and she remember from childhood. This was a place where atmospheric remnants of the neighborhood's industrial origins remained, even as it began its evolution as a center of art and fashion. One of Patz's pictures gives the broken base of an old streetlight the natural resonance of a tree stump; another captures the odd beauty of a bent ladder leading down from a fire escape; yet another makes white graffiti on the cast iron facade of a typical Soho building artful by virtue of the photograph's selective vision. In these and other pictures, Ari Patz gives us an intimate picture of the particular details that constitute a child's eye-view of one's familiar surroundings: the rubble, the cracks in the sidewalk, and all else that makes a place peculiarly evocative.

Ingrid Cusson is a "double-take" artist, in that her pictures tend to provoke surprise and often a



Ari Patz



Ingrid Cusson



Kirsten Mogensen

smile. In one, for example, a baby with deformed hands appears to be being dangled rather carelessly upside down in front of a large, bored-looking dog. One's initial reaction is shock, but it quickly gives way to relief and amusement when it becomes clear that it's actually a baby doll being

offered to the lazily unresponsive dog by a small child whose hands and arms enter the picture from the left side.

The majority of Cusson's other pictures, including one of an adolescent boy in a windbreaker posing proudly with his pitbull, explore the relationships between various New Yorkers and their canine companions. It is Ingrid Cusson's habit to travel via the subway system throughout various Manhattan neighborhoods and areas of the outer-lying boroughs chronicling the daily lives of their diverse inhabitants, and she does so with an eye for the telling gesture and moment that makes it possible to compare her to a kinder, gentler Diane Arbus.

Kirsten Mogensen tends to select for her subjects the more atmospheric and poetic aspects of urban life. Her pictures are often so soft-focused as to verge on the abstract, as seen in one brooding vision of a water tower atop a building silhouetted against a nocturnal sky with lighted windows glowing blurrily in a smaller structure nearby. Mogensen also seeks out those endangered traces of nature that manage to survive in the midst of the great city, such as birds or scrawny trees in Williamsburg or on the Lower East Side. Mogensen invests such subjects with a poignant poetry that reminds us of how precarious our own existence often is, an awareness that none of us can very well avoid dwelling upon from time to time, since the events of September 11th shook our complacency so profoundly.

Each of these three photographic artists, in his or her own way, celebrates both the strengths and fragility of our city and its inhabitants in a way that can be deeply moving if we take the trouble to think about what they are trying to show us. We can only be grateful to the curator Himiko Joseph for being inspired to bring these neighbors of hers together and offering us the opportunity to do so.

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Drama and Diversity Enliven the CLWAC's 2002 Members Exhibition

Featuring seventy works from seventeen states, the 2002 Members Exhibition of the Catharine Lorillard Wolfe Art Club, seen recently at Broome Street Gallery, 498 Broome Street, was a comprehensive survey of painting and sculpture by women artists of all styles and tendencies.

Although many of the artists were from other parts of the country, several familiar New York artists were also included. Rose Weinstock is well known for her paintings in which windows are a recurring motif. Here, Weinstock showed an intimate oil pastel in which a precisely placed utility pole, framed by a window, had the austere abstract presence of one of Barnett Newman's singular stripes.

Frequently exhibited New York sculptor Jean Kroeber, known for her graceful feminine imagery, was well represented by works in both marble and wood. Kroeber's walnut wood sculpture of a slender, sinuously elongated figure in a clinging, ankle-length dress was especially outstanding in its formal simplicity.

Another familiar local sculptor, Amy Unfried, showed a bronze of a little girl with a butterfly perched on one hand and a bird on her other forearm. Unfried's sculpture was as appealing for its command of space as for its subject matter.

Besides being the president of the CLWAC, Eleanor Meier is an accomplished watercolorist. In this show, Meier's still life "Old Bean Pots" demonstrates her ability to capture the distinct qualities of various surfaces in considerable detail without sacrificing the luminous freshness peculiar to her medium. By contrast, Holly Meeker Rom, another officer of the club who was instrumental in organizing the exhibition, showed her own approach to the medium. Rom's watercolor of three figures relaxing on a beach was notable for its boldly simplified composition and integration of the figures and their surroundings in clear color areas. Yet another way with watercolor was seen in the work of Jane Stoddard, whose skillful image of a front porch with rocking chairs, a flag, and other folksy elements, revealed her ability to make light and saturated areas of shadow illuminate the poetry of a precise moment in time.

Portraiture, a somewhat neglected art in recent years, was much in evidence here. One example was Gabriela Dellosso's large realist oil of an imposing matron in Spanish dress, wielding a fan with the imperious air of one of Goya's contessas. Others were: May Rolstad Trien's exquisite little pencil drawing of a woman's head captured with classical grace; Jeanette Martone's large drawing of two African American youngsters poised against a rough urban wall, rendered in detail with snapshot immediacy; and Lucille Paulsen's tiny oil portrait of a young girl, par-



Jean Kroeber



Gabriela Dellosso

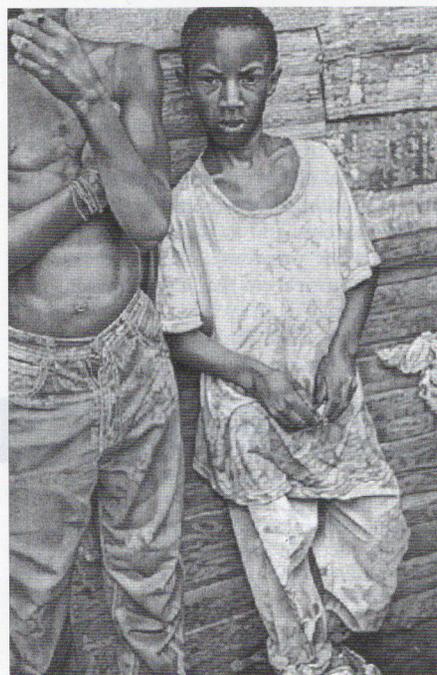
ticular and contemporary, yet rendered with an unearthly purity reminiscent of a Botticelli angel.

Portraiture also played a part in an oil by Susan Elmes of two women and a man in a Vermeer-like interior. The sense of triangular tensions, of a hidden narrative, invests Elmes' painting with a drama that is enhanced by its taut pictorial organization.

Landscapes and cityscapes were also well represented. Lorrie B. Turner's rugged little pastel of a verdant field, a falling fence, and distant hills captured an idyllic pastoral mood, even while respectfully preserving a specific sense of place. In a small, evocative oil, Ginger Bowen, achieved an impressively coherent composition by virtue of her subtle use of color harmonies to integrate a stucco structure and its natural surroundings. A sense of nature's richness was evoked in Rae



Susan Elmes



Jeanette Martone

Smith's vibrant pastel of a lush Italian garden where delicate pink flowers bloom and a picturesque little path winds through trees and sun-dappled foliage.

Urban subjects, too, were approached from various directions, as seen in Ruth Rieber's strong color woodblock print of figures juxtaposed with a wall covered by artfully scrawled graffiti; a characteristically lively photo realist Soho Street scene by Ruth Newquist; Janet Indick's abstract assemblage, interpreting the vertical thrust of a city skyline with a variety of cardboard tubes, torn strips of paper, and reflective surfaces.

These and other works, far too numerous to describe in this space, made for a memorable exhibition by this highly respected organization of women artists.

—J. Sanders Eaton

The Spiritual Realism of James Sepyo

On week night evenings in Brooklyn Heights, shortly after dusk and with a view of the twinkling lights of the Brooklyn Bridge just outside of his window, the artist James Sepyo's muse awakens. Unlike most artists who depend on natural light to complement their canvases and cease painting after sunset, Sepyo keeps musicians' nocturnal hours when it comes to his craft.

Sepyo has learned to fuse evening shade and moonlight to give his paintings what he calls a "twilight beauty." This method of painting helps to emphasize the human characteristics of plant life in his "Flowers to Consciousness" series that dates back to 1969.

Having exhibited in Tokyo, Japan during the mid 1980's, one would think that Sepyo had been a denizen and protégé in the Asian world, from the manner by which he applies Far Eastern principles into his daily life and surroundings. Long before feng shui was introduced into popular conversations, this Harlem born artist has understood how a healthy environment can compliment the creative process.

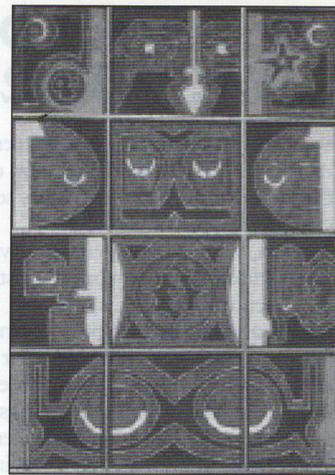
A pictorial diary covers his loft walls. The jazz of Branford Marsalis and Nubian Jasmine incense add to the atmosphere. Sepyo's work provides a visual discourse about a historical era that has left a rich cultural legacy to the world.

During the Civil Rights Movement, Sepyo along with fourteen other neighborhood

artists, formed a Harlem based artist organization known as Weusi. Originally Weusi supported itself with member contributions and later evolved into a corporation that vied for grants. Its mission was to operate as a school providing opportunity through self-help and cultural awareness. With the support of Weusi, these prolific students confronted the rapid social changes across America. They defined their artistic identities while using their paintbrushes as bullhorns.

Sepyo's social consciousness is exemplified by his choice of culturally significant subject matter. The signature piece that epitomizes the ancestral motifs and African symbolism series that was indicative of the work he produced during the early 1970's, has been housed by the Schomburg Center for Cultural Research on West 135th Street in Manhattan, within their Art and Artifacts collection. Entitled "The Rights of Passage," Sepyo pays homage to the artisans who produce stories and life's lessons on stone by creating a stone textured canvas. The subject of this painting, in acrylic mixed medium, is based on the West African story of the bull of the Cameroon. This piece depicts a young person leaving the village to wander and explore the outside world, and upon return, being honored with a celebration to signify the transition from childhood into adulthood.

James Sepyo's spiritual realism, can be experienced in his stone textured canvas



James Sepyo

entitled "The Family Tree." This painting was realized in the late 1970's, however, it is influenced by the painted stone relief work of the ancient Egyptians. Incorporating a sense of hierarchical scale, Sepyo imparts a sense of the natural flow and balance within the family unit.

In a purely Socratic manner, James Sepyo poses the question, "What is art if not the soul's response to life's beating pulse?" It is imperative to first find an answer for oneself before the journey that is art can begin.

—Christopher Boswell

Christopher Boswell writes about emerging and established artists in the U.S. and abroad.

