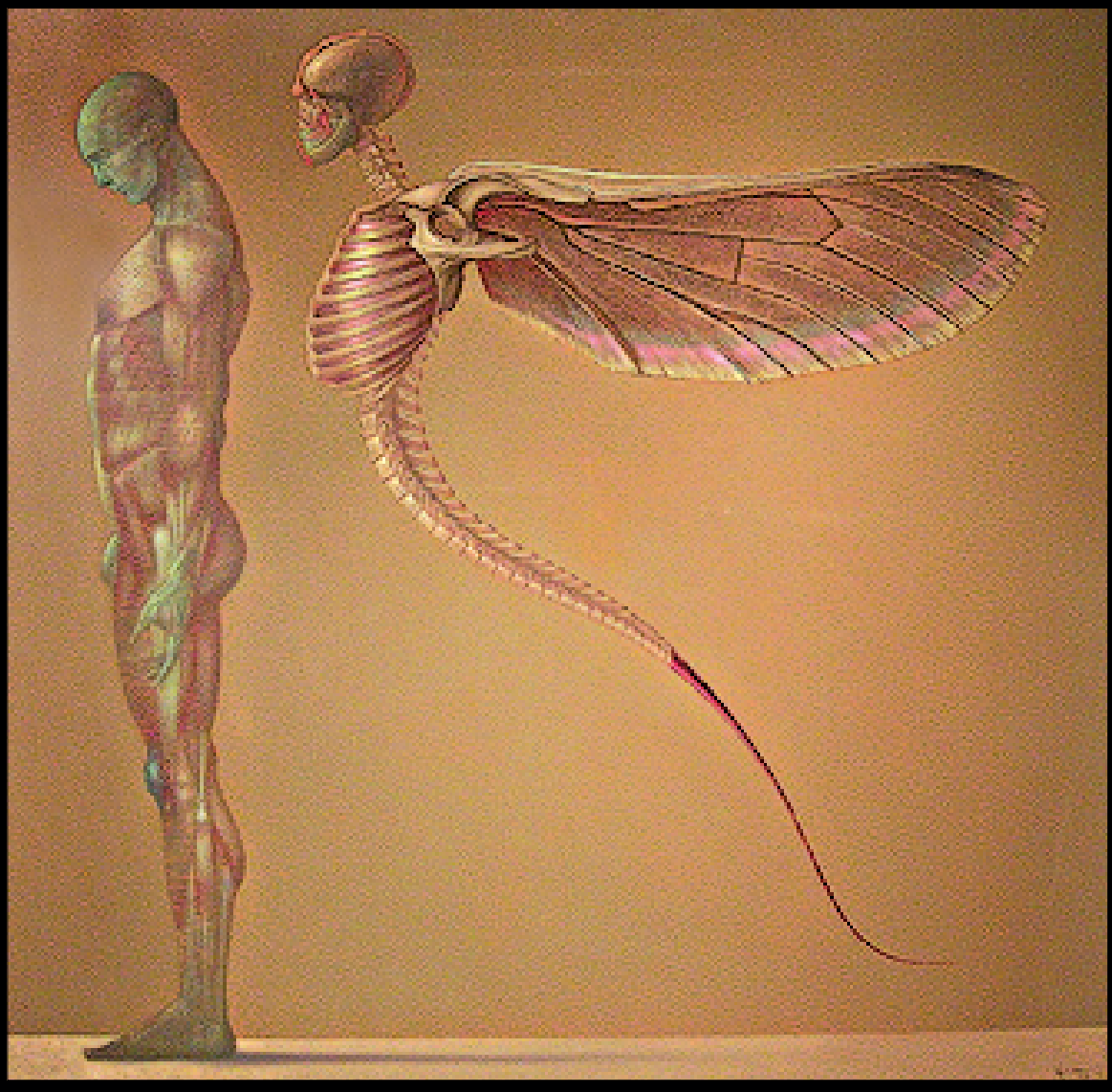
Vol. 6 No. 1 September/October 2003 New York

GALLERY&STUDIO

The World of the Working Artist



Michel Henricot

Premiere New York Exhibition

September 13 through October 5, 2003

CFM Gallery

112 Greene Street, SoHo, New York City 10012 (212) 966-3864 Fax (212) 226-1041

Monday thru Saturday 11am to 6pm Sunday Noon to 6pm

info@cfmgallery.com www.cfmgallery.com

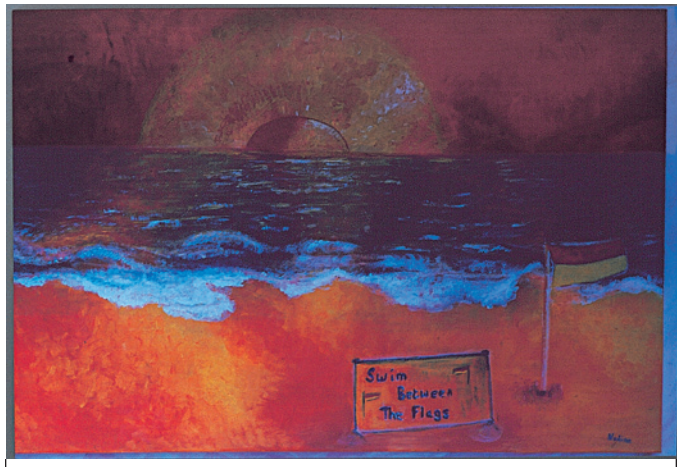
ABSTRACTIONS OF MOVEMENT

— A solo exhibition of large photographs —

ROBIN HERSTAND

OCTOBER 28, 2003 - DECEMBER 14, 2003

Narthex and Stairwell Gallery | Saint Peter's Church
619 Lexington Avenue New York, New York



"Cable Beach", Acrylic on canvas

Nadine Archibald

The Outback Visits New York

October 14 - November 1, 2003

Gelabert Studios Gallery

255 West 86th Steet • New York, N.Y. 10024
212 874 7188 • Tues-Sat 1 - 6pm
www.gelabertstudiosgallery.com

"Saga" (Detail) Mixed Media Installation Dimensions Variable

May DeViney

Schism

October 14 - November 1, 2003

Reception: Thursday, October 16, 5-8pm

Viridian Artists

530 West 25th Street, New York, NY 10001
(212) 414-4040 Tues - Sat 10:30am - 6pm

Tripping The Light Fantastic

The Annual Fine Art Photography Exhibition

September 24th - October 14th, 2003
Reception: Thursday, September 25th, 6-8pm

Alfonsina Betancourt, Dave Bown,
Michel Chansin, Donna L. Clovis,
Maureen Delaney, Lyn Gardiner,
Wes Hardison, Hisashi Kagawa, Daniel Lai,
Beth Parin, Anil Rao, Kelly Segre,
Protacio Serna

Agora Gallery

Gallery Hours: Tuesday - Saturday 12-6pm
415 West Broadway, SoHo New York, NY 10012
212 - 226 - 4151 / Fax: 212 - 966 - 4380
www.Agora-Gallery.com / www.Art-Mine.com

Japan Art Alliance

ALC Japan
Contemporary Artists
Painting • Sculpture • Works on paper

Exhibition:
October 3 - 25, 2003

WESTWOOD GALLERY

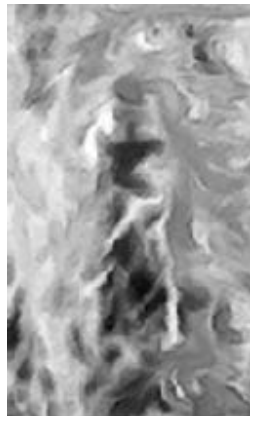
578 Broadway First Floor New York, NY 10012
Tel: 212-925-5700 Fax: 212-925-3449
E-mail: info@westwoodgallery.com
Web: www.westwoodgallery.com

Fujiko Komatsu, The Unseen Sky, acrylic on canvas, 76.5 x 57 in.

G&S Highlights

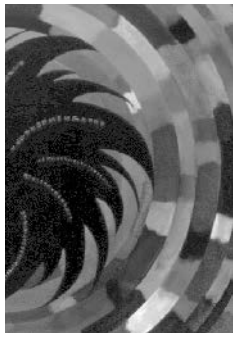
May DeViney, pg. 21

Kandace Barnes, pg. 29

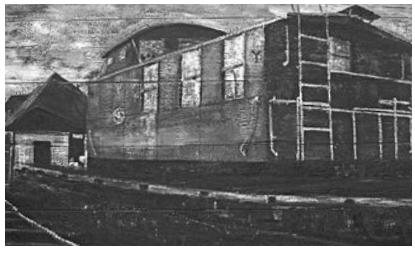


Nadine Archibald, pg. 11

On the Cover:
Michel Henricot *survived being the protegé of great Surrealist Leonor Fini to become a formidable painter in his own right. Well known in France, his first New York solo show, at CFM Gallery, is reviewed on page 3.*

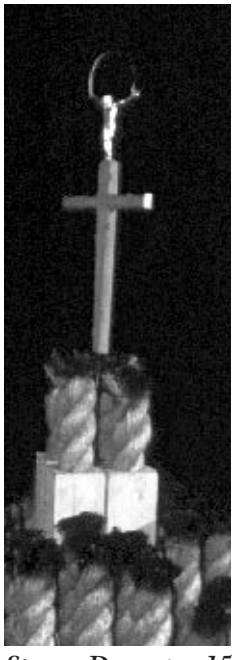


Ed Brodkin, pg. 23

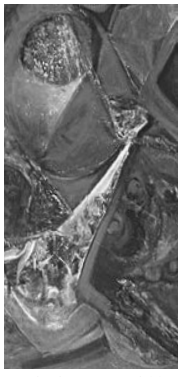


K.C. Davis, pg. 31

Siena Porta, pg. 27

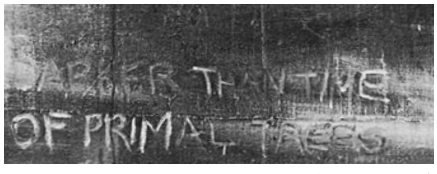


Steven Dono, pg. 15



Miriam Wills, pg. 8

Ekatherina Savtchenko, pg. 4



Amy Banker, pg. 25

Robin Herstand, pg. 9

Kiki, pg. 13

GALLERY&STUDIO
An International Art Journal
PUBLISHED BY

217 East 85th Street, PMB 228, New York, NY 10028
(212) 861-6814 E-mail: galleryandstudio@mindspring.com
http://home.mindspring.com/~galleryandstudio