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Jacqueline Politis-Jobin: Visions of Nocturnal Cafes

If genre is an endangered species of painting, one can only suspect it is because the modern world has been so fragmented and deconstructed by the intrusions of media and other highly kinetic distractions, which shatter linear perceptions like the strobe lights in a discotheque, that it is difficult for many artists to find the means to piece back together the more serene and sensible aspects of our everyday existence. Thus, few artists today even attempt to depict scenes detailing the lives of ordinary people in the manner of the Dutch masters of the seventeenth century, although certain aspects of our lives have not changed all that significantly that it would not be possible or worthwhile to revive genre painting as a viable contemporary enterprise.

Indeed, Jacqueline Politis-Jobin, a painter from France who exhibited recently at Montserrat Gallery, 584 Broadway, blithely proceeds as though it were the most natural thing in the world to paint such scenes. And she succeeds admirably in creating compositions that, while somewhat anomalous in the context of the international art world—or, to be more precise, what we like to think of as “mainstream” art—exert a unique fascination.

Perhaps the fact that she is an autodidact, entirely self-taught, and has developed independently, un beholden to the stifling “sophistication” that supposedly separates schooled artists from so-called outsiders, accounts in part for Politis-Jobin’s intrepid refusal to desist from depicting scenes that by unspoken yet tacit agreement should not be possible today, even given the generally permissive ground rules of postmodern figuration. At very least, according to the orthodox critical criteria, one should treat such scenes with a modicum of self-protective ironic distance. Politis-Jobin, however, ignores these academic notions disguised as avant garde attitudes, preferring to plunge right into the fray of everyday life. And it is all for the better in terms of the humanistic and atmospheric qualities that make her oils on canvas so evocative.

Looking at her paintings, in fact, one begins to realize how much of life, its *joie de vivre*, character and color, has been banished needlessly from so much figurative art, and how such self-conscious avoidance of what some may consider “old-fashioned” subjects has impoverished contemporary culture.

What Politis-Jobin seems to know is that no human activity that continues from century to century can be anything but eternal, and this is especially true of the tendency of people to gather in cafes and other public places to eat, drink, and be merry. Consequently, such activities are as valid a subject for art as when Bruegel took such delight in the celebrations of the peasantry,

or when Renoir captured a more genteel but no less vibrant segment of society in his “Luncheon of the Boating Party.”

Such subjects never really go out of style, and Jacqueline Politis-Jobin celebrates them with the urbane eye of a painterly flaneur, letting her brush take leisurely note of the details of dress and facial expressions in her multi-figure compositions, whose complexity and taut pictorial organization leaves no doubt that, while self-taught, she is a con-



“The Melissia’s café at night (Attica, Greece)”

sumately sophisticated painter in her own manner.

One sees this sophistication to special advantage in the canvas entitled “The Melissia’s Café at Night (Attica, Greece).” Here, Politis-Jobin depicts several figures, most of them male, involved in an animated conversation in the outdoor garden of the café. The artist’s handling of the nocturnal scene, particularly the play of light and shadow on the faces and figures of the men, some seated at tables, others standing, reminds one of both van Gogh’s dark early work “The Potato Eaters” and any number of paintings by Georges de La Tour.

The latter painter’s French classicism and handling of indirect lighting from a candle or other source to reduce masses to simple, contrasting shapes is recalled by Politis-Jobin’s treatment of the massed figures at and around the table in the foreground of her painting. The bold strokes with which she captures the features and the gestures of the figures, however, is more reminiscent of those in the aforementioned picture by van Gogh. For, like van Gogh, Politis-Jobin has the impressive ability to depict a scene in a detail without allowing her brush work to become finicky.

Here, she delineates the standing figure of the old man holding forth to the others of

various ages seated at the table with particular force. Her brush dwells affectionately on his lumpy cap, craggy profile, and shaggy mustache. She captures the definite gesture of his right hand as he extends it to make a point, while leaning forward with his other fist resting on his hip. He is obviously a man with definite opinions and the others view him with various degrees of interest and bemusement as they listen to him with expressions that suggest that they are receiving

his monologue with the proverbial “grain of salt.” The same might be said of two other men looking on from another table nearby. Although not participants in the one-way conversation, they can clearly hear it and are enjoying it from a slightly more detached perspective.

That we can infer such narrative meanings from the picture testifies to Politis-Jobin’s skill in capturing character and conveying subtle meanings through her depiction of

body language and gesture. However, her handling of light and shadow is equally important to the atmosphere and drama of the picture, as seen in the background figures, illuminated by the light pouring out of the café itself, which also plays upon the trees and foliage of the garden. Indeed, the entire scene is bathed in golden auras that gleam around the figures, the trees, the tables, and other components of the picture, creating rich chromatic effects that simultaneously evoke atmosphere and unify the composition.

In another painting entitled “Café on the Seashore at Night, Number 2,” Politis-Jobin depicts a nocturnal scene in which figures clustered in an outdoor café give way to a view of majestic mountains looming against the night sky above a body of water, the combination of figure groupings and an expansive landscape vista evoked in considerable detail displaying yet another facet of this artist’s pictorial complexity.

Here, as in several other paintings of subjects such as Greek women sewing and gossiping on their doorsteps, or people in a marketplace, Jacqueline Politis-Jobin reflects a variety of ordinary activities with a skill and sensitivity that ennobles our common humanity.

—Bela Miklos

The Art Studio Club of New York at Broome Street

One of the earliest and largest of the many group exhibitions that enliven the art scene leading into the Summer months is the 46th Annual Members Exhibition of the Art Studio Club of New York, at Broome Street Gallery, 498 Broome Street, from May 29 through June 16.

The range of work is unusually diverse, and one of the artists who exemplifies this diversity within her own oeuvre is Natalie Garfinkle, whose work ranges from neo-surrealist oils to domestic subjects, to art quilts such as "This is Your Life Crazy Quilt," an elaborately detailed visual autobiography.

Another versatile exhibitor is Phyllis J. Creore whose clay sculptures and pastels both deal with figurative themes. Although markedly different in medium and technique, both reveal the thorough knowledge of anatomy and sensitive emotional nuances that distinguish Creore as an artist.

While sculpture is all too often treated as a stepchild in many exhibitions, as "something one backs into while looking at paintings," as one critic notoriously put it, three dimensional works are given their proper due in this exhibition, and this review will follow suit:

Sybil Maimin's clay sculptures are comprised of strongly stylized forms that suggest all manner of things, from the human figure, to exotic musical instruments, to three dimensional Chinese characters. Finished after firing with oil paint rubbed into their surfaces, creating a rich patina, their interlocking shapes, according to Maimin, are concerned with "the tension between connection and separateness."

Robert Harmon's carved wood sculptures are especially exemplary for their formal complexity. Particularly impressive are a series of pieces in which simplified figures are juxtaposed with various primal symbols in a manner that suggests a sophisticated take on Mexican folk motifs.

Shirley Ginzberg is another gifted sculptor whose works in both wood and stone center on voluptuous forms. Whether carving or chiseling the human figure or inanimate objects such as oversize pears or apples, Ginzberg's pieces invariably explore the flowing, femininely sensual volumes and contours.

The full-length terracotta figures of Patricia Fabrizio also take their inspiration from feminine themes. In Fabrizio's pieces, however, the figures are usually either lithe young women or mature women, both equally lean and self-possessed in their sense of strength and empowerment.

Then there is Janice W. Baxter, whose large painted wood sculptures often seem to allude to the human figure but arrive at all manner of imaginative abstract configurations. Baxter is obviously more concerned with the formal thrust of her pieces than

with rendering the human form with any degree of realism; however, her sculptures evoke a strong sense of physical movement nonetheless.

That humor and significant form are not mutually exclusive is made delightfully clear in a sculpture by Dianne Marxe of a group of penguins striking poses not unlike those of a group of human commuters milling around in a train station.

Although the two tendencies are often thought to be opposed, the painter Anne Bookstein has been described as a "Romantic Impressionist," and that designation seems especially apt. For Bookstein's still life and figure paintings are distinguished not only by her vibrant evocation of natural light and color but also but also by a romantic sense of longing and nostalgia.

By contrast Dino Fabrizio, the director of the Fabrizio Art Studio, is a landscape painter whose solidly accomplished oils capture the play of light and shadow in natural settings with almost scientific accuracy. At the same time, however, Fabrizio's paintings of snowy woods, running brooks, and other landscape subjects are notable for his ability to create powerful, formal compositions from the abstract patterns that occur in nature.

Peggy Elting has her own distinctive approach to landscape painting in oils inspired by Summers on Long Island. Elting employs a particularly sunny palette to capture the colors and textures of grass, flowers, weathered rowboats, and sheds, among other simple subjects that evoke the magic of the everyday with exhilarating freshness and immediacy. Her pictures offer a restful respite, a vacation for the eyes.

Eleanor Goldstein's sense of landscape is more darkly visionary. Dramatic skies often dominate Goldstein's luminously glowing oils and pastels, which present a sense of nature transmogrified, of actual places filtered through the distorting lens of human consciousness with peculiar intensity. Nature to Goldstein is obviously a very subjective experience and this perspective enables her to depict its moods and movements in a strikingly poetic manner.

Gloria Trachtenberg is an intrepid colorist. In her oils of still life, landscape, floral, and animal subjects, Trachtenberg combines hot reds, pinks, and purples in concert with other vibrant hues to create dramatic chromatic contrasts that lend her pictures a vital energy.

Although space does not permit further description here, this exhibition also includes interesting works by Gerda Kominik, Suzanne Langle, P. Kimball Loewenberg, Mary L. Newman, Cali Gorevic, Yvette Newman, Inge Price, E. Marga Schlesinger, Hortense Zera, and Marianne Schnell, whose solo show is reviewed elsewhere in this issue.

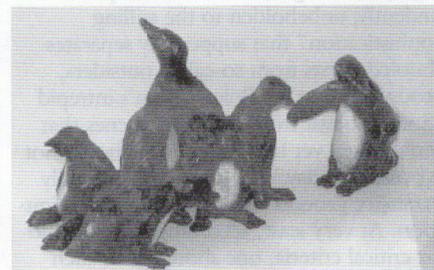
—Martin Parsons



Natalie Garfinkle



Gloria Trachtenberg

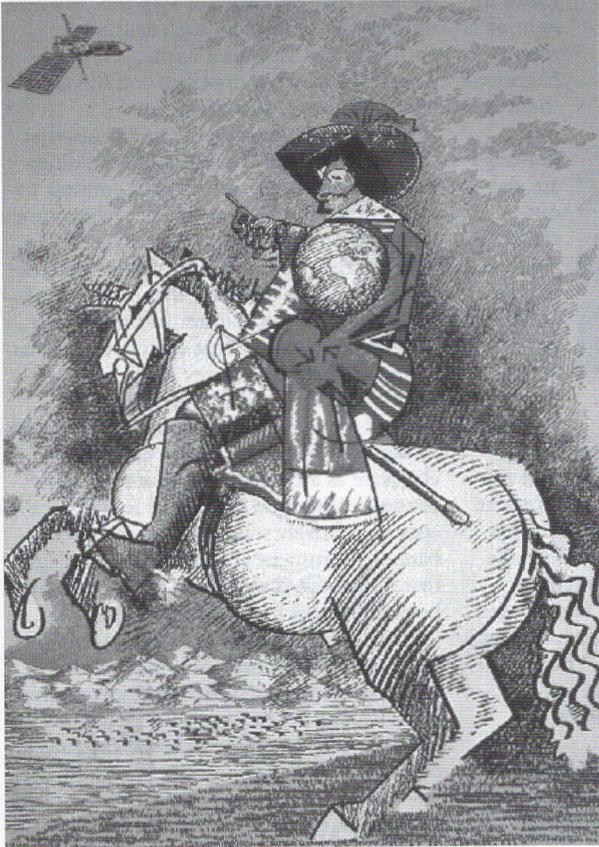


Dianne Marxe



Patricia Fabrizio

Ángel Aragonés: A Contemporary Spanish Painter Revamps Velazquez



"Cuestión de Estado"

The Spanish master Diego Velazquez has influenced a host of modern painters, ranging from the great American realist Eakins, who traveled to Madrid to study his court portraits, to Francis Bacon, whose "Study after Velazquez's Pope Innocent X" is one of the best known works by that British maestro of the macabre.

Few artists, however, have steeped themselves as thoroughly in Velazquez's oeuvre as his fellow countryman, the contemporary Spanish painter, sculptor, and printmaker Ángel Aragonés, whose brilliant exhibition of graphic works, "Amid the Light and Shadows of Velazquez" is on view at Jadite Galleries, 413 West 50th Street, from June 4 through 28.

Born in Madrid, where he studied at the Academy of Fine Arts and the Circle of Fine Arts, Aragonés has exhibited his work in prestigious galleries and museums throughout Europe and the U.S. and executed numerous major public sculpture commissions. But drawing is the firm armature upon which all of Aragonés' work rests. Whether the medium is painting, sculpture, or serigraphs—as seen here—Aragonés' fluid draftsmanship animates all of his creative projects.

Indeed, among contemporary artists

Aragonés' draftsmanly abilities can only be compared for their fluidity and incisiveness to the celebrated Mexican artist Jorge Luis Cuevas, who has also worked variations on themes from the Old Masters. While Cuevas is best known for his biting satire, however, Aragonés applies a broader, more sympathetic vision to his revampings of Velazquez, both in his depictions of the dwarfs and odd characters who served as the unofficial jesters of the Spanish court and in his stately equestrian portraits.

The vastly different approaches that we see in the work of modern Spanish masters as diverse as Picasso, Dali, and Miro also inform and fertilize the art of Ángel Aragonés, which forges modes of surrealism and abstraction to create a distinctive personal synthesis of the expressive and the formal. In his serigraphs, as in his paintings, he often distorts human

anatomy to create powerful plastic permutations at once poetic and aesthetically appealing.

In one serigraph, entitled "Que ves dos," for example, the head of a nobleman is centered within a triangular shape afloat on a pink ground. Although the source is presumably one of Velazquez's court portraits, the subject bears a striking resemblance to James Joyce, an effect enhanced by the fact that the glass of one of his spectacles is blackened, given our knowledge of the Irish author's problems with his vision. If indeed the resemblance is deliberate, it suggests a depth and diversity of references akin to the writings of Jorge Luis Borges.

In another print, "Margarita entre las cortinas y sus sombras," Aragonés exploits the abstract possibilities of a figure wearing one of those billowing hoop skirts familiar from such Velazquez masterpieces as "The Maids of Honor." Here, however, the figure and her costume are exploited to create a semi-abstract pink form that creates a powerful composition in concert with the plush red curtain that Aragonés places above the figure, apparently both as a bow to the opulence of the Spanish court and to enhance the innate theatri-

cality of the image.

Other prints, such as "Acedo entre el día y la noche" and "Cuestion de Estado" develop other motifs from Velazquez in areas of line and color that filter the figurative elements of the Old Masters through a sensibility informed by the contemporary cartoon and hard-edge abstraction.

The former serigraph depicts a man in period costume seated before a window which gives way to a romantic vista of mountains and starry sky, while the latter is an equestrian portrait, the rider resplendent in a feathered hat on a rearing steed. Both man and mount are angularly stylized, however, and in his hand the horseman brandishes what appears to be a cell phone, remote control, or other anomalous mechanical objects. Adding to the incongruity, another object resembling a satellite or spacecraft can be seen suspended in the sky above the horse and rider.

Like the American postmodern painter Archie Rand, Ángel Aragonés has the ability to introduce contemporary references into an art historical context to create witty juxtapositions that transcend period and place. Aragonés, however, identifies so strongly with the great artistic traditions of his native Spain that his work achieves a truly metaphysical dimension.

—Ed McCormack

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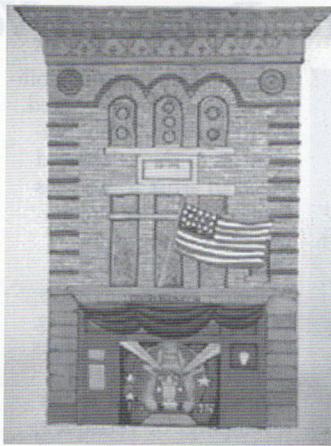
Barbara Swanson Sherman: Architecture as Portraiture

In an exhibition at the Pen & Brush Club last year, Barbara Swanson Sherman demonstrated her ability to make drawing an art form fully as autonomous and complete as painting. In that show, Sherman depicted human and animal figures within elaborate architectural settings in compositions as notable for their sense of fantasy as for their technical finesse.

For her newest exhibition, at the Donnell Branch of the New York Public Library, 20 West 53rd Street, from June 22 through July 11, Sherman concentrates solely on architectural elements, setting herself a different kind of challenge and meeting it with equally pleasing results.

Although the title of the show is "Manhattan's Prettiest Firehouses and Police Stations," Sherman states that she started the series "before the attacks of September 11 focused so much attention upon them." After the attacks occurred, however, she says, "I knew that I would somehow respond artistically, and then realized that I had already begun."

In fact, the stately beauty of the firehouses and police stations, as Sherman depicts them in her meticulous pen and ink technique, augmented by areas of watercolor, serves as a quietly affecting tribute to the heroic men and women who lost their lives in the September 11 tragedy.



"Engine Company 18, West 10th Street."

of figures and fantasy brings to the forefront. The clarity of Sherman's line and the strength of her design lends her drawings an austere beauty that is pleasurable in purely aesthetic terms, as well as for how skillfully she revives a woefully neglected medium.

For while pen and ink was once widely used in books and magazines, particularly during the "Golden Age of Illustration," from the 1880s to the 1930s, the medium has declined in the several decades since the advent of halftone printing.

Since Sherman's work succeeds admirably

For all the resonance in light of recent history, these new drawings are also outstanding for their purely formal virtues, which the absence

in a gallery setting, it should be regarded as fine art rather than illustration; yet, it has qualities that we associate with the very best modern ink draftsmen, such as Russell Patterson and Rockwell Kent. This lends her new drawings considerable nostalgic as well as aesthetic appeal—especially since the firehouses that they depict occupy beautiful old buildings that stand in sturdy and elegant contrast to much of the city's more recent architecture.

Sherman isolates her subjects against the white of the paper, in order to give each the specific sense of character that one normally associates with portraiture. In this manner, she enables us to see that each structure has its own unique personality traits.

In "Engine Company 18, West 10th Street," for example, the large red door with its big bold Fire Department emblem, as elaborate as a coat of arms, dominates. By contrast, "Engine Company 8 in Tribeca" appears relatively staid, with its red door bare of adornment and the American flag that flies above it serving as the most flamboyant element in the composition.

Here, as in all of the drawings in this show Barbara Swanson Sherman demonstrates not only her superb draftspersonship but a respect for the particular details of each subject, through which she captures its character and its essence. —Wilson Wong

Jenik's Joyous Dance of Freedom

The painter who exhibits under the mononym of Jenik has had a wide and varied history. Born in Iran of Armenian parentage, she studied in Iran, Scotland, France, and Norway. She also spent years in Europe, visiting museums and studying the work of the masters. Finally settling in Southern California, where she is known as both an artist and a teacher, she forged a style notable for its coloristic dynamism and gestural freedom.

Jenik's recent New York City exhibition, at Agora Gallery, 415 West Broadway, was entitled "Paradigms in Motion," and the title was especially apt, since the works on view were invariably characterized by a sense of movement, flux, and evolution.

"My art is the expression of life and the joy of being alive," Jenik has stated. "In my art, I look for some essential radiance, just as I seek that radiance in nature."

This philosophy in all its immediacy and simplicity is evident in her work. For while she steeped herself in art history and gained a sophisticated grasp of modernist aesthetics, she retains a sense of innocence that imbues her work with freshness.

One can only compare her playfulness to painters such as Calder and Miro, who have come out the other side of sophistication to arrive at a freedom that, while hardly childish, is joyously childlike. This freedom,

however, was hard won: Jenik built her work on a solid foundation, mastering the fundamentals of drawing, composition, line, and color until she was capable of capturing the world as she saw it. Only then, did she branch out to depict the world as she felt it. While her extensive training still informs her every stroke, Jenik has stated that she has spent the last few years "having the courage to forget all of that; to use that information indirectly so as to paint from within myself, not with my brain but with my heart."

Having exhibited since the 1970s, she has worked her way through various phases, from stylized semi-abstract compositions, constructed with hard-edged areas of color; to works in which luminous hues were contained within bold outlines apparently influenced by stained glass; to totally abstract compositions of flowing linear forms; to her present style, in which bold calligraphic gestures and brilliant colors are harmoniously married.

Although Jenik especially admires her fellow Armenian Arshile Gorky, and her paintings, like his, often hover between the abstract and the surreal, her remarkable creative fecundity and relentless inventiveness also call to mind the work of Paul Klee. Her



"Return"

gestural extravagance, however, is very much informed by Abstract Expressionism. Indeed, she partakes liberally of so-called "action painting's" rich vocabulary of spontaneous strokes, splashes, and drips to animate her compositions, making sinuous lines dance over vibrant areas of primary color to conjure images that morph before one's eyes from biomorphic abstraction to figuration.

It is the exuberance of her dance, finally, that makes Jenik a unique painter and makes her work a joyous world unto itself.