EDITOR AND PUBLISHER **Jeannie McCormack**
MANAGING EDITOR **Ed McCormack**
SPECIAL EDITORIAL ADVISOR **Margot Palmer-Poroner**
DESIGN AND PRODUCTION **Karen Mullen**
CONTRIBUTING EDITOR **Juliet M. Ross**

Michel Henricot's Pas de deux of Sensuality and Mortality

The art of the painter Michel Henricot comes to us enveloped in personal legend. As a youth Henricot, who was born in France in 1940, was known for his surpassing beauty, which caught the eye of the great surrealist painter Leonor Fini. From the early 1970s to the late eighties, the pair spent every summer together. Photos from that time, showing the glamorous feline-featured older woman and the handsome young man lounging poolside in gossamer white garments reminiscent of Roman togas, attest to the intimacy they shared in Fini's Arcadian preserve of private fantasy. Knowing Fini's predilection for beauty, whatever gender it happened to present itself to her in, this seems no surprise. However, Michel Henricot was by no means a mere "boy-toy," to borrow a term popularized by the pop diva Madonna. No, he was a gifted painter in his own right, and the most remarkable aspect of his relationship with Fini is that he managed to be the protege of a personality so formidable, so all encompassing, without surrendering his own artistic identity on the sacrificial altar of her greatness.

The significance of this accomplishment is everywhere evident in Michel Henricot's first New York solo exhibition at CFM Gallery, 112 Greene Street, from September 13 to October 5.

Neil Zukerman, the owner and director of CFM Gallery, who revived Fini's career in the U.S. after her often self-destructive willfulness all but eclipsed her visibility here, has been collecting Henricot's work for some time and has featured select paintings in group shows at the gallery. Up until now, there have not been enough canvases for a solo show, since according to Zukerman they have a way of being snatched from the artist's easel by French collectors almost before the paint is dry. But Zukerman can be a very persuasive man once he decides that the time is right to mount a major exhibition of an artist whose work he believes in, and the present show demonstrates that his persistence has been well worthwhile.

To enter a gallery filled with Henricot's pictures is to find oneself transported to a private world as timelessly hermetic as that of Odd Nerdrum or H.R. Giger. Indeed, Henricot's neoclassical realist technique is every bit as refined as Nerdrum's and his ability to subject the human figure to endless permutations of metamorphosis is as impressive as that of Giger. Henricot's imagery, however, is less disturbing and more aesthetically pleasing than that of the other two artists, for his compositions are invariably possessed of underlying abstract qualities which make it possible for him to depict a startling variety of figurative anomalies without verging on the grotesque.

"L'Incendiaire"

Take, for example, a painting such as "Fusion," in which a skeletalized human body is seen in extreme perspective so that only the top of the skull, shoulder-bones, and ribcage are visible. One's vantage point could very well be one end of an embalming table or a slab in a morgue, yet the image is transcendent rather than morbid. This has, in part, to do with a thin red line, resembling a beam of light, emanating from the figure's breastbone and dissecting the composition at its center. Adding further to the metaphysical mystery of the picture is the fact that, seen from this angle, the human cadaver resembles some exotic form of crustacean, suggesting a mystical transformation of organic matter and one life form morphing into another in an endless cycle of regeneration.

This sense of metamorphosis is even more emphatic in "Idole I" and "Idole II," two related paintings in which the centrally placed image, set against beautifully modulated areas of smooth, subdued color, seems to simultaneously symbolize a human torso and some otherworldly life form hovering mysteriously in space. Here, as in all of Henricot's paintings, the emblematic symmetry of the composition enables the artist to imbue his canvas with all the virtues of abstraction, albeit without leaving out all the riches of the world and the human imagination.

Like Richard Lindner and very few other contemporary painters, Henricot employs abstract design as an armature to bolster his figurative fantasies and lend them a powerful visual impact. In Henricot's case, this is all the more remarkable for the subtle tonalities he employs: deep blues and rich earth colors, set off by pale pink, violet, and purple hues that emit a luminous glow. His mastery in the lighter register is especially lovely in "Jardin des délices — Le Matin," in which fanciful organic forms, somewhere between flowers and fungi, flow and glow with a delicate luminosity akin to that other chromatic visionary Odilon Redon.

The abstract qualities that animate Henricot's compositions also extend to his more overtly figurative paintings, such as "Voyage," where a single figure is seen from above, bracketed between the sides of a small boat, and "Le Voyageur IV," in which a standing male nude with clearly defined tendons, as in an anatomy chart, is seen in profile with a large skeletal figure—seemingly a human/avian hybrid with butterfly wings!— hovering behind him.

In other paintings by Michel Henricot, such as "L'Incendiaire," "La Tentation," and "L'Alcôve," classically comely male nudes are fettered and bound in a manner evoking a host of intriguing allusions, from mummy wrappings to the trappings of sado-masochistic games. In yet other canvases, such as "Araiere Payse," mysterious ruins, as intricate as the mazes in Escher's prints, range over vast, sandy terrains, attesting to Henricot's ability to paint landscapes as evocative as his figurative subjects.

Critics have gone to great lengths to interpret the paintings of Michel Henricot, citing diverse sources from Greek mythology to ancient Egypt, and the artist himself has contributed to the mystery surrounding his work by likening painting to archaeology and speaking of it as "an act which connects me to a very old past." And like his mentor Fini, he has shown considerable theatrical flair, posing for a photographer in elaborate make-up and silken Mandarin robe, clutching a bizarre mask bearing the unmistakable face of the Cat Lady herself. But it is the paintings that speak to us most eloquently, conjuring an extraordinary realm where sensuality and mortality enact a graceful pas de deux; where supple naked bodies appear suspended weightlessly in an irresistible limbo of stones and bones.

—Ed McCormack

Ekatherina Savtchenko: Intrepid Traveler on a Highway to the Unknown

"I am interested in diffusing reality's boundaries, in crossing the STOP line of our consciousness to the other side of the unknown," says the Russian-born artist Ekatherina Savtchenko, who lives and works in Germany. "I am ready to meet the unknown."

Toward that end, in her most recent work, Savtchenko has invested the time-honored genre of the self-portrait with new life, adding to a list of laurels that is already quite impressive for a young artist. A veteran of several highly praised exhibitions in New York, Japan, and throughout Europe, as well as a prestigious survey at the Russian State Museum in St. Petersburg, Savtchenko's newest solo venture can be seen at A. Jain Marunouchi Gallery, 24 West 57th Street, from September 15 through 27.

One first became aware of Savtchenko's work in 2001, with her exhibition "The Primal Universe," at Westwood Gallery in Soho. The show featured several very large acrylic paintings on canvas in which the universe was embodied and eroticized as an anthropomorphic archetype. These works were monumental neo-expressionistic extravaganzas, inspired in part by Hindu myths, as well as by Scandinavian legends of Ymir, the Glacial Giant whose body transformed into the entire cosmos. They were daring and ambitious in scale and theme in an in-your-face manner akin to that of the young Julian Schnabel. Although unassuming and petite in person, Savtchenko came off on canvas as a painter with a similarly "macho" desire to establish her presence on the scene by making a heroic painterly gesture. And she succeeded admirably, for her "Primal Universe" paintings were aggressive in the very best sense of the term, clearly making the point that a woman artist could convincingly adopt a stance every bit as grandiose as that of Schnabel or Basquiat.

Indeed, in another major exhibition earlier the same year in another Soho venue, Savtchenko explored other Big Themes—among them, the mathematical formulas behind the chaos theory, the structure of human brain cells, and the ethical consequences of genetic cloning—in equally aggressive kaleidoscopic compositions of swirling circular shapes and figures.

More recently, earlier this year and in the present show, Savtchenko has continued her habit of delivering a one-two punch by staging serial solo shows during the same art season. However, having already made the point that she can sling paint on a large scale with the best of them, Savtchenko has adopted the more intimate format of the painted photograph in her two most recent exhibitions. Yet, one has only to consider the statement by the artist that opened this review —"I am ready to meet the unknown"— to realize that the reduction in scale indicates no diminishment of confidence or ambition on the part of this scrappy contender in the gladiatorial arena of high-stakes contemporary painting.

As in her previous show of painted photographs at Jain Marunouchi, the present exhibition in the same venue features images of the artist as an integral element in her compositions. With her blond bangs and waifish good looks, the photogenic artist was able to cast herself convincingly as the virgin sacrificed to the god of spring, in an earlier series of painted photographs, inspired by Igor Stravinsky's avant garde ballet "Le Sacre du Printemp"—or "The Rite of Spring." In that series, her image was skillfully integrated with a painted landscape that evoked not only Stravinsky's celebration of Russian paganism, but also Celtic tales, and Norse nature myths, the mix-and-match approach being part and parcel of her postmodern sensibility.

Indeed, in this series of "dreams," as she referred to them, the integration of figure within a landscape saturated by vibrant rainbow hues was so complete as to beg comparison with the human bodies mummified for hundreds of years in the bogs of Ireland , as well as with such mythic figures as the Nature Nymph and the Earth Mother.

In Savtchenko's most recent painted photographs, however, the figure to ground relationships are decidedly more discrete, with the artist strolling or dancing amid generally more abstract areas of brilliant color. These hues are predominantly the fiery reds, yellows, and oranges that one recalls from her large canvases exhibited in Soho. Here, too, the artist is clad not in the long gown, suggestive of the sacrificial virgin, that she wore in the Stravinsky-inspired series, but in the black slacks and top—the basic bohemian outfit— that she favors for street wear. Thus, she represents not a mythic character, but herself in her everyday persona, as she moves through her natural element of paint, insinuating herself right into the center of the pictorial drama to update the tradition of self-portraiture in a manner that is equally exciting in both painterly and conceptual terms.

In some of her new pictures, photographic elements of a landscape, a highway, or other exterior locales can be discerned seeping through the acrylic pigment, diluted to a semi-transparent consistency. These settings have a phantom quality, like places from a dimly remembered dream, and as she traverses them Savtchenko encounters stick figures almost identical to those in her larger paintings on canvas. It has been noted that these figures have a certain stylistic kinship with the pictographic personages of both A.R. Penck and Keith Haring, as well as with primitive petroglyphs. In the context of Savtchenko's painted photographs, however, these severely simplified, silhouetted figures could also resemble aliens from outer space.

Indeed, there is a suggestion of the encounters that some earthlings claim to have had with such extraterrestrials in some of the new pictures. In one, the artist assumes a trance-like posture, her arms dangling at her sides, while a single silhouetted figure levitates above her head, the positions of its arms suggesting those of a hypnotist. In another called "Contact"—the title itself suggestive of such Spielbergian encounters—Savtchenko strolls somnabulately toward three broadly gesturing stick figures. Although the strange beings appear to be trying to spook her, she strides on intrepidly— as if in a quite literal demonstration of her stated readiness to face the unknown!

Equally, literal, in regard to the artist's statement about "diffusing reality's boundaries" is another work, in which Savtchenko is seen seated in the cross-legged posture of a 1960s "flower child," blond hair blowing in the breeze, before the big letters of the word STOP, stenciled on a highway. The composition is divided into bold areas of red and blue, the vibrantly saturated hues contributing to the almost psychedelic sense of adventure. Here, too, Savtchenko presents herself as an intrepid hitchhiker en route to the unknown.

The highway motif also figures prominently in another painted

photograph, in which the tiny image of the artist and a single, spooky stick figure approach each other on a broad stretch of blacktop with telephone poles receding in deep perspective and a blaze of yellow, phosphorescent as an explosion, enlivening the red sky above distant mountain ranges. Although this setting could actually be anywhere in the modern world, in the context of this Russian-born artist's work, one thinks of the great descriptions of rural American highways in her fellow countryman Vladimir Nabokov's novel "Lolita." And, indeed, Savtchenko's rapid succession of New York exhibitions suggests that she sees success in the U.S. as key to fulfilling her ultimate dream of artistic glory.

"When I am painting, I feel like a godhead creating a new world," Ekatherina Savtchenko has stated, and unlike a great many of her contemporaries, it is clear that she intends no irony. It is precisely this single-minded self-belief and the passionate intensity it engenders that makes Sevtchenko an artist whose work exerts a powerful fascination.

—Ed McCormack

"Encountering the Unknown 4," painted photograph at A. Jain Marunouchi Gallery, 24 W. 57th Street, September 15 -27.

Women Artists at Cornwall: Nature as Culture Shock

Encountering the exceptional recent exhibition "American Women Artists at Cape Cornwall 1992-2002: The Brisons Veor Residency," at The Painting Center, 52 Greene Street, one was put in mind of Jon Schueler's poetic memoir "The Sound of Sleat."

A slightly younger colleague of Kline and de Kooning in the 1950s, Schueler left the comfort and camaraderie of the New York School to face isolation and hardship in a remote area of the Scottish highlands. Although its rugged landscape and dramatic skies inspired Schueler's best work, many considered his relocation a disastrous career move at a time when all eyes were focused on America.

Without making that ultimate sacrifice, the nine New York artists at The Painting Center found their own inspiration during briefer stays in a similarly remote region of southwest England called Cape Cornwall, known for its copper and tin mines and its picturesque Neolithic ruins. Here, each of them lived and worked at different times over a decade in a granite house provided for writers and poets in the winter and for visual artists in the summer.

Each of these urban painters reacted differently to the untamed landscape, unearthly light, and occasionally threatening weather conditions at Cape Cornwall, where high winds and hurricane gales frequently batter the shore. All, however, produced works with an edgy beauty suggesting a kind of natural culture shock.

Reportedly, the late Gail Cohen Edelman, who was the first American painter to take up residency there in 1992, experienced one of the violent storms common to the region and it made a deep impression on her. Streaking linear forms resembling lightning bolts often enliven Edelman's darkly dramatic mixed media works, which are imposing in scale and were among the most abstract works in the show. Also influenced by the dolmens, burial mounds, and stone circles left behind by Neolithic peoples, Edelman's dynamic compositions capture a sense of the metaphysical forces underlying nature.

Possessed of all the power and presence of oils, the large watercolors of Stephanie Rauschenbusch, such as "Vertiginous and Stormy View from Cape Cornwall," seem simultaneously akin to the drawings of van Gogh and the paintings of Charles Burchfield, for their transcription of the landscape into rhythmically jotted forms that fairly writhe with energy. In light-filled strokes and luminous washes, Rauschenbusch delineates the shapes, colors, and textures of tall grasses, roiling cloud formations, and the piled stones of a prehistoric barrow, or burial mound, depicting each in considerable detail without sacrificing the bold masses that lend her compositions their strong formal thrust.

Working in oil on linen, masonite, and aluminum, Marcia Clark, best known for her large, panoramic New York City views, brings her expansive vision to bear on the landscape in a gestural yet descriptive style. Clark's fluid brushwork ranges over three joined swatches of linen, staggered to enhance the sense of steepness, in one especially hilly vista called "Climb to the Tower," which demonstrates this artist's ability to evoke a sense of sweeping grandeur on any scale.

Some of Sharyn Finnegan's meticulous realist oils are almost miniature in scale yet heroic in spirit, particularly her series depicting the distinctive Brisons rocks—craggy black mineral formations that rise monolithically out of the ocean— at different times of day and engulfed in fog. Finnegan's painting of the granite residence itself, nestled on the cliff side with the chimney of one of the area's now-abandoned tin mines rising skyward in the distance, gives a vivid sense of the locale's isolated majesty.

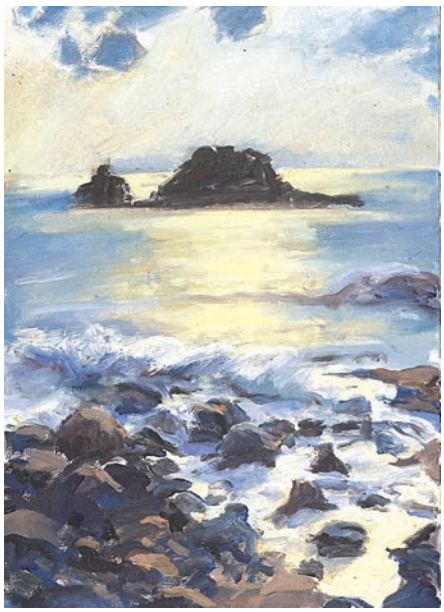
In her juicily painted bravura oils, Lynne Friedman was particularly taken with the interaction of the rugged rock-croppings and the sea, as seen in the series "Land's End: Cornwall," as well as in "Sunset," where a sloping hill appears illuminated from within, as foamy waves flow below. By contrast, Friedman's pen and ink triptych "Waves and Tides" charts sinuous abstract patterns in the movement of water.

"Alice's House," a vigorous acrylic painting by Nancy Beal evokes the pastoral serenity of a small dwelling nestled among verdant hills. In another canvas, Beal sets a vase of bright red flowers and other homey still life objects before a window, as though in a poignant effort to domesticate the wild landscape outside.

By contrast, along with a group of pastels, Fran Hodes showed an intricately composed oil on canvas called "A Window in Cornwall," in which a large stuffed bird, a butterfly in a glass dome, various fruits, and all manner of other objects are crowded onto a table. Here, the antic profusion of the still life rivals the wildness of the window-view of crashing surf and the Brisons rocks, rendered by Hodes with hyper-real exactitude.

Pattern painter Ann Schaumburger's for-

Nancy Beal



Judy Zeichner

Gail Cohen Edelman

mal approach made her something of an anomaly in this show. Working in gouache and acrylic on paper, she took as her sole subject the horses that graze the fields of Cape Cornwall, schematizing their simplified outlines in optically dazzling abstract compositions. However, Schaumburger also incorporated other aspects of her surroundings, such as the designs in the tiles in the bathroom of the granite house, into her compositions, thereby investing them with personal resonance even while retaining their formal purity.

Then there was Judy Zeichner, who captured transcendent qualities of light in oils such as "End of Storm," where dramatic clouds hover over the craggy shapes of the Brisons rocks, rising out of shimmering waters that culminate in foamy curls along the rocky shoreline. Contrastingly down to earth, although equally striking for the deft brevity of its composition, was Zeichner's painting of an artist standing at an easel facing out to sea, not far from a parked car. Come to think of it, the automobile, only partially visible in the boldly cropped composition, was among the few images in the entire show signifying the world beyond this remote, ancient place where nine gifted women

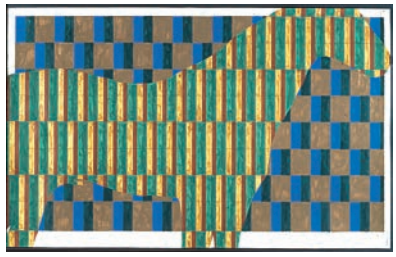
Lynne Friedman

painters discovered unexpected epiphanies.

How each artist responded in her own unique manner to the same natural stimuli, creating a unique statement, says something profound about the mysteries of human perception and creative vision. And how this splendid group effort escaped the attention of so-called Major Media is something of a mystery in itself, since "American Women Artists at Cornwall" was one of the most enjoyable and important theme shows to come along in quite some time.

—Ed McCormack

Fran Hodes



Sharyn Finnegan

Stephanie Rauschenbusch

Marcia Clark

Miriam Wills Animates the Still Life

If taken too literally the French term for still life, nature mort, can suggest that there is something less than vital about paintings of inanimate objects. However, the new still life paintings of Miriam Wills demonstrate that nothing could be further from the truth. Indeed, the mixed media works in Wills' "Fruit Medley" and "Floral Medley" series are every bit as rollicking as her earlier paintings of carousel horses.