—Robert Vigo

The Allusive, Yet Elusive, Abstractions of Dorothy Stewart

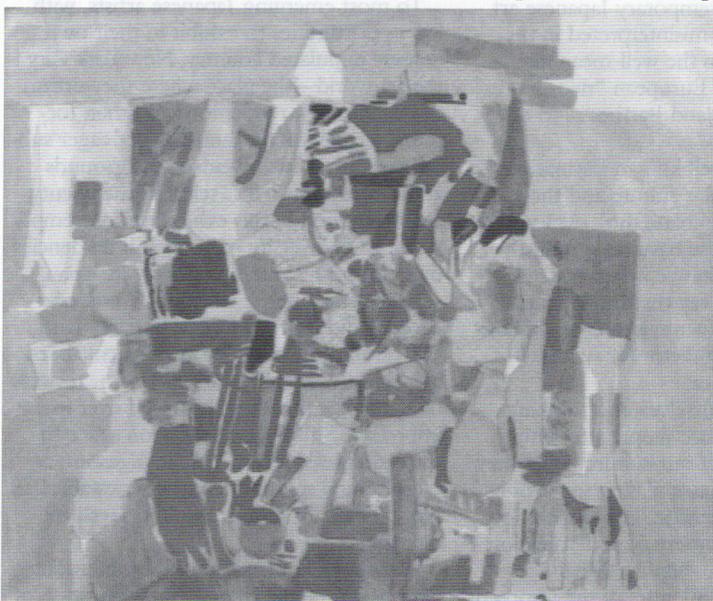
If it is indeed true, as Sam Lewisohn, author of "Painters and Personality" maintains, that "in the creation of significant art the personality of the artist is the decisive factor," Dorothy Stewart would have to be an extraordinarily upbeat individual. Even if, on the other hand, one believes that a good many more complex, consciously willed choices can be equally decisive in determining the direction an artist's work will take, Dorothy Stewart's paintings must be seen as beacons of optimism amid the dark and somber Sturm und Drang of much postmodern art.

This seems especially so of the paintings that will be featured in Stewart's exhibition at Noho Gallery, 530 West 25th Street, from July 16 through August 3, with a reception for the artist on Saturday, July 20, from 4 to 6PM.

In a review of a previous exhibition by Stewart, one critic noted that the outlines of childhood toys and other objects could be discerned amid the myriad shapes that fill Stewart's paintings. Another writer, in a catalog for a group exhibition that she participated in, noted that her abstractions "can be read as metaphors for landscapes and interiors." The artist herself takes pains to make clear, however, that she works "to give expression to an inner state," and that if recognizable objects appear in her paintings "their emergence is never contrived but spontaneous."

Granted, one can imagine that one is seeing all manner of things in her pictures. The sheer abundance and variety of kandy-colored shapes that swarm over her canvases like windblown confetti give rise to all manner of lively, sometimes zany, conjecture. A particular bubblegum-pink hue, the precise shade of the animated cartoon character Porky Pig, is ubiquitous and invariably suggestive of flesh, viz., the figure. A verdant green color, clear as lime sherbet, and a frequently used baby blue hue, can evoke memories of storybook landscapes when combined in the map-like configurations of flatly painted forms that comprise most of the compositions. Stewart's palette also features softer gray and ocher hues, as well as a strident cadmium yellow that mimics the Crayola yellow that kids use to draw the sun.

Stewart's jam-packed hellzappoppin compositions suggest as much zany movement, frenetic activity, and all around allusiveness as Hairy Who artist Gladys Nilson's more figurative, cartoon-influenced watercolors or Robert Goodnough's



"Chimes"

wonderful paintings of cubistically deconstructing schooners. Yet, one should resist any temptation to approach her paintings as one would a Rorschach test. For we do her work a disservice when we strain too hard to read specific images and symbols into it. Far more in keeping with her actual intentions, it would seem, would be to view the many kandy-colored forms that swarm like windblown confetti over the surfaces of her canvases as manifestations of the general effusiveness and buoyancy that seems to permeate her aesthetic sensibility.

In this regard, this Canadian-born painter who has made her home in New York City for many years combines the chromatic luminosity of the Fauves with the gestural energy of the Abstract Expressionists. For while her spontaneous style assimilates aspects of the New York School, her color sense is closer in its confectionery deliciousness to the School of Paris.

Perhaps the most aptly named painting in Stewart's new exhibition is the large acrylic on canvas called "Chimes," given how well that title reflects the bell-like clarity of its colors and the musicality of its composition, with sharp-edged, shard-like,

roughly rectangular shapes massed harmoniously against expanses of bare white canvas that allow for "breathing room." Also exemplary in another regard is "Channel," a more boldly composed large canvas where broad, brilliant strokes of yellow, interspersed with bits of green, gray and blue, slash horizontally across the white ground. While

the former painting is notable for its subtle lyricism, the latter is succulent and explosive.

Other large canvases such as "Y" and "Doors," with their intricate compositions, suggest abstract picture puzzles, in which the colors and shapes are simultaneously allusive and elusive. Like the poems of John Ashbery, the paintings of Dorothy Stewart dazzle us with a shimmeringly evocative surface that tantalizes by withholding specific meanings and denying closure.

Although abstract, Stewart's paintings are paradoxically pictorial, like fragments of memory and consciousness converging in permutations too fleeting and complex to pin down in conventional terms. Yet they strike a chord of recognition nonetheless and resonate within us long after we have looked at them, lingering like some lovely, taunting melody to a song whose words one can no longer recall.

—J. Sanders Eaton

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Striving for New Self-Definition

The issues of contemporary Japanese art are all too often misinterpreted in the west, due as much to the well-meaning but skewed views of European “neo-Orientalists” like Roland Barthes as to our own native egotism.

Because of their well known fascination with American popular culture and their remarkable ability to create their own version of it, the Japanese have been unjustly accused of being imitative, when it would be more accurate to say that the Japanese are a people with an acute awareness of context as a determining factor for success in any aesthetic endeavor.

While we flatter ourselves into thinking that Japanese artists are simply attempting to replicate aspects of our culture, what they are actually doing is assimilating some of its most blatant characteristics out of a by now ingrained habit of perpetual modernization that began in 1868, when the Meiji Restoration ended 250 years of self-imposed isolation.

At the same time, it would be inaccurate to divide Japanese culture into pre and post Meiji, as even some Japanese critics and art historians tend to do, since the traditional arts of brush painting and calligraphy have continued to evolve along a path of parallel innovation continuing to the present, and to feed into the mainstream, as any enduring cultural achievement inevitably must.

Thus, while it may be true that the Japanese practice the art of appropriation better than any other nation on earth, it is equally apparent that even at their most culturally acquisitive they invariably transform whatever they borrow into something uniquely Japanese. Paradoxically, this often means more “American” than American, as seen in those Japanese rock bands who play louder, wear flashier fashions, and cavort more frenetically onstage than the majority of their western peers.

Indeed, this intensification of effect, as it manifests in contemporary visual art, can be seen among some of the participants in the group exhibition “Japan Art Alliance,” at Westwood Gallery, 578 Broadway, in Soho.

The show is being presented by Westwood Projects (a division of Westwood Gallery established to focus on international artists, which is currently organizing several museum exhibitions nationwide) in conjunction with ALC, Associate Liberal Creators, an arts organization, based in Tokyo, whose purpose is to offer exhibition opportunities to Japanese artists, particularly in New York.

To most emerging Japanese artists, with few opportunities to exhibit in their own densely populated country, New York City is the art world—the place where they dream of making their reputations and their fortunes. From among thousands of eager submissions by artists of varied backgrounds and career levels, ALC selected the twenty artists featured in this exhibition to exemplify the wide diversity of styles and tendencies that comprise contemporary art in Japan.

In the spirit of the occasion, Westwood Projects did things a little differently with this exhibition. While most of its collaborative ventures involve the gallery’s own stable of artists, for this show it turned over its impressive 5,000 foot exhibition space to the artists selected by ALC in a gesture of crosscultural solidarity that other established New York City venues would do well to emulate.

Perhaps the one artist in the exhibition who best exemplifies that “intensification of effect” alluded to earlier is Tetsugo Nakamura, whose paintings drag post-Pop imagery—kicking and screaming, as it were—into the embattled area of gestural abstraction. The dominant figure in one of Nakamura’s compositions is the cartoon character Tony the Tiger from the Kellogg’s Corn Flakes box, seen here striding in his goofy, splay-footed way across a cubistically fractured field of slashing strokes and predominantly red color areas. Also swept up in the painterly fray are fragments of the Kellogg’s logo, the heads of Elsie the Cow and her husband Elmer, an elegant Japanese written character, and even a prominent barcode—the latter apparently a wry comment on the commodification of art.

When American Pop artists emulated the slick, uninflected surfaces of advertising and commercial design with hard-edged precision, they were reacting against what they saw as the retrograde “romantic” tendencies of Abstract Expressionism. Nakamura, however, combines elements of the two opposing schools as only an artist can who views both with nostalgic affection from afar, without the Oedipal antagonisms which spur art movements that immediately succeed one another.

Other works by Nakamura incorporate the cute, cuddly cartoon characters that permeate Japanese culture and are often as beloved by adults as by children. Like the pubescent Lolitas in school uniforms and sweat socks featured in fetish magazines for overworked “salary men,” these cute characters, harking back to the carefree joys of

childhood, offer such solace from the daily grind that they are often used as corporate logos in Japan. Thus, these seemingly innocuous symbols are fraught with complex social meanings in the work of artists such as Tetsugo Nakamura.

The mechanistic view of the universe advanced by Isaac Newton comes to mind in viewing the “paper sculptures” of another gifted artist in the exhibition, Tokyo native Hiroji Chiba, apparently influenced by origami but much more complex, personal, and contemporary.

In some of Chiba’s pieces autumn leaves are convincingly wrought in trompe l’oeil detail. Here and there, however, portions of these leaves peel away to reveal an understructure of computer innards or other mechanical elements, as if to symbolize Newton’s theory that the world is like a massive clock and all of its components, down to the tiniest elements of nature, are likewise mechanical constructs.

In a work that Chiba calls “Love and Peace,” the central element is a beautiful white wing, which is seen disembodied and set against a collage of newspaper clippings as if attempting to transcend the foregone conclusion that not only the physical world but all of the activities and aspirations of humankind are mechanically predetermined.

Seen thus, the piece is particularly poignant, with the white wing trailing loose feathers as it apparently loses speed above an ethereal stratosphere of rainbow hues, its mechanisms protruding at one end like the broken bones of the robotic bird or angel from which it has been violently wrenched.