Clearly, the dynamism of Wills' paintings does not depend on the specific characteristics of her subject matter. Rather, it emanates from the combination of energetic paint-handling and seamlessly integrated collage materials with which she animates her compositions.

"Enjambment" is a term that usually describes the way clauses and other grammatical units play off each other in poetry. But it too can be applied just as aptly to how vigorous painted passages and appropriated photo-images of fruits and flowers interact in Wills' new paintings. Wills' habit of compositional compression puts such pressure on her imagery that one almost expects juice to spurt from the glistening fruits in her pictures! In a review of a past exhibition, her compositions were described as vortex-like, and that locution still applies to a painting such as "Fruit Medley #4," where the collage images are interwoven among boldly swirling forms as rhythmical as those in Brice Marden's "Cold Mountain" paintings.

Here, as in all of her compositions, the painted color areas are skillfully matched to or harmonized with the hues in the photographic images, creating a harmonious melding of values. While the more turbulent subject matter in Wills' earlier paintings, particularly her "Carousel Horse" series, tended to upstage her formidable formal gifts, here her skills as a colorist and composer of abstract forms come to the forefront. In fact, for all intents and purposes her still life pictures actually are abstractions, with the forms and flowers functioning more as formal than descriptive elements. In this regard, Wills' use of collage seems akin to Picasso and Braque's early Cubist experiments, although her organic forms and rugged paint surfaces are more reminiscent of such homespun American abstract pioneers as Arthur Dove and Joseph Stella.

Few artists whose names spring immediately to mind, however, can compete with Wills when it comes to choreographing a composition cram-packed with an intricate array of forms and colors. She has been called a "Maximalist" and the word certainly fits in terms of her ability to juggle a diverse range of elements and finally orchestrate them into a visually coherent whole.

"Wills' Open Studio exhibition can be seen at 89 Park Avenue (between Newark & 1st Sts.), Hoboken, New Jersey, 07030, from 12 to 6 PM on Sunday, October 19th. For information call 201-659-3427 or 212-982-7196.

Especially exemplary in this regard are "Fruit Medley #2," where contrasts between swerving and angular color areas create a dynamic sense of Hofmannesque push and pull, and "Floral Medley #11," in which the soft, fleshy petals of delicate pink flowers float over stark black and white piano keys. Both pictures succeed by virtue of Wills' mastery of compositional point and counterpoint—particularly her ability to bring lyrical and harsher elements into close harmony.

Indeed, the art of Miriam Wills is an art of convergence and contrast. Collage elements and areas of color converge and skirmish on the picture plane only to be resolved by the artist's muscular strokes and gestures, which pull the various components of the composition into a hard-won harmony in the act of painting. The spontaneous process she employs has its precedent in that of the Abstract Expressionists, although her use of collage to provide imagistic accents also dictates a slightly more deliberate approach, just as her ability to balance nonobjective and representational elements makes Wills a quintessentially postmodern artist.

—Lawrence Downes

At St. Peter's Church: The Painterly Photography of Robin Herstand

"Subway"

In a little over a century, photography made tremendous strides to transcend its documentary origins, and in recent decades has finally achieved parity with painting as a major fine art medium. Much of its progress in this regard occurred in the 1960s, when a handful of forward-looking fine art photographers started experimenting with color, which had been stigmatized by its association with commercial magazine and advertising photography since the thirties. While old school purists such as Walker Evans railed against color as a "corrupting influence" on photography and denounced it as "just plain vulgar," the art form was dragged kicking and screaming into the contemporary arena to challenge the primacy of painting by brave souls like Joel Meyrowitz and William Eggleston. Especially influential in establishing color photography as a medium to contend with was Eggleston's 1976 exhibition at the Museum of Modern Art, the catalog of which noted that Eggleston's importance lay in "his bold acceptance of the fact that the world itself existed in color " and that "the blue and the sky were one thing."

Which brings us to the present and to the photography of Robin Herstand, whose many splendored solo show of large color photographs can be seen at the Narthex and Stairwell Galleries/Saint Peter's Church, 619 Lexington Avenue, from October 28 through December 14.

Herstand's photographs, which range in size from 16 by 20 to 40 by 60 inches have a boldness and physical presence one usually associates with abstract painting. However, as Herstand's explains, "My works are not photos of paintings, multiple exposures, or drastically altered in Photoshop on a computer. The work is produced using straight photography with color negative film that is custom printed in a color darkroom on photographic paper."

In this regard, Herstand is something of a purist herself, considering how many of her contemporaries employ digital methods to achieve their effects. However, her approach is anything but traditional, she goes on to explain, saying, "I produce this work under conditions which introduce a series of rapidly changing uncontrolled variables that work to alter and distort the representational qualities of these images. But while these variables may be uncontrolled as to their presence and action, they are carefully selected and balanced against one another and the image is made at that precise, fleeting moment in time when balance of color, image, focus and blur are obtained."

This reviewer first became aware of Herstand's work when she exhibited some of her ground breaking photographs of Times Square in a group show at the Broome Street Gallery in Soho. Given that Herstand has a background in social work and that these photos were done before Times Square had been Disneyfied, when it was still a tawdry, preserve for peep shows, hookers, and drug dealers, one might have expected her to take a social realist approach. Instead, Herstand photographed The Great White Way in nocturnal rain, creating phantasmagoric images of neon dissolving in puddles and faceless pedestrians passing like ethereal beings which seemed to signal the emergence of a truly visionary talent.

Herstand's new exhibition at the Citicorp Center confirms one's first impression that Robin Herstand is destined to make a significant contribution to the evolution of what can only be termed painterly photography. Indeed, her approach calls to mind the blurry imagery of Gerhard Richter's realist paintings, themselves derived from photography, but her pictures seem all the more authentic for having been achieved solely with the camera. For Herstand employs the camera with a fluidity rarely seen, even among her experimental peers, achieving images of a singular beauty, both in terms of their compositional originality and her manner of manipulating color.

Take the large photograph called "Beat the Donkey," for one especially exciting example. Since the title of Herstand's picture is also the name of a rock band, one can only assume that the fragmented figures partially discernible within its kaleidoscopic composition electric hues are musicians. But while it is fun to search for clues in Herstand's pictures, literal subject matter is hardly the point. Indeed, if anything Herstand comes closer to capturing the music itself than merely the figures of the musicians in this virtuoso image of shifting forms and pulsing electric red, blue, yellow and violet hues.

Somewhat more subdued in color, although equally exciting in another manner is "Subway," in which the comparison to the aforementioned Gerhard Richter seems most apt. Two shadowy figures stand like phantoms on the platform, bracketed between columns, as the train streaks by in a purple blur, while other mysterious forms which may or may not be figures appear in the distance. Although more abstract than descriptive, Herstand's "Subway" is a picture as compelling in its own way as George Tooker's famous realist painting of the same subject in the collection of MOMA.

Although subject matter can be discerned amid the forms and colors in many of Herstand's pictures, others would not be identifiable without their titles. One of these is "Department Store," in which Herstand has created a composition resembling nothing so much as a vigorous gestural composition from the Abstract Expressionist era. Equally dynamic in pure formal terms is "Toy Store," where cheery red and yellow hues and rhythmically repetitive shapes evoke a sense of playfulness without focusing on anything really recognizable.

Somewhat more surreal is "Wax Museum," in which a closeup of a hand, a foot, and tile floor are readily recognizable, although one cannot tell if they are parts of living people or waxen effigies, since the severe cropping of the image renders it mysterious and ultimately unknowable. Each of Robin Herstand's color photographs, in fact, possesses its own special secrets. Consequently, her images are closer to poetry than to prose, in that they compel us with allusions and metaphors rather than through documentary evidence. Indeed, Robin Herstand is very much in the vanguard of the continuing evolution of the fine art of photography.

—Lawrence Downes

Major K. A. C. A. L. Survey Celebrates 100 Years of Korean Art in the U.S.

If Korean art has recently emerged as a force to be reckoned with in the New York art scene, much of the credit must go to the artist Daniel Daeshik Choi and his wife Jung Kyu Choi, who have worked tirelessly over the past few years to make art audiences in this country aware of the couple's considerable cultural contribution made by Korean and Korean-American artists. The couple's most recent venture, presented by Korean American Contemporary Arts Ltd., the organization they founded, and sponsored by Korea Times was "Centennial: Korean-American Artists," a large survey of some 120 participants in celebration of the one hundred year anniversary of Koreans in the United States.

Seen through August 31st at Puffin Room Gallery, 435 Broome Street in Soho, the exhibition included artists working in traditional techniques of ink painting, along with artists experimenting with more modern modes of expression. Both forms seem to be interrelated in significant ways, since even Korean artists who emigrate to the United States retain a strong sense of their cultural heritage and many integrate it with Western forms of expression in new and innovative ways.

Daniel Daeshik Choi is certainly a fine example of this. Here, he was represented by graceful calligraphic drawings on long scrolls, as well as by an emotionally affecting sculptural installation of two structures representing the destroyed Twin Towers of the World Trade Center. Covered with collaged newspaper pages relating to the tragedy of 9/11, they were the setting of a traditional Korean dance to appease the dead which was performed at the gala reception for the exhibition. Also presented at the show's opening were an authentic Korean tea ceremony and demonstrations of calligraphy and brush painting.

With so many fine artists participating it is impossible to do a show of this size and scope true justice. Many worthy artists are bound to be omitted for no reason other than space limitations. At most, one can choose artists whose work demonstrates by its variety the diverse talents represented. Among the younger generation, one of these was Esther Chen, whose dynamic mixed media self-portrait propped a photo-collaged face of the artist atop a painted nude body surrounded by a rain of real ten and twenty dollar bills to make a strong statement against materialism, as emphasized by its title, "Meaningless."

Another gifted young artist, Seong Ran Hong, revealed impressive lyricism in her painting "The Memories," where photo-images were half submerged under many layers of paper and tactile painted color areas in an abstract composition conveying a variety of emotions ranging from joy to sorrow. Photographer Joon Park also made an impressive contribution with his strong gelatin silver print, "Dream of America," juxtaposing four fishes with the stars and stripes, while painter Kyung Hee Park a frequent exhibitor in New York City, showed a characteristically whimsical acrylic painting on canvas featuring sinuous biomorphic forms.

Jung Kyo Choi and Daniel Daeshik Choi

Video pioneer Nam June Paik, easily the best-known Korean artist in the U.S., was represented by an intriguing abstract oil called "Jacob's Ladder," consisting of a few swift forms on a white primed canvas. Although world famous for his installations of stacked television sets, the calligraphic thrust of this work by Paik, in keeping with the theme of this exhibition, seemed more related to his Korean heritage.

Although not quite as well known here as Paik, another distinguished elder artist in this show was Kim Po, a New York resident since 1957, whose work is in the collection of the Guggenheim Museum. Here Po was represented by a small expressionistic paining of a head possessed of a raw, primitive power. Yet another notable painter, Young Jin Park, showed a semi-abstract canvas in which vibrant colors were combined with cursive forms in whose sensually swelling contours of birds and other figurative references could be discerned. By contrast, Jung Chung Seo showed an atmospheric realist oil of small boats set against mountains and watery reflections in the golden glow of afternoon light. Also quite accomplished in a realist manner was a pencil drawing of tigers by Sheen Young Kang, an artist and physician who instituted an innovative prison art program for convicted felons in Korea.

Among the more avant garde works were Jennifer Cho's "Haystack," an installation of glittering twig-like shapes casually stacked in a corner of the gallery; an abstract grid of Styrofoam squares in a plexiglass box by Soo Kyung Kang, and Jinja Kim's sculpture of a rudimentary house sitting on top of a large clear plastic cube filled with colorful paper. Other strong sculptures were Soung Cheul Park's two small black abstract pieces, as mysterious and hermetic as the work of Louise Nevelson, and an intricately convoluted large wood coil by Sa Hyun Choi. Also compelling in another manner was a sculpture of two slender, severely simplified figures in sterling silver by Komelia Hongja O. Kim which was notable for its sleek elegance and use of a precious metal in a fine art context.

Painters, however, were more numerous in this show and one whose work held considerable interest was Myounghee Kang whose painting "Ambition" was darkly evocative in the manner of Arthur Dove. At the same time, there were also echoes of Arshile Gorky in Kang's biomorphic forms, which appeared to allude to landscape, particularly mountains, yet retained an intriguing abstract autonomy. Then there were Hyun Chough, whose mixed media paintings are familiar to New York gallery goers for their rugged assemblage elements awash in the vibrant red hues that have become her stylistic signature; an emblematic acrylic painting by Hayan Kim, an intrepid young artist who combines neo-pop imagery with bright color areas reminiscent of the Russian Constructivists; Jeong Sook Doh, whose mixed media painting "Song of Good Things" employed gesture and texture with winning vivacity; and the varied visual vocabulary of the late Sung Pyo Han, a gentle soul who combined passages of Abstract Expressionist brushwork with scrawled drawings in his lively collage paintings and whose death in 1999 was a real loss to the Korean art community.

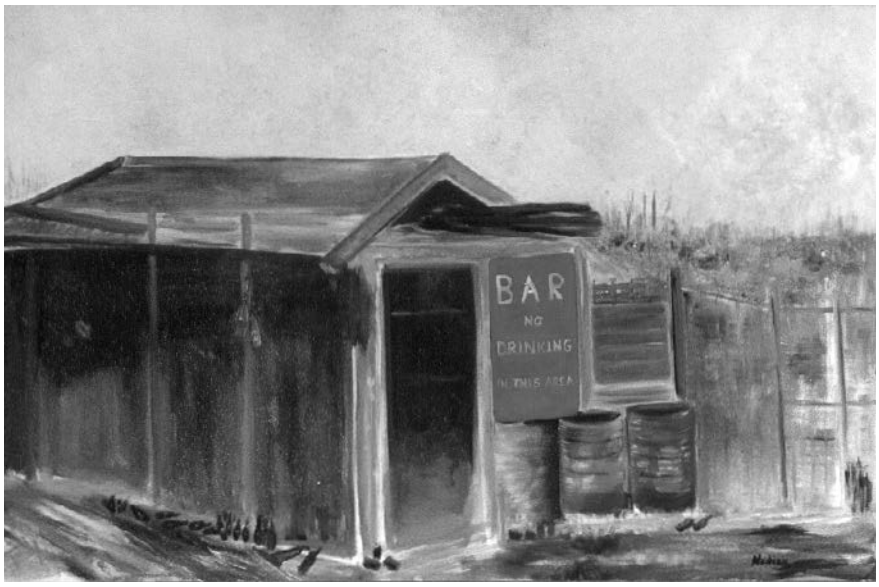
Mr. and Mrs. Choi have made an important contribution to establishing Korean American artists in New York City, as Mayor Michael Bloomberg noted in an official proclamation commending the efforts of Korean American Contemporary Arts Limited. Given its timely nature, this "Centennial" exhibition, especially, is one of their major achievements.

—J. Sanders Eaton

Exploring the Outback with Aussie Artist Nadine Archibald

Robert Hughes has noted that there has been "very little informed argument about Australian painting," and one might add that this is particularly true of contemporary Australian painting, especially here in the so-called art capitol of the world, where we should be seeing a good deal more of it.

True, there was a major survey of the work of Sidney Nolan, Australia's best known modern artist at the Metropolitan Museum of Art a few years ago, and the brightly patterned Dreamtime designs of the Aboriginal artists have become something of a cottage industry on a par with Outsider art. What we don't get to see enough of, however, are mainstream artists from Australia who work within the lively figurative and romantic landscape tradition unique to that country. For Australia's relative isolation from Europe and its aesthetic traditions has resulted in the vibrant individuality that we see in the work of Nolan and other elder statesmen such as Albert Tucker, Arthur Boyd, and Robert Dickerson, who forged distinctive modes of neo-primitivistic expressionism.



"Bar"

Much in the tradition of these older artists, yet possessed of her own singular vision, is the contemporary Australian painter Nadine Archibald, whose strong solo exhibition, "The Outback Visits New York" can be seen at Gelabert Studios Gallery, 255 West 86th Street, from October 14 through November 1.

While Nolan and others have taken the Outback for a subject, none has captured its arid landscape and ramshackle little settlements with such stark boldness as Archibald shows here. A podiatrist by profession, although she has painted since childhood, Archibald's works in acrylic, mixed media, and oil can only be compared to Philip Guston's late figurative style in terms of the blunt expressiveness of her forms, her intrepid color sense, and her vigorous paint application. That Archibald also makes liberal use of the often caustic signs scattered throughout the countryside adds an element to her work which is very much in keeping with contemporary semiotics.

In the absence of human figures (which would only distract from the drama of desolation in Archibald's Outback paintings), these terse texts are literal "signs of life," suggesting the human presence somewhere just outside the picture space, and providing touches of ironic humor. In one painting, for example, the mind reels at the mixed signals sent by a sign hanging on a decrepit shack, presumably a drinking place for Aborigines, which says "Bar," and immediately below, "No drinking in this area."

Archibald's colors add to the atmosphere of desolation and decrepitude in her Outback scenes. The burnished earth tones that she often chooses make everything look as though it is rusted and coated in dust. Yet, her darker colors are combined with yellow, ocher, and deep red hues that suggest a sense of insufferable heat. Indeed, Archibald's distinctive palette subjects local color to an aesthetic transformation that appears more intuitive than premeditated. A refreshingly primitive directness is counterbalanced by an innate sophistication, the seeming contradiction between the two producing an exquisite plastic tension.

This combination of qualities is especially effective in "Rock," one of Archibald's boldest compositions, depicting a massive mountainous terrain enlivened by luminous red, blue and purple hues, set against one of those strident yellow skies that the artist favors. At the center of the composition is a sign that says "NO THROUGH ROAD —WRONG WAY—GO BACK." In one of the printed texts with which Archibald annotates her pictures, she waxes philosophical, saying, "There are no through roads in the Kimberly region of northern Australia and all pathways are difficult and not what they seem. Life is like that — you could be going sideways instead of along. Most of us end up going the wrong way."

One could look at Archibald's exhibition as a highly poetic inner travelogue, to which her texts provide the wry asides of a somewhat world weary tour guide. Take for example the long horizontal composition called "Pink Roadhouse," in which the low-lying pink structure, plastered with a visual cacophony of signs, is set against an even paler expanse of sky, with a single, forlorn phone booth out front. Here, the artist tells us, "The trappings of the journey of life do not prepare us for life itself. Communication is the essence. Phone home. Now. For the passer by, stay awhile. Your journey could be a long and lonely one. You are after all on the fringe of the desert. Be prepared."

Slightly ominous? You bet. But no one promised that a journey to the Outback would be like a traipse through a rose garden—least of all Nadine Archibald, whose painting "Cable Beach" is annotated as follows: "We are born and we die. These are our flags. It only remains to pay taxes between our two markers. There is no escape, we must swim between the flags."

The latter phrase refers to a sign on the beach directing bathers to "Swim between the flags" posted in the sand. However, no bathers are visible, as a huge sun sinks into the water, its rays radiating over the waves and igniting the sand in an orange blaze. In this, one of her most Guston-like compositions (although one would not be at all surprised if this mostly autodidactic Australian never heard of the New York painter), Archibald creates an image of such strange beauty that one is happy to accept life on its own harsh terms.

Thankfully, there are no patronizing images of picturesque Aborigines in this exhibition. Cattle, however, roam freely across roads where the ubiquitous sign warns "WRONG WAY — GO BACK," or, like the lone cow in a painting called "Please Shut the Gate," stand obediently behind a broken bit of fence with miles and miles of empty desert all around.

Nadine Archibald's exhibition introduces us to a place where surreal juxtapositions are everyday occurrences. But it is her ability to depict them poignantly, while providing much pure visual pleasure, that makes her work so rewarding and enjoyable.