By contrast, Takuya Terasawa offers a more harmonic view of universal energies in a series of meticulous acrylic paintings in which all the elements of nature are unified by swirling organic rhythms and areas of vibrant color as intricately interwoven as tantric or psychedelic designs. In one painting, an entire bestiary of stylized animals, suggesting the symbols of the Chinese calendar, enlivens the branches of a massive tree, surging upward at a vertiginous angle against a sky blazing with other intense patterns and hues.

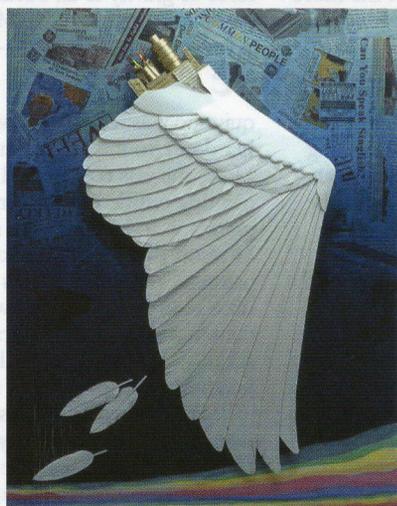
In another work, Terasawa depicts a blazing sun, swooping birds, and schools of fish tossed upon rhythmic waves in equally visionary terms, creating a composition that ambitiously attempts to capture the mystical forces of nature in a manner that can only be compared to—without seeming in the least bit derivative of—the dynamic watercolors of the great American eccentric



Junichi Aoki

Charles Burchfield.

While their views of nature are interestingly at odds, Hiroji Chiba and Takuya Terasawa are singular talents, wholly un beholden to any style or tendency presently in vogue. Both seem genuinely oblivious to art historical precedents, as they pursue their personal visions with an intrepidity that would be refreshing in any national context.



Hiroji Chiba

On the other hand, one of the most intriguingly perplexing artists in the show is Junichi Aoki, whose abstract paintings of swarming circular shapes are weirdly allusive, suggesting rioting olives or eyeballs, among other bizarre possibilities.

Aoki's compositions tease one's perceptions in a similar manner to the "Bad Painting" and "New Image" movements that sprang up in the East Village in the late 1970s. Aoki transcends "technique" and "talent", as though convinced that such notions are irrelevant, *passé*—relics of a kinder, gentler age whose quaint standards

U.S. art press and mass media. Rather, Aoki's paintings come across like purposely sloppy parodies of Neo-Expressionism, with their acidic colors splashed and dripped, and their impetuous brushstrokes suggesting but never quite depicting a host of latent monstrosities.

Like Donald Baechler and Christopher Wool, Junichi Aoki is one of those deliberately crude, patently abrasive artists whose work manages to be oddly compelling despite its adamant refusal to ingratiate itself to the viewer. Indeed, that kind of chutzpah signifies an integrity that makes one curious to see what Aoki will do next.

Far from being imitative, most of the



Tetsugo Nakamura

no longer apply.

While ostensibly abstract, Aoki's forms appear to be derived from cartoons; however, they are not rendered in the precise manner of "Superflat," the Japanese Pop and Hip Hop-inflected movement presently garnering the most attention in the

artists in this show challenge western stereotypes of what Japanese art is supposed to be all about. Yes, some are obviously enamored of American popular culture; yet, there are others—particularly, the woodblock print artist Yukiko Shimo, the ink painter Yoichi Wakui, and the ceramicist Takeshi Tanaka—who successfully update traditional Japanese mediums, making them new and vital by virtue of their thoroughly contemporary sensibilities.

The dominant western perception of Japanese art gets bogged down in stereotypes because, as Alexandra Munroe of the Japan Society in New York City once put it, paraphrasing the Japanese writer and intellectual Karatani Kojin, "it ignores the indigenous forces and internal logic that have shaped the modern Japanese experience."

Perhaps this excitingly eclectic and illuminating exhibition of mostly emerging artists striving for new, more accurate self-definition will help to put at least some of those stereotypes to rest.

—Ed McCormack

J. Garfinkel: The Merger of Painting, Jazz, and Joy

"I've often felt my painting is a means of communicating feelings and ideas beyond the limitations of what I could put into words," the painter J. Garfinkel has stated. "Words can be too intellectually precise and at the same time not precise enough for evoking the emotional response generated by art."

Garfinkel, who is also a musician and credits a lifelong involvement in jazz and rock for the ability to improvise, was featured in a recent solo show at Montserrat Gallery, 584 Broadway, which included a variety of works in watercolor, water-based inks, and acrylics.

Like those of Paul Klee, the artist who comes to mind as a direct ancestor of Garfinkel's eclectic approach, the paintings in the exhibition are improvisatory in style as well as technique. Each painting appears to determine its own content and style in the act of creation, according to the dictates of the subject or idea that the artist wishes to express. There is a freedom to Garfinkel's work that is almost childlike, yet these are obviously the works of a sophisticated artist fully in control of medium and message, to couple those two words that the late Marshal McLuhan linked so significantly.

Indeed, every picture is a new adventure

and determines its own form. Working exclusively on paper enhances the freedom in Garfinkel's work, for paper has its own special characteristics, which seem to encourage swiftness of execution and an experimental approach. The use of water media also allows for a good deal of fluidity. Garfinkel likes to exploit "bleed" and other free-flowing methods of achieving a sense of spontaneity and flexibility, qualities the artist values highly.

"I set out with a given idea, structure or concept, but from there, I allow the painting to develop as it must," Garfinkel has stated, and the compositions do indeed seem to have a life of their own.

"Themes in E Major," for example is a watercolor saturated with vibrant color, at once deep and luminous. Areas of blue, yellow, and green interact and interweave, creating an abstract composition of roughly rectangular shapes with a numinous sense of mystery that can be likened to certain of the aforementioned Klee's works in which grids of color glow from dark grounds. Like Klee, too, Garfinkel favors poetically evocative titles, such as "I laughed at the Green Dream" and "When Quarks Danced" that suggest fanciful meanings, even in the more abstract and visually undecipherable compo-

sitions. These tiles are not meant to be interpreted specifically, however; it is clear that they function simply as signposts to spark the viewer's imagination and encourage interpretations as freewheeling as the paintings themselves.

"I find that my art, especially the abstract works, send a message to be interpreted by the viewer in the manner they see fit," says the artist and it is apparent that there is a good deal of room for personal interpretation indeed. In a painting such as "Blue Night," for example, the references to landscape are clear, with a blue green sky hovering over blue mountains. Yet, the picture suggests a dreamscape as much as a literal landscape, a metaphysical terrain as fluid as any of Garfinkel's other paintings, created with dancing lines, forms, and color areas that cannot be related to any aspect of the visible world.

The childlike freedom of J. Garfinkel's compositions can only be compared to the serious playfulness of artists such as the aforementioned Klee, as well as other kindred spirits like Joan Miro and Alexander Calder. Like those great predecessors, J. Garfinkel refuses to acknowledge the force of gravity as an obstacle to the sheer joy of painting. —Maureen Flynn

A Soho Salon Showcase

As an established Soho venue with an international roster and clientele, Montserrat Gallery, 584 Broadway, has a considerable range of artists to draw upon for the revolving salon-style group that it has recently introduced. On one trip to the gallery close to deadline time, there were works on view by several gallery artists with diverse styles.

Alvin Pimsler is a draftsman of unusual gifts. Here, he was represented by two exquisite ink and watercolor drawings of female nudes. Pimsler's sinuous ink line delineates the sensual contours of the voluptuous figures with an elegance reminiscent of Egon Schiele. Piquant bits of color enhance the delicate beauty of the drawings, which Pimsler signs with a red seal in the Asian manner, a touch that becomes an element in the composition.

Caroline Degroiselle showed sailing scenes that highlighted her vigorous brushwork and vibrant use of color. Degroiselle is a refreshingly natural painter in the French manner, merging elements of Impressionism with her own innate exuberance to invest her pictures with a sense of light, movement and air. Here, the billowing white sails are a perfect foil for Degroiselle's breezy style.

Dorothy A. Culpepper can only be termed a "maximalist" for the way she pushes the envelope, so to speak, making her compositions repositories for an intricate array of interlocking forms and intense color

combinations. Culpepper's painting "Going in Circles" is aptly named, for its churning compositional rhythms take the eye on an almost dizzying joyride. While it would be risky for a lesser artist to juggle so many diverse elements within a single picture, Culpepper organizes her compositions with admirable skill.

Graciela Vallejo is a figurative artist whose darkly evocative paintings are enlivened by a sense of mystery and fantasy. Her work has a Latin American flavor that can be compared favorably to that of the well known painter and printmaker Harold Toledo. Vallejo's paintings, however, have an existential quality that also seems akin to the plays of Samuel Beckett, as seen in "El Dialogo II," with its gnomish figures gesticulating enigmatically in a desolate dreamscape.

An austere abstract vocabulary is employed evocatively in the sculptures of Letty Fonteyne. In the piece on view at Montserrat, a horizontal bronze band fastens a large, smooth stone to the bronze support in a manner that could suggest a mountainous landscape with a pregnant moon rising on the horizon. But all such interpretations are almost beside the point in the case of an artist such as Fonteyne. For while it is fun to read specific meanings into her elusive and physically imposing wall sculptures, her pieces are equally engrossing for their abstract qualities alone.

Mary Wittkower, on the other hand, is

quite unabashed in her love of nature and her desire to interpret it in majestic terms. Here, she was represented by a landscape painting entitled "Cathedral Rock" whose grandeur and sweep were reminiscent of the Hudson River School. Like those earlier painters, Wittkower favors dramatic panoramas. However, her brushwork has a more contemporary vigor, its bravura strokes adding a gestural energy that amplifies and heightens the romance of nature.

Professor Germain Chassot is a sheer delight, an artist whose style is a unique synthesis of the naive and the sophisticated. Chassot paints scenes of rural life with a charm and expressiveness that sets his work apart from art world trends in a timeless manner akin to that of Henri Rousseau. Here, the piece de resistance is a painting called "Cheese Maker." In it, Chassot depicts people hard at work in a crude country kitchen, making the everyday exotic and evoking a nostalgia in the viewer for a simpler time.

Then there is Willis Pyle, a painter best known for his lively and engaging circus and equestrian scenes. In the briskly brushed, colorful racetrack scenes exhibited at Montserrat most recently, however, Willis Pyle comes across as a contemporary cousin of Raoul Dufy for his ability to evoke vitality, atmosphere, movement and excitement with vigorous strokes of sparkling color.

—Peter Wiley

Curator Carrozzini Presents Nine "Worlds" at the Annex

"'Out of this world' is not a condition of absence, of estrangement, yet rather the act of shifting one's gaze and perspective," the curator Stefania Carrozzini said of the group show of that same name, organized by D'Arts International Exhibition Service, in Milan, Italy, and recently presented at The Annex, 601 West 26th Street.

To make her point she presented nine artists with varying perspectives from which to ponder on the question of what constitutes the "ins and the outs" of contemporary reality.

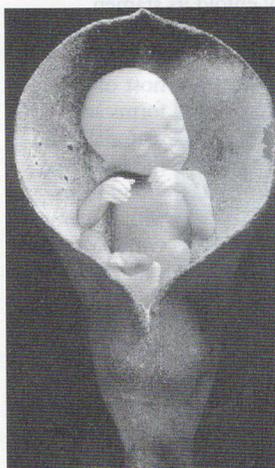
Also a poet and watercolorist, Giovanni Garasto employs photography to question the "hive of concrete" that constitutes the modern apartment complex. His deadpan views of rows of identical windows and balconies convey the conformist facades behind which modern passions must make themselves felt.

Traces of the urban scene can also be discerned in the paintings of Pino Chimenti, albeit transformed into elements of a personal mythology that the artist depicts in intricate and colorful hard-edged paintings. Like the late Oyvind Fahlstom, Chimenti creates compositions that suggest fanciful game boards in which interior and exterior concerns are confoundingly combined.

In his painting "Green Frogs," Roberto Bertazzon reveals a kinship with American "New Image" painters in his ability to compel our attention through indirection.

"Outside" would appear to be a literal designation for Bertazzon, since many of his paintings are concerned with ecology. At the same time, his interest in memory indicates that inner reality plays an equally strong role in his aesthetic.

Massimo Berruti is both introspective and "out of this world" for the hermetic quality of his Pop-influenced imagery, which takes the form of mysteriously uninhabited places



Antonio Techel

Expressionist. Without question he is an "insider" in the sense that Selden Rodman meant when he wrote his famous defense of "the new humanism." At the same time, Buell's powerful paintings of tormented figures place him bravely outside the dictates of fashion.

The figure also plays a role in the work of both Antonio Techel and Josephine Vanas. Antonio Techel is a psychotherapist as well as an artist and his computer generated images often deal with issues of identity and socialization—issues about as "in and out" as one can get. Here, Techel's striking image of a baby in the womb of a flower harked back to ancient Mayan sculpture yet was achieved through the most modern means.

Josephine Vanas, on the other hand, focuses in on specific parts of the human image in her radically cropped realist compositions in oil on canvas. Vana's painting of a woman's feet, dancing in high heeled shoes on a visceral red carpet, her white skirt billowing out in gossamer folds, spoke vol-

umes about the mysteries of personality that even the most fragmented images can reveal.

Created with an airbrush in dark monochromes the spookiness of Berruti's paintings is offset by their striking formal austerity.

Buell, an artist who lives and works in Paris, is the group's unabashed

unabashed

Stefania Siragusa creates the sense of a specific portrait in her own unique manner, integrating found objects, such as a shiny compact disc, with sinuous abstract shapes so evocatively that we feel them as human presences with distinctive personalities. Intricate and intimate, Siragusa's fanciful assemblages qualify as "out of this world" for their zany whimsicality.

Space is the decisive element in the abstract acrylic paintings of Graziano Guarnieri, who employs strong color areas and geometric shapes to create distinctive compositions that blur the distinctions between inside and outside so effectively that one must question their relevance alto-



Roberto Bertazzon

gether. Indeed, Guarnieri's manner of structuring space strongly suggests that metaphysics may have the final word.

But one suspects that Stefania Carrozzini, an art critic, journalist, curator, and the founder of D'Arts International Exhibition Service, was well aware that the questions she was raising were indeed metaphysical, when she came up with the title "Out of this World" as a context for presenting these nine intriguingly diverse artists to the New York art audience.

—Lawrence Downes

ÁNGEL ARAGONÈS

"Amid the light and shadows of Velazquez"

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Reception: JULY 11, 2002 6-8pm

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Beth Olds * Orit Orion
Jason David Robins**

Suzuki and Ito: Different Visions Harmoniously Fused

Akiko Suzuki and Kumi Ito are two distinctly different types of artists, although both have incorporated aspects of design and the decorative arts in a fine arts context.

Akiko Suzuki's work is located at a juncture where craft morphs into fine art, and Ito applies the skills acquired as a professional fabric designer to imbue even her most hectic figure compositions with a pleasing symmetry that makes them paradoxically serene. The two artists, for all their contrasts, make for a pleasingly harmonious duel exhibition at Cast Iron Gallery, 159 Mercer Street, from May 25 through June 5.

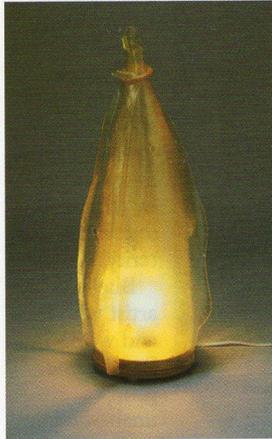
Akiko Suzuki creates objects that can serve a utilitarian purpose as elegant lighting devices. To refer to her pieces as "lamps," however, would be to trivialize them unfairly. For Suzuki's creations transcend their practical functions to become objects of great beauty. They wed form to function in a manner that leaves no doubt that she is a fine artist, an innovative sculptor, as opposed to merely a gifted designer.

One facet of her remarkable talent is the manner in which she transforms materials. On first encountering Suzuki's pieces one might think that the main material with which she creates the pieces were blown glass or some variety of molded clear lucite. It comes as a great surprise to learn that it is actually very thin leather that takes on a gossamer, translucent quality when the light shines through her sculptures from within.

Apparently, the flexibility of leather enables her to create shapes with a striking organic fluidity. The material is furled and folded to create forms that often resemble some unknown species of exotic plant. In one piece, for example, sharply pointed frond-like shapes surround a tall, tubular center created with a fine wire mesh material. The overall effect is of the way the petals

of a plant tenderly enfold its stamen.

In other pieces, the sensuously curving contours of Suzuki's sculptures suggest a host of organic forms and materials, and the light that glows from within seems to symbolize the vital energy that animates all natural life forms. At the same time, for all that they suggest, these illuminated objects retain the formal austerity and abstract autonomy that makes Akiko Suzuki a complex and challenging contemporary sculptor.



Leather Lamp
by Akiko Suzuki

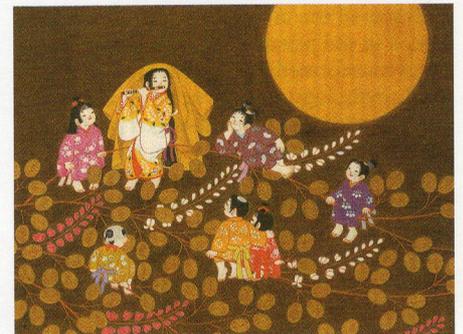
The paintings of Kumi Ito are among the most celebratory and life-affirming works one can hope to encounter in our stressed-out age, for her subject is children's games and joyous folk festivals that hark back to a simpler time when the artist was a child in a small Japanese village where such events were still an everyday occurrence. She recaptures her indelible memories in gaily colored and intricate gouache paintings on paper that have the timeless intimacy and intricacy of both Indian miniatures and the vibrantly populous prints of the Edo period in Japan.

Although flowers figure prominently in many of Ito's pictures, it could be said that the figures themselves form a flower garden of children. They are so appealing with their colorful kimonos and holiday costumes that they remind us how natural children truly

are, as they engage in rituals that seem clearly universal, for all their specific cultural details.

In one painting, for example, kids perch like birds on tree branches under a full autumn moon, entranced by a flute player. Although the scene appears to relate specifically to the Japanese festivals that take place in the fall, it is as universal as any fairy tale. In another painting by Kumi Ito, children and adults partake in a traditional tea ceremony in a Japanese interior. Yet, here too, there is such a sense of fun mingled with ritual that anyone who has ever staged a perhaps less formal tea party or engaged in a children's birthday party can readily identify.

In other paintings by Kumi Ito children climb and swing from trees, attend raucously to their younger siblings, and engage in a host of other activities that should resonate fondly in the memory of anyone who has



Kumi Ito, gouache on paper

ever experienced the joys of childhood. But even more important, this gifted artist seems to be telling us that it is never too late for anyone who is still young at heart to recapture such lost joys.

—J. Sanders Eaton

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Marilyn Stevenson and the Radiance of "Real Images"

The innovative uses to which certain contemporary photographers have put their medium in recent years have moved closer to painting in terms of transcending its documentary function to make imaginative subjective statements. One especially exciting example of this can be seen in the work of Marilyn Stevenson, a native New Yorker who grew up in Greenwich Village and has worked in a creative capacity for various mass circulation magazines over the years, exhibited her fine art photography in numerous venues, and been awarded a good many honors.

Most recently, Stevenson was awarded a grant from the New York Foundation of the Arts to fund a series of works she refers to as "photographic light" drawings, which she exhibited in her recent solo exhibition, "Do You See What I See," at New Century Artists, Inc., 530 West 25th Street, in Chelsea.

In these works Stevenson manipulates her camera, through small gestural movements, to create color photographs in compositions of linear networks which project a sense of light, energy, and movement. Like writhing neon, her luminous lines flare and flame out of nocturnal blackness, forming patterns that invite a host of subjective interpretations.

Although Stevenson herself has compared the series to "a type of photographic Rorschach test," this is by far too modest an assessment; for there is nothing random about the the flowing forms that she creates. Rather, they are skillfully accomplished abstract explorations of

form, color, and spatial relationships, suggesting profound and infinite visual manifestations of universal consciousness. At the same time, one cannot help reading hints of specific imagery in their intricate linear configurations.

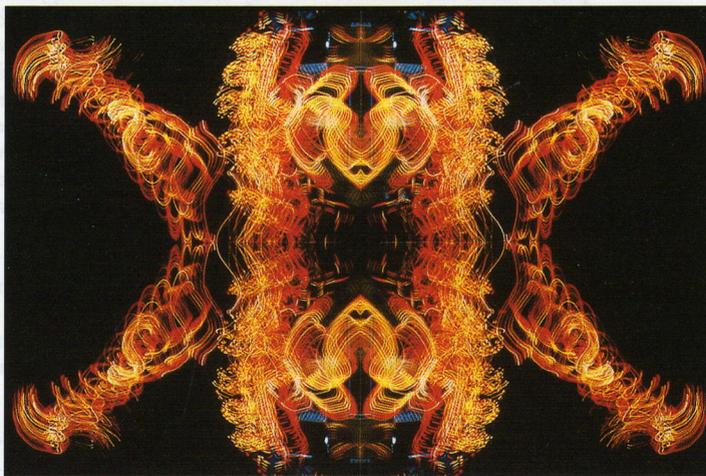
In the large photographic piece called "Am I Centered Yet," for one example, the central form suggests a human torso splayed out against a dark cosmic expanse—perhaps a numinous image of "the etheric body" of which mystics speak, or a projection of the transcendent

impressions of ethereal presences suggesting the auras or energy fields that surround the human body. Stevenson's photographs create the impression that one is experiencing form from the inside out, rather than viewing it as a discrete entity apart from oneself. They seem to allude to interior rather than exterior spaces. Indeed, her pictures suggest an alternate dimension in which forms are no longer stagnant, physical objects but electrified, evolving, breathing energy constructs that envelope the viewer in their warm glow.