—J. Sanders Eaton

The Complex Allegories of Meir Levinger

Although he now lives in Silicon Valley, California, where he is employed as a software engineer, the paintings of Meir Levinger often hark back to Israel, where he was born.

Basically self-taught, except for a period of private study with another artist, Levinger has schooled himself in the methods of the Baroque masters, perusing books and old prints and experimenting until he could emulate their techniques flawlessly. How successfully he applies these techniques to his style of contemporary allegorical realism was seen in his recent exhibition at Agora Gallery, 415 West Broadway, where his synthesis of old and new techniques and subject matter proved most engaging.

Like Alfred Leslie and John Nava, Meir Levinger applies the lessons learned from various past masters to different canvases, availing himself of the wide variety of manners the term Baroque encompasses. A painting such as Levinger's oil on canvas "The Coffee Maid," for example, recalls the the restraint and stillness of Vermeer, with its image of a woman in an elegant interior pouring coffee into a dainty cup near a table set with a pristine still life of bottles and fruits. By contrast, Levinger's "Last Supper in Zion Square" is more patterned on the turbulence of Caravaggio and Rubens with its dramatically straining figures. The latter painting is also interesting for its juxtaposition of classically clad figures and a male nude (his genitals discreetly obscured by the profusion of fruits on a table) with a woman wearing what appears to be a modern admiral's jacket, one hand positioned in an almost Napoleonic gesture.

That the underlying content in Levinger's narrative pictures is elusive, not easy to decipher, makes them all the more fascinating. The modern world, after all, has grown increasingly complex in a manner that makes straightforward allegories insufficient to address its layered ironies.

Presumably with this in mind, Levinger has evolved a personal iconography which enables him to combine vaguely biblical imagery with an awareness of the political complexities of modern Israel in paintings such as "The Jerusalem Syndrome." In this remarkable oil, a voluptuous young woman, nude except for a loincloth and what appears to be a crown of flowers appears to levitate, arms outstretched as though for a crucifixion, within a magnificent stone interior.

One could make all manner of subjective assumptions about the symbolism in this powerful oil on canvas, the most obvious being to see it as an elegy for the innocent lives lost to terrorism. However, it is not necessary to arrive at a definitive interpretation of the painting's possible meanings to appreciate the sheer beauty of the nude figure, and the artist's handling of the ancient stone steps, and other architectural details, and conclude that "The Jerusalem Syndrome" is an affecting tour de force.

"The Jerusalem Syndrome"

Equally accomplished for its subtleties of light and shadow, the skillful delineation of the folds in the clothing, and the lyrical mood evoked by the melancholy pose of the figure, is an oil entitled "Lady with a Coffee Pot." Here, the subject matter speaks for itself, no lengthy interpretation is necessary; yet Meir Levinger invests the picture with an immediacy and a verisimilitude that makes clear one is in the presence of an immensely gifted realist.

—Lawrence Downes

Photographers Focus on "Scenes of Life"

The entire spectrum of everyday experience was the subject of "Scenes of Life," a photographic exhibition by members of the West Side Arts Coalition, seen recently at Broadway Mall Community Center, on the center island at Broadway and 96th Street.

Curator Leslie Nagy captured the pathos of a busker in a public mall, ignored by passing pedestrians. Other vibrant color prints by Nagy focused on subjects such as a Volkswagen upstaged by a large pink flower in the foreground and the intricate interaction of motorcycles and small boats clustered on a shoreline in a manner both suggestive and formally appealing.

Deborah Reinhard was represented by several subway scenes that gained atmospheric drama from being in black and white, much in the manner of old movies. Somnolent seated passengers, a train approaching on shadowy tracks, and subway doors scrawled with graffiti were some of the subjects that Reinhard imbued with a gritty poetry.

A formal austerity akin to both Georgia O'Keeffe and Robert Maplethorpe was seen in Bob Merritt's large digital color prints on canvas, the medium enhancing their painterly qualities. Merritt's photographs of single brilliant blooms on black grounds were especially striking, lending the flowers the quality of plant portraits.

The beaches, boats, and bungalows of Provincetown provide inspiration for the photographer known as RJ Katz, one of whose pictures was recently featured on the cover of the Provincetown Pocket Guide. Whether photographing a clothesline between cottages, a lone woman with a blue umbrella, or an empty beach chair with a house looming above dunes behind it, Katz infuses her pictures with a sense of the life, light, and color peculiar to beachfront communities.

Much in the manner that William Wegman has made his dog central to his art, Gloria Waslyn photographs her two pet parrots, referring to them as "unofficial ambassadors of the rain forest" and placing them in a variety of situations where they interact amusingly with humans. Waslyn's pictures of the birds perched on the shoulders of a subway musician and preening among flowers on a Buddhist altar in Chinatown are especially winning.

Lee Muslin, whose work is well known in the East Village, showed a group of color photos enlivened by subtly surreal juxtapositions of objects that suggest visual puns. "Bathing Beauties" plays off the incongruity of two chairs in a bathtub, while "Shoe Mobile" makes a funky visual statement with a jumble of old sneakers dangling from a pole on a city street.

Agus Sutikno's versatile vision moves easily from a black and white image of two romping Chassidic boys, to various Asian genre subjects, to a gorgeous color print of shadowy figures set against a luminous sky. Each of Sutikno's pictures tells a story, yet retains a sense of mystery.

Jeff Berman evokes vibrant color and a sense of texture in his technically accomplished digital prints. Whether photographing an elaborately costumed Chinese dancer, participants in the Puerto Rican Day Parade, or a group of Italian musicians, Berman's humanistic, visually compelling pictures strike just the right balance between content and design.

Shirley Piniat's C-prints focus on exotic locales, capturing the storybook beauty of a mountainous terrain or a valley in Peru in an atmospheric manner akin to Asian scroll paintings. Piniat treats human subjects with similar sensitivity, as seen in her picture of a Peruvian flute player.

Kim Vu captures fleeting moments of magic: a little Asian girl collecting shells in the sunlight; a cat napping on the steps of a store; three ducks serenely navigating the surface of a lake. Like visual haiku, Vu's C-prints are possessed of breathtaking brevity and grace.

—Robert Vigo

In "Wax Works," Kiki (Brodkin) Returns to an Abiding Love

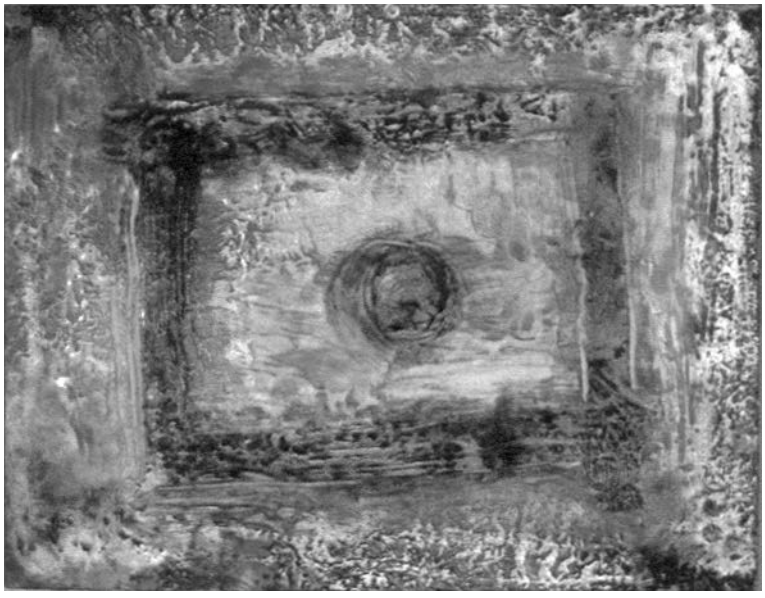
In an exhibition two years ago, the painter, sculptor, and printmaker who has had a long and distinguished exhibition history as Kiki Brodkin, but now prefers to be known simply as Kiki, showed a group of digital works that were remarkable for their painterly qualities. As this reviewer noted at the time, what distinguished Kiki's work from that of others working in the medium, many of whom are techies first and artists second, is that Kiki saw the computer as "little more than a tool." To her, it was hardly something that was going to revolutionize art or render traditional media obsolete, as some of its more pretentious advocates would have one believe. Kiki picked up the mouse as though it were a brush and used it accordingly, to produce compositions with characteristic buoyancy and verve.

For her most recent exhibition, at Pleiades Gallery, 530 West 25th Street, from September 2 through 20, with a reception for the artist on Saturday September 6, from 11 to 6 PM, Kiki has returned to one of her favorite mediums, encaustic. Wittily, she has titled her new show "Wax Works," a phrase which conjures up images of Madame Tussaud's Wax Museum in Times Square. Kiki, however, remains an adamantly abstract artist whose encaustic paintings show her at her best. Indeed, the combination of tactile and chromatic effects that she coaxes from the medium afford her the opportunity to combine aspects of her painterly and sculptural gifts in works that compel us with both their ethereal qualities and their "objectness."

All of the works in the show are small in size, which is refreshing in itself, given that overblown scale is still one of the prevalent clichés of contemporary art. The idea that the "importance" of a work of art increases in direct proportion to its physical size is, of course, ludicrous and surely it is time to retire a notion that had some relevance in the Abstract Expressionist era, when American art was engaged in shouldering its way to worldwide dominance, but has grown increasingly silly.

In the case of Kiki's new paintings, however, the small scale serves an even more germane purpose, in that it enhances the physical qualities of her work, lending each piece the presence of a discrete object. Which is to say, the sculptural materiality and tactility of the encaustic surface is emphasized by not being dispersed over a larger space, and it also accentuates the gem-like qualities in her "Wax Works."

The nature of the ancient medium itself, in which the color appears suspended within the molten wax rather than sitting on the surface, contributes to the sense of "trapped light" that makes the viewer of Kiki's painting feel as though he or she is gazing into the depth's of some heretofore unfamiliar gem. The fluidity of her compositions, which often appear to have evolved of their own accord rather than having been directed by the artist's hand, add further to the feeling that one is observing some natural phenomenon, and Kiki confirms the intuitiveness of her creative process in her statement, "How wonderful it is to always reach into the unknown to call up the poetic power of magical, visual imagery."