At the same time, their allusiveness persists: The piece called "The Devil Made Me Do It" could suggest the bottom of a beetle or a Phoenix-like bird with outstretched wings; "Passion #5" has the fierce presence of the fanciful bronze lions that guard ancient Chinese tombs, and other pieces as well provoke all manner of intriguing subjective interpretations.

However, these works are equally remarkable in technical terms and for their abstract qualities alone. For through her fugue-like braiding of radiant lines in various hues that converge to create what scientists call "real images—images formed by rays of light that recombine—Marilyn Stevenson creates works that literally fill the gallery space with luminescence. And that she does so in the by now relatively venerable medium of photography, rather than with laser beams or other more recent high tech tricks, makes her accomplishment not only visionary but metaphysical.

—J. Sanders Eaton



"Passion 5"

state of nirvana one hopes to arrive at through the process of deep meditation. In either case, the picture conjures up the sense of a visionary experience in a receptive viewer.

Each of Stevenson's pictures focuses on a central form that branches out into mirror images of itself. Thus each is possessed of a symmetry not unlike that seen in mandalas. Stevenson merges aspects of the ancient with modern technology to evoke

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Mosaic is “Re-Elevated” in the Art of Judith S. Paul

Although mosaic was used extensively by the ancient Romans and the early Christians and was raised to an unsurpassed level of beauty under the Byzantine empire, it has not generally flourished as a modern medium. Perhaps mosaic has flown beneath the critical radar in recent years because it has been employed more often by craftspeople to create commercial designs than by fine artists for expressive purposes. Thus, a recent exhibition of mosaic sculptures by Judith S. Paul, at Montserrat Gallery, 584 Broadway, came as something of a revelation.

By any criteria one cares to use, Judith S. Paul is a fine artist. Originally, she employed shards of broken china as a subordinating element in wall pieces in a manner that might be compared to Julian Schnabel's use of shattered crockery in his paintings. In 1999, however, Paul took a course at the Studio Arte Del Mosaico in Ravenna, Italy, that inspired her to explore the ancient medium to the utmost and has resulted in some of her most exciting works to date.

Featured in the show at Montserrat was a series that Paul calls “True Confessions,” of which she says, “Although my work as an artist has always included a theme or narra-

tive component, this current series examines in a more direct fashion the various issues and beliefs I hold at this time in my life. Some of the messages in this work are humorous while others are serious, yet all of them reflect my own feelings and life experiences.”

Along with their formal attributes, which are considerable, texts incorporated into Paul's mosaic sculptures add an element of conceptualism that makes her pieces all the more intriguing. One sculpture in a pyramidal format in blue and white tiles, for example, contains the sentence “As I lay dreaming, I saw that my wings fit just right.” Another piece, entitled “Birdsong” and taking the form of an elegant table adorned with blue and violet designs incorporates the phrase “If love were a bird it would never stop singing.”

One of Judith S. Paul's most complex mosaic sculptures is entitled “Ina Gadda Da Vida.” It is comprised of a tall, tower-like structure containing intricate designs and the phrases “Sympathy for the devil” and “Smoke gets in your eyes.” At its apex are a pair of shapely feminine legs, one of which is entwined by a snake, suggesting Eve in the Garden of Eden, among other seductive meanings. Other pieces, as well, combine

visual and verbal wit with remarkable aesthetic qualities, as seen in the signature piece of the exhibition, “True Confessions.” This takes the form of a churchly structure topped by a cross and inscribed with the words, “Guilt gnaws on the bones of forgiveness.”

Equally extraordinary for both its stately beauty and its ironic humor is the sculpture entitled “The Blue Streak,” a tall, stately totemic shape on the base of which one can read the admonishment, “A monologue is not a conversation.” Here, with characteristic wit, Judith S. Paul makes a universal statement; for surely there exist few persons anywhere who have not, at one time or another, wished to express similar sentiments to some self-centered friend or acquaintance.

Like the work of William T. Wiley and Robert Arneson, the mosaic sculptures of Judith S. Paul couch personal playfulness in obsessive craftsmanship to create pieces that address serious issues with a great deal of humor and style. Paul, however, accomplishes even more by re-elevating a medium that has been relegated to the decorative arts in recent times to its former status as a fine art.

—Joyce Lynn Marcus

Exploring Neo-Abstract Tendencies in Soho

Five abstract artists exemplified the possibilities that still exist to make innovative nonobjective statements in recent solo showcase exhibitions at Montserrat Gallery, 584 Broadway:

Roger Hanson is a consummate colorist, setting strokes of intense fluorescent hues afloat on black fields to create thickly impastoed compositions that suggest falling leaves in a fanciful chromatic realm where autumn trees shed pastel confetti. Combining the textural intensity of Milton Resnick with the color field pyrotechnics more akin to Jules Olitski, Hanson's paintings are at once tough and lyrical in the very best sense of both terms. It is their combination of chromatic dynamism and juicy tactility that makes his paintings succeed so admirably, his trust in the untrammelled painterly gesture, as well as his belief in the physical properties of paint as a conduit for feeling. Like most of the best abstract painters today, Hanson aims not to revive the heroic aspects of modernism but to probe those essences which transcend appearances and embody them in the material substance of pigment.

Floral forms, peacock feathers, and other graceful and fanciful facets of the natural world are called to mind when one encounters the sinuous linear abstractions of Roberta Nelson. The swirling shapes that fill Nelson's intricate compositions seem to mimic the repetitive patterns in nature, and indeed some of her paintings actually are

landscapes, albeit with a strong abstract thrust. Yet, there is a strong element of magic in her compositions as well, a personal calligraphic poetry that is much more difficult to pin down. One thinks of Celtic and Persian myths, as well as elements of tantric design.

Although one of the paintings in Roberta Nelson's exhibition contained a figure at the entrance to what appeared to be an ornate forest, the majority of her compositions compelled attention solely by virtue of their insistent rhythmic variations.

San Francisco-born artist Steven Rehfeld creates collage paintings densely layered with abstract forms and bits of drawn or found texts or images. Everything is fodder for Rehfeld's fertile, restless imagination: fragments of Chinese newspapers, diagrammatic sketches on tracing paper, and myriad other elements that he melds into muscular gestural compositions. One of his most distinctive techniques is a kind of reverse collage, in which forms or images emerge through “windows” cut into the picture surface. All the diverse elements in Rehfeld's compositions are merged and melded by virtue of his virtuoso manipulation of thick, juicy impastos.

The British painter Anne Urquhart employs rich, deep colors and gracefully flowing forms in her allusive abstract paintings, which have an Art Nouveau sumptuousness with their deep, rich colors, sinu-

ously flowing outlines and billowing forms. Although none of her shapes resolve into specific images, they refer to memories of her travels in Europe and the Far East, as well as to Greek myths. A particular favorite is the story of the sea nymphs known as the Nereids, who supposedly escorted the souls of the dead on their journey to the afterlife. Presumably, this myth is the inspiration for Urquhart's compelling oil on canvas, “All the Blue Souls II,” with its dramatic composition dominated by a looming blue shape juxtaposed with other luminous hues.

The sculptor Jay Harris is an exponent of a mode that can be classified as “neo-funk.” His pieces, created with found objects, paint, and other materials have a primitive power, suggesting artifacts from some unknown tribe. Tree branches or phallic forms encrusted with pigment and wrapped with rope or plastic have the feeling of fetish objects. Like Wallace Berman, George Hermes, and other artists associated with the Beat Generation, Harris eschews the slick commodification of the art object for a more freewheeling, intuitive approach to assemblage that thumbs its nose at art world conventions. And indeed, his work presents a vital alternative to the increasingly industrialized, conceptually dry tendency in contemporary sculpture, with its transformations of debased materials into objects possessed of an odd, rough beauty.

—Dorothy K. Riordan

Benafshi's Consciousness-Expanding Neo-Symbolism

Although psychedelic art, a movement that sprang from the counterculture of the 1960s, was relatively short-lived, it has had a considerable influence on subsequent generations of artists. The movement was the first to explore with any consistency the expansion of consciousness through chemical means, and those who experimented with LSD and other hallucinogens created some remarkable imagery. But just as the insights gained through drugs proved to be temporary and of dubious value in the long run, and have by and large been replaced by such practices as meditation among those who wish to achieve more enduring states of higher consciousness, the new generation of artists has applied aspects of psychedelia soberly to achieve more substantial aesthetic gains.

One of the more gifted among them is Keren Benafshi, a painter born in Israel who has traveled widely in search of inspiration, rather than seeking it in altered states. Largely self-taught, she has traveled in England, India, Thailand, and Australia and exhibited widely. Most recently, Benafshi, who is also a published poet, had an especially impressive solo show, entitled "Living in Light," at Agora Gallery, 415 West Broadway.

Featured were several acrylic paintings in which intricate compositions were created



Keren Benafshi, "Passion of Life"

with a combination of brilliant abstract patterns and subtly integrated photographic collage elements. Most of the abstract patterns in Benafshi's compositions are comprised of small dots of brilliant fluorescent and acrylic colors. Their closest counterparts are the "Dreamtime" paintings of the Australian Aboriginal peoples, with whom Benafshi established a close rapport.

However, the addition of figurative collage elements into the swirling compositions that Benafshi calls "energy paintings," broaden their scope considerably, suggesting a more complex array of art historical sources—particularly the mysterious imagery of Symbolist masters such as Gustave Moreau and Odilon Redon. So many of

Benafshi's paintings are so innately mystical, in fact, that a good case could be made for calling her a Neo-Symbolist.

In one painting, a little boy with the shaved head and saffron robes of a Buddhist monk appears in the process of reincarnation; in another, a comely mermaid is engulfed by luminous patterns; in yet another, a spectral white-gowned female figure is all but submerged in an enchanted forest of vaguely arboreal imagery, overlaid by myriad colorful visionary spirals. In the latter picture, especially, Benafshi shows a kinship with the Symbolists in her ability to, as art historian Nancy Frazier puts, "synthesize rather than describe, to suggest ideas by symbols rather than elaborate on them in a reportorial manner."