"Composition with Rectangle"

There is about some of her works a sense of mysterious ancestral memory. They have the rugged beauty of ancient tablets containing esoteric knowledge in the form of rough-hewn symbols, such as the sinuous linear form that snakes vertically down the center of the encaustic painting called "Switchback." Here, the subtly mottled, earthy red ground adds to the impression of a fossilized terrain. In a companion work called "Switchback Also" a similarly serpentine shape, albeit arranged horizontally, is incised on deep yellow ground and juxtaposed with an orb that suggests a black sun.

While the forms in both "Switchback" paintings adhere to the two dimensional picture plane so sacrosanct to modernist painting, other recent paintings by Kiki explore deep space in a more postmodernist manner. In "Shine," for example, the forms flow liquidly from the center of composition out toward the edges. Not only does the movement of these configurations create the illusion of infinite perspective, as in a galaxy, but Kiki's handling of the encaustic medium—the way she exploits its special luminosity and translucence with skillfully layered areas of luminous color and glowing light-suffused white— heightens the effect of a splashy Milky Way.

In another painting called "Pines," Kiki intriguingly subverts the illusion of perspective that she achieves via the suspension of rich green and rusty red hues in the translucent waxen surface by overlaying it with roughly scored linear elements that function as an irregular grid, drawing the viewer's attention back to the picture plane. Yet the eye simultaneously slips between the cracks, so to speak, resulting in a lively optical tension.

By contrast, other paintings, such as "Composition with Rectangle" and "Grey Haze" project a less ambiguous adherence to the picture plane. The former painting does so by hanging a bold geometric shape, like a slightly askew empty picture frame, around a smaller, roughly circular shape, in a composition energized by vigorous textural swirls set against a golden ocher ground; the latter with animated gestural strokes and piquant bursts of bright color enlivening an opaque, monochromatic grey ground.

Something should finally be said about Kiki's superb skills as a colorist, to which she gives full vent in paintings such as "Orange and Purple Haze," with its deliciously peachy hues, and "Search 1," where delicate, radiant yellow and pink shapes dance like windblown petals on a flowing, subtly nuanced blue-grey field.

Abetted by her innate sense of how to balance opacity with translucence, weighty impastoes with fluid washes, and further animate the surface with tactile scratched and scored elements, Kiki's chromatic abilities lend her recent paintings great vigor and lyrical immediacy.

Despite her long and varied career—which has included prestigious exhibitions at William Paterson University and in Germany, as well as being honored by the University of Medicine and Dentistry of New Jersey for a commissioned sculpture, now permanently on view—unlike many veteran artists, Kiki Brodkin continues to experiment and evolve. "Wax Works" is a bright and shining highlight in her ongoing journey.

—Ed McCormack

Jordania Goldberg and the Art of Golf

What George Bellows did for boxing, Raoul Dufy did for horse racing, and Picasso did for bull fighting, Jordania Goldberg endeavors to do for the sport of golf. A graduate of California's prestigious Art Center, In her professional life Goldberg has been a psychotherapist, a belly dancer, and a message therapist, among other things. As a painter, she is equally versatile, combining loose abstraction with exacting figure drawing to create acrylic paintings that capture not only the imagery but the exhilarating energy of the sport she loves.

In her recent exhibition at Agora Gallery, 415 West Broadway, Goldberg showed a series of works in which different aspects of the sport were captured in the manner of "action painting"—the term critic Harold Rosenberg coined for the splashier aspects of Abstract Expressionist pyrotechnics. Goldberg is especially adept at these pyrotechnics, splashing and dripping with an admirable combination of abandon and control to create compositions with a marvelous sense of velocity.

In "Fairway," bold, broad strokes of verdant green and brilliant yellow convey a dazzling sense of grass and sunlight, evoking the expansiveness of a golf course. Here, as in many of her golf paintings in acrylic on paper, the focal point and piece de resistance is the small figure of a golfer in action. While linear and sketchy in order to coexist harmoniously with the expressionistic handling of the green slopes and blazing sunlight, the figures in Goldberg's paintings are realistically proportioned, their physical attitudes attesting to the artist's knowledge of both classical anatomy and the game of golf.

A strong element of fantasy, however, is also present in some of Goldberg's paintings, as seen in the acrylic on paper she calls "Ruff," where the figure swinging the club stands on what appears to be a clump of sod and earth suspended in a cosmic blue expanse. Here, there is a suggestion of the transcendence that can come with excellence in any sport or other endeavor that takes one out of oneself into the sphere of wider possibilities.

Equally exuberant in terms of color is the painting entitled "Water Hazard," in which another figure is seen mid-swing amid vigorously applied saturations of brilliant pink and blue-green further enlivened by splashes and drips that give the impression that the golfer could be playing amid ocean waves. A non-golfer can only surmise that the title may refer to those moments in the sport when the player must deal with bodies of water that impinge upon the court. Goldberg, however, has obviously taken poetic liberties in this painting, playfully suggesting that such moments can be tantamount to playing a few rounds with King Neptune!

"Fairway"

Also included in this show were a self portrait in golfing clothes and pose, skillfully executed in charcoal and conte on paper, and "Hogan II," a tribute to a great golfer in which Goldberg combines a detailed pencil drawing of the athlete, along with photographic images and geometric shapes to create a dynamically fragmented composition incorporating elements of abstraction and realism.

Indeed, Jordania Goldberg's ability to combine diverse elements within a single composition and merge them harmoniously is one of the talents that makes her an exciting new discovery. –-Maureen Flynn

Steven Dono's Renaissance Alter Ego Giacomo di Bovino

In an age when being something of an iconoclast has become almost a prerequisite for being taken seriously as an artist, the art of Steven Dono exemplifies the most literal meaning of the term, even while not seeming to take itself too seriously.

Dono takes pleasure, in his labor-intensive sculptures, in deconstructing belief systems–-especially religious ones that push repressive rules regarding sex and morality yet seem more tolerant of war and violence. He began outraging people in graduate school, with a painting called "The Laughing Christ " that even some of his supposedly hip fellow art students found offensive. He wasn't trying to upset anyone, he insists—just making the point that Jesus couldn't always have been as grim as he is usually depicted.

Dono does his dogma-bashing in a cavernous studio in the crypt of The Cathedral of Saint John The Divine, where he happens to be artist-in-residence. Not only does the Episcopal church have its first gay bishop; it also has an honest-to-God iconoclast in the mother church of its New York diocese. The mere thought of this would probably send former mayor Rudy Giuliani into paroxysms of outrage. In fact, Dono can't help wishing that Giuliani were still in office, when he thinks of all the publicity one of hizzoner's famous tantrums might generate for his new solo show, at Phoenix Gallery, 568 Broadway, from October 1 through 25.

The exhibition presents "works from the far side of the Renaissance by Giacomo di Bovino (1481-1543?)," a fictional alter ego of the artist, whom Dono characterizes as a "forgotten satiric painter/sculptor/rake." On entering, one of those prominent wall-texts that have become so ubiquitous in museums informs us that Giacomo learned early in his career that "his art was not acceptable for the ruling classes and certainly not the church." To survive, he forged works by more famous artists ("He stole from the best and sold to the rich") and plagiarized under several aliases, all of which incorporated the word "cow" in different languages— except for one: "Uccello di Dono."

Giacomo was in trouble with the Papal Police for much of his life for offenses such as "art forgery, heresy, vandalism, seducing Pope Pius III's 'ward' (1503) and other indiscretions." The date of his death is in dispute because "he just disappeared in the summer of 1543. Some believe he died in a clandestine duel with the First Duke of Paduka. Others believe he once again eluded capture by the Papal Police by escaping to Russia and becoming a court favorite of Ivan the Terrible. Still others say that Giacomo went to Africa, disguised himself as a eunuch and 'served' in the harem of the Sultan of Fez."

Even having absorbed this biographical data, one is hardly prepared for the works Dono has created for his alter ego. One such piece, "Jesus Christ Springendes Seil, c. 1499"— or "Jumping Jesus" —features a gold leaf figure of Christ skipping rope atop a wooden cross sprouting from an imposing four-levelled structure of hefty wood beams and thick lengths of rope, their tips singed like giant cigarette butts. Here, as with his student portrait "Laughing Christ," Dono let's the Messiah "lighten up" a little.

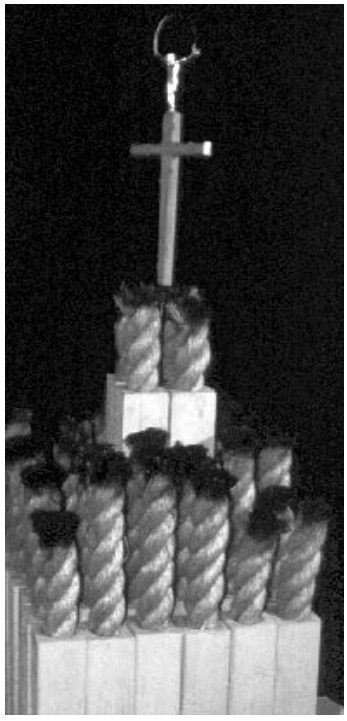
For all its irreverence, the work presents a buoyant–-even transcendent—contrast to the usual image of Christ nailed to the cross. One feels genuinely relieved not to see him suffering for a change. Is it possible, then, that what Dono is actually giving us here is an exhilarating new interpretation of The Resurrection?

Then there is "Magdalene's Marionette, c. 1511 (Signed Georgie la Vache)," a three-dimensional assemblage within a large gold frame that is the centerpiece of the show by virtue of its sheer outrageousness. On a tilted-back chair in the corner of a cell-like brick room, attached to strings suspended from a godly gold hand above her head, a life-like female marionette sits casually fondling a sword, her shapely legs crossed, her feet projecting out through the frame. She is nude, except for black leather elbow gloves, a red leather corset (which uplifts her bare breasts ballistically), black stockings, and spike-heeled shoes–-your basic S&M fetish gear. Wavy scarlet hair spills over her shoulders and she has a red pubic patch to match—a startling sight on a puppet!