Benafshi, however, takes the synthesis even further, in terms of combining mystical allusiveness with contemporary formal boldness. This is especially striking in compositions where the abstract elements are dominant as seen in "Dimensions," a large, powerful, horizontal triptych in which the central image is a stylized sunburst. Here, with the emblematic power of a freeform mandala, yellow, red, green, and blue hues radiate with the pulsing energy that makes the paintings of Keren Benafshi succeed so splendidly.

—Wilson Wong

Ways with Collage in West Side Show

Collage was crucial to the development of Cubism and thus to the entire evolution of modern art. That it still offers artists ample opportunity for experiment was made clear in a recent exhibition curated by Emily Rich at the West Side Arts Coalition at Broadway Mall Community Center (on the center island at 96th Street and Broadway).

Miriam Wills' fluid expressionistic images of flowers, butterflies and organic forms are intermingled in vibrant abstract compositions. Her synchronized colors, combined with harmonious naturalistic forms, reflect a vision of unity.

By contrast, Carolyn Kaplan uses fragments of collage as free floating elements. In her piece titled "911," as in others, free floating forms and objects create a sense of uncertainty, hidden danger and surprise.

Jordi Waggoner uses faded photographs and pictures of angelic figures in her collages, in which the fragmented images are integrated into a cohesive poetic vision. In one piece, two barges or ships float on a distant body of water, and in the foreground three faded photographs are like windows reflecting the underlying mystery of the scene.

Inge Price uses colorful torn paper fragments to generate rhythmic abstractions. Each work reflects a different pattern of

rhythms as in a complex musical composition.

Arlene Sheer's small poetic collages explore subtle visual metaphors for ideas and events that are emphasized in the titles of her work, such as "Not Again!," "The Doors of Perception," and "Two guys go into a bar..." The latter title humorously suggests that two angels on a city street are about to share a joke.

Maria De Simone exhibited dark red and green collages composed of rectangles and lines. Her austere, darkly evocative works reflect a formal sensibility and a keen understanding of spatial relationships.

Iris Berman's witty assemblages make use of dissected computers, wires, screws, washers, and other such items to create new environments for things that usually have a mechanical purpose.

Curator, Emily Rich explores two approaches to abstraction in her painterly collages. She uses torn pieces of canvas and string to create serene, creamy colored abstract beachscapes. In others, the ripped canvas is used to create bold energetic compositions. In both approaches, Rich's collages show a strong commitment to exploring abstract forms.

Dora Riomayor uses collage to create specific scenes of suburban houses and interiors with figures and flowers. Through her

use of shadows and dark areas, she takes an everyday setting and imbues it with mood and mystery.

Reena Kondo tackles difficult subject matter confidently in her intricate collages. In her circular composition of terrifying images from 911, she shows how difficult it is to comprehend the unfolding of a traumatic event. The circular arrangement of the images emphasizes the unreal or dreamlike quality of a tragedy.

Jack Dittrick uses everyday items to create his unique structures. In one of his constructions there is a little robot-type man seated in a styrofoam packing form. In this assemblage, he demonstrates how the most commonplace objects can be used as symbols to indicate isolation in a complex technological society.



Emily Rich

—Jeannie McCormack

John Manocherian: The Redemptive Gesture

To be an abstract painter in the postmodern era requires a certain act of faith. In order to persist in believing that forms and colors alone can suffice at a time when so many others, in the thrall of conceptualism and "idea art," have succumbed to the belief that paintings no longer matter as objects of aesthetic delectation, one must believe wholeheartedly that putting pigment on canvas or paper not only places one in a noble historical continuum but is one of the most important endeavors known to humankind.

Never having met him or had the opportunity to hear him express his views on the subject, this writer would not presume to know exactly if this is the opinion of the New York artist John Manocherian.

However, having seen the paintings he will exhibit at Cast Iron Gallery, 159 Mercer Street, from July 18 through August 3, one can attest to Manocherian's obvious commitment to the undying validity of pure painterly enterprise. In this regard, one can only assume that all of Manocherian's paintings are untitled because he does not wish to in any way lead the viewer astray by suggesting that his compositions allude directly to anything other than that which meets the eye.

This uncompromising stance, while common enough during the era when certain of the Abstract Expressionists were endeavoring to expunge all "literary" elements from painting in order to put the emphasis on the physical properties of the art object and preserve its abstract integrity, is relatively rare today.

Manocherian's paintings, however, insist on being viewed in those terms and succeed admirably by virtue of his ability to create powerful compositions and seductive surfaces. Ruggedly tactile and chromatically seductive, his acrylic paintings on canvas and paper project a lush sensuality that envelopes



"Untitled," 2002

the viewer and sweeps him or her up in their gestural force. At the same time, Manocherian, at least in his exhibition at Cast Iron Gallery, eschews the enormous scale that many of the Abstract Expressionists chose, in favor of relatively intimate formats. That the impact of Manocherian's paintings is in no way diminished by their intimacy attests to this artist's remarkable ability to invest each square inch of the canvas or paper with a sense of energy and lively visual incident.

In one untitled acrylic painting on canvas, Manocherian compels our attention with thick, succulent strokes of glisteningly visceral red pigment laid down in bold, broad swathes, perhaps with a palette knife or trowel. These vigorous incursions of a single vibrant color occur against the pure white of the paper, which shows through here and there, creating exquisite windows of relief from the relentlessly furious onslaught of converging and overlapping strokes. In another work of the same size, however, the

colors are contrastingly muddy and the strokes, while bold, swerve sinuously, covering most of the paper with serpentine curves. These slithery shapes flow gracefully over the sludge-like surface in a composition that is at once muscular and lyrical.

From one painting to the other, the viewer marvels at the sheer variety of forms, colors, and textures that

Manocherian conjures up in the act of painting. Seemingly sliding on the viscosity of the pigment itself, he employs a variety of gestures, from sinuous to blunt, to generate constantly shifting pictorial rhythms that, for all his refusal to title his paintings, suggest (at least to this viewer) all manner of allusions to landscape and other aspects of reality, even as the paintings maintain a striking abstract autonomy.

Not only does John Manocherian display a great deal of gestural inventiveness, he is also a remarkable colorist. Indeed, his liberal use of vibrant red, yellow, and blue hues, is as hedonistic and intrepid as that of Hans Hofmann or the British painter Howard Hodgkin. His combination of relatively intimate scale and intense color is especially akin to that of the latter artist. John Manocherian has his own unique approach, however, and his work is distinguished, above all, by its impressive commitment to the untrammelled painterly gesture.

—Dorothy K. Riordan

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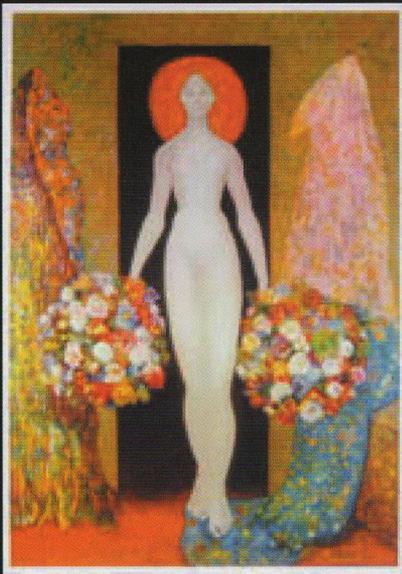
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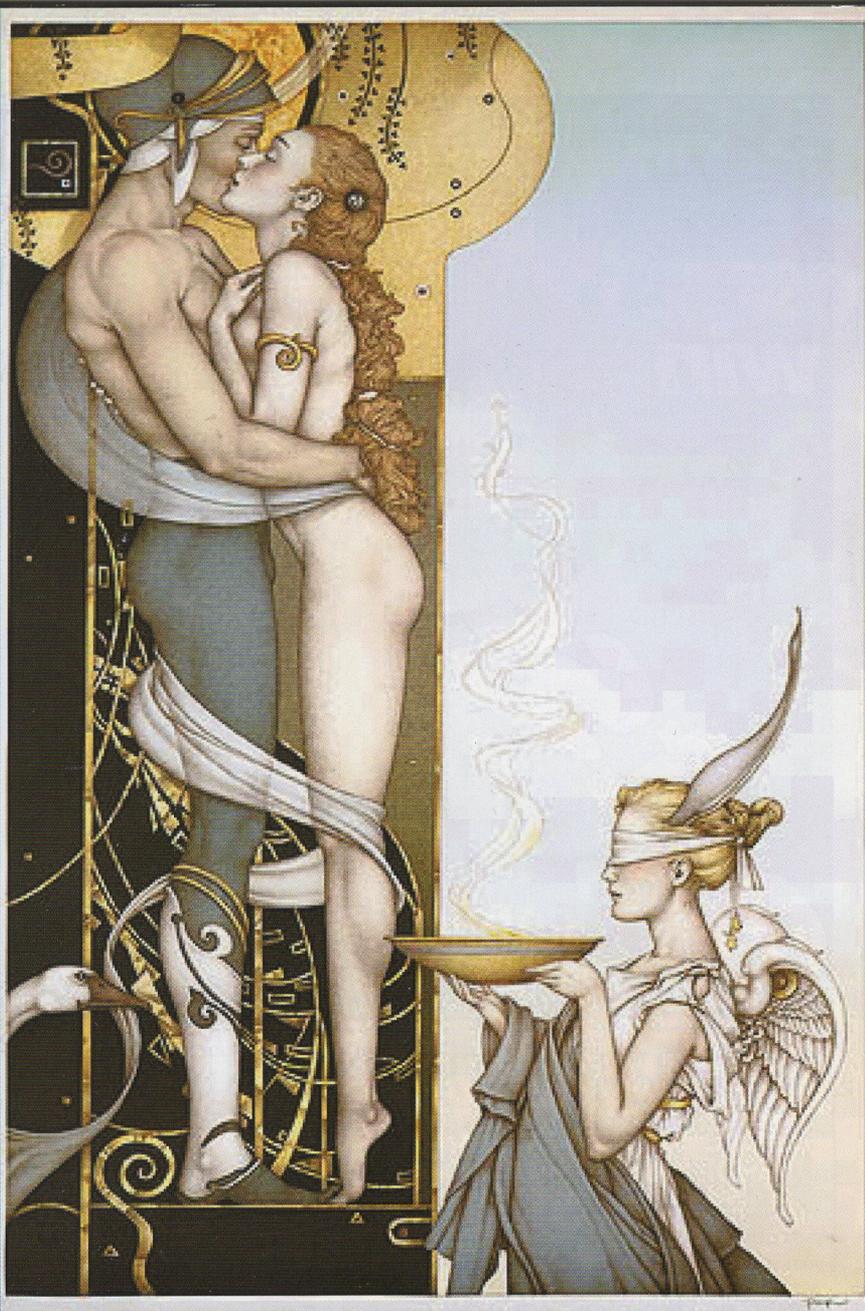


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