Dono's marionette is blatantly "harlotized," to use a term coined by Jane Schaberg, author of "The Resurrection of Mary Magdalene," one of a spate of recent books contradicting the long-held image of Magdalene as a penitent prostitute. A character in Dan Brown's current best seller "The Da Vinci Code," expressing a view that has been embraced by some contemporary biblical scholars, asserts: "That unfortunate misconception is the legacy of a smear campaign launched by the early church."

The French, especially, are fond of the theory that Magdalene was married to Jesus and pregnant by him at his crucifixion. Dono himself seems partial to this idea, or at least entertains it in his wry way, leading one to wonder if, besides being a reference to the runaway U.S. ship of state, the rudderless ship in one of his previous installations might have had something to do with the view, also popular in France, that Magdalene immigrated in a rudderless boat, bearing the Holy Grail.

In any case, as a recent article in Time magazine pointed out, various revisionist



"Jesus Christ Springendes Seil (Jumping Jesus)," c. 1499

texts, both popular and academic, presenting Magdalene as "a woman of substance" (anything from "a rich and honored patron of Jesus" to "an Apostle in her own right") have gained her a sizable following "among Catholics "who see in her a potent role model and a possible argument against the all-male priesthood."

Dono, however, presents his Magdalene as an unrepentant badgirl, as bodaciously empowered by her sexuality as James Bond's glamorous nemesis Pussy Galore. With her big, red gash of a lipsticked grin, she seems to be saying, "If they want to make me a whore, then I will be The Queen of Whores!"

Other pieces in this show include The Last Brunch," an altered version of Da Vinci's "The Last Supper" with the figure of Jesus replaced by a pyramid of pastries; "L'amore dei pattini dei donne," a sort of dangling shrine for shoe fetishists; di Bovino's "Self portrait as Albrecht Durer," and "Il Taccuino segreto de Giacomo," which purports to be Giacomo's private notebook.

The latter piece is positioned on a pedestal so low that in order to view it one must bend over, as though inviting a kick in the pants. It is well worth the risk, however, since all but the most dogmatic blue-noses will find much thoughtful fun in this all-out assault on some of our sacred cows (if one will pardon the expression) by one of our most provocative and consistently brilliant conceptual sculptors.

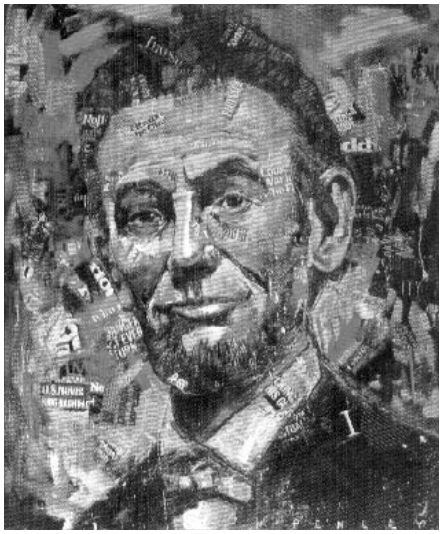
As for Giacomo di Bovino, say what you will of his morals; as an artist, he was way ahead of his time! —Ed McCormack

New York Notebook

Anthem Gallery: Neo-Soho Pioneers

There's nothing like a notorious name on a gallery invitation to get your attention. We get hundreds of them but this one stood out: "LIZZIE GRUBMAN PUBLIC RELATIONS," it began in the kind of big block letters you usually see on marquees, "cordially invites you to celebrate the grand opening of Anthem Gallery, 41 Wooster Street, featuring artist Steve Penley," followed by the date of the reception and other relevant information.

It was the first time we had ever seen the press agent billed above the artist in this manner. But even more surprising was encountering the Hamptons set's favorite offender in a fine arts context. We couldn't help wondering if, besides helping inner city children with their reading lessons, the judge had ordered Lizzie to do some public service in the realm of High Kulcher...



Steve Penley, "Abe"

The incongruity of the Lizzie connection aside, however, it was nice to see a new gallery opening in Soho when everyone else seems to be pulling up stakes and moving to Chelsea. While Soho's more established venues are upholding the neighborhood's tradition as an important art district and the friendly people behind the reception desk at the Soho Grand tells us they will take as many bundles of Gallery & Studio as we can supply them with, since copies are immediately snatched up by their many art-conscious guests, few new galleries can afford the rents in the area these days.

Apparently Anthem Gallery is an exception. It is backed by a trio of successful businessmen from Hempstead, Long Island, one of whom, Stephen Gresalfi, says of himself and his partners, his brother Chip Gresalfi and their cousin Steve Parker: "The fact that we distribute auto parts is about as relevant as it is romantic. Our experience in selling art is minimal. Some theorize that we opened a gallery in Soho as an excuse to eat more Buffalo Shrimp from Acme. There is too much evidence to support this claim for us to credibly deny it!"

On a more serious note, while admitting that "this venture is certainly a departure from what we are used to do," Gresalfi assures us that he and his partners "will be applying the same sound business philosophy to our gallery as we do our other business." He adds, "We have always hired excellent people and just tried to stay out out of their way."

Left to right: Chip Gresalfi, Steve Parker, Madalyn Warren, Steve Penley, & Stephen Gresalfi

Although gallery director Madalyn Warren is also new to the art business, she feels that growing up with an artist mother, surrounded by natural beauty in the Adirondacks, has helped her hone her aesthetic sensibility. She also holds a degree in political science, "which is all about human nature, communication, and organizing people, and that can be helpful, too, in what I'm doing now."

A personable young woman with a refreshingly direct personality, Warren seems intent on making the venue a success. Toward that end, besides reading everything she can find about the business, she has been introducing herself to more experienced dealers at neighboring galleries, such as O.K. Harris and Coda, and actively soliciting their advice.

"So far, everybody's been really helpful, and I'm gaining more confidence as I go along, sort of feeling my way," Warren says. "One thing I've noticed is that the really successful gallery people seem to be the most unpretentious and accessible ones. I hope to follow their example."

Anthem's premiere exhibition was an auspicious beginning, since Steve Penley, who hails from Atlanta, where he still lives and works, but studied at the School of Visual Arts in New York City, is certainly an impressive painter. Penley was the subject of a lavishly illustrated full color book published recently by Longstreet Press and his work is in numerous public and private collections, including those of former White House Chiefs of Staff Hamilton Jordan and Jack Watson. In fact, Watson, who turns out to be more articulate about art than one might expect, actually wrote the catalog essay for Penley's show (as with Lizzie Grubman...go figure!).

Penley's work, though, speaks for itself, combining figurative subject matter with vigorous brushwork and a sense of abstraction in a manner akin to that of the young Larry Rivers. The paintings of historical and cultural icons, such as JFK, Winston Churchill, Albert Einstein, and Andy Warhol, for which he is best known are not only insightful likenesses but also visually dazzling. In these, as well as his floral still life paintings and genre subjects such as the panoramic view of Washington Square in the show at Anthem, Penley's large acrylics on canvas combine punchy Pop colors with energetic Abstract Expressionist brushwork.

In addition to its handsomely appointed ground floor space just a few doors up from The Drawing Center, Anthem Gallery will debut its new basement exhibition area on September 4th with "Excavation #507," an installation by San Francisco artist Paul Carpenter. A filmmaker and performance artist, as well as a painter and sculptor, Carpenter, like Bruce Connor, is one of those multi-faceted funkmeisters that California seems to breed. His installation at Anthem envisions a futuristic archeological dig from the year 2507 in New York City, a concept that sounds as spookily ominous as our recent blackout proved to be.

All told, Anthem Gallery seems a daring endeavor on the part of its neophyte owners and director, the intrepidness of whose combined enthusiasm can only be cheered in a climate of often crippling caution.

"Our business experience in New York has taught us to embrace the astronomical overhead associated with this area," Stephen Gresalfi asserts in his characteristically optimistic manner. "You get what you pay for. There is only one Soho. Although other areas of the city are cheaper, and there might be a temporary trend to relocate, the gallery needed to be in a district that is a destination for art collectors, both international and domestic. Only Soho, despite its high rents, met these conditions, and therefore it was an easy decision. The Lizzie Grubman involvement is simply a measure to increase the exposure of Penley's art to more people."

Well, as we said at the onset, it sure got our attention.

A Brush Dipped in the Melting Pot

We could not help thinking "there goes the neighborhood" when we read a recent article in the New York Times real estate section about Guns N' Roses guitarist Richard Fortus and his girlfriend buying a two bedroom apartment in the Seward Park complex on the Lower East Side.

Those idealistic unionists and socialists who originally conceived the development as "workers' housing" in the1930s could not have imagined that someday it would become a haven for nouveau rich rock stars and other vulgarians in search of a "cool place to live."

We can only be thankful that The Educational Alliance, a 113 year-old Jewish community organization right across the street from the Seward Park complex, still upholds the traditions that made the neighborhood so vital several decades before it was discovered by all the cafe latte trendies. Indeed, a delightful exhibition by the local painter Alexander Kruse (1888 to 1972), who chronicled immigrant life on the Lower East Side in the teens and twenties, will open on Sunday, September 21, with a reception from 3 to 5 PM, and continue through November 7. (Hours are Monday through Thursday, 9 AM to 9 PM, and Friday and Sunday, 9 AM to 6 PM. The gallery is closed on Saturday.)

At age eleven, while sketching on Grand Street, Kruse was discovered by the great Ashcan School painter George Luks. Impressed with the youngster's talent, Luks referred him to Henry McBride, the New York Times art critic who, in the late 1890s, "started The Educational Alliance Art School to teach art to immigrant youth," according to Walter O'Neill, the present director of the school and curator of the gallery. At the "Edgies," as the community center was known in the neighborhood, Kruse studied alongside other aspiring artists such as Jacob Epstein, Moses Soyer, and Philip Evergood, all of whom would become leading Social Realists in the art world of the early twentieth century.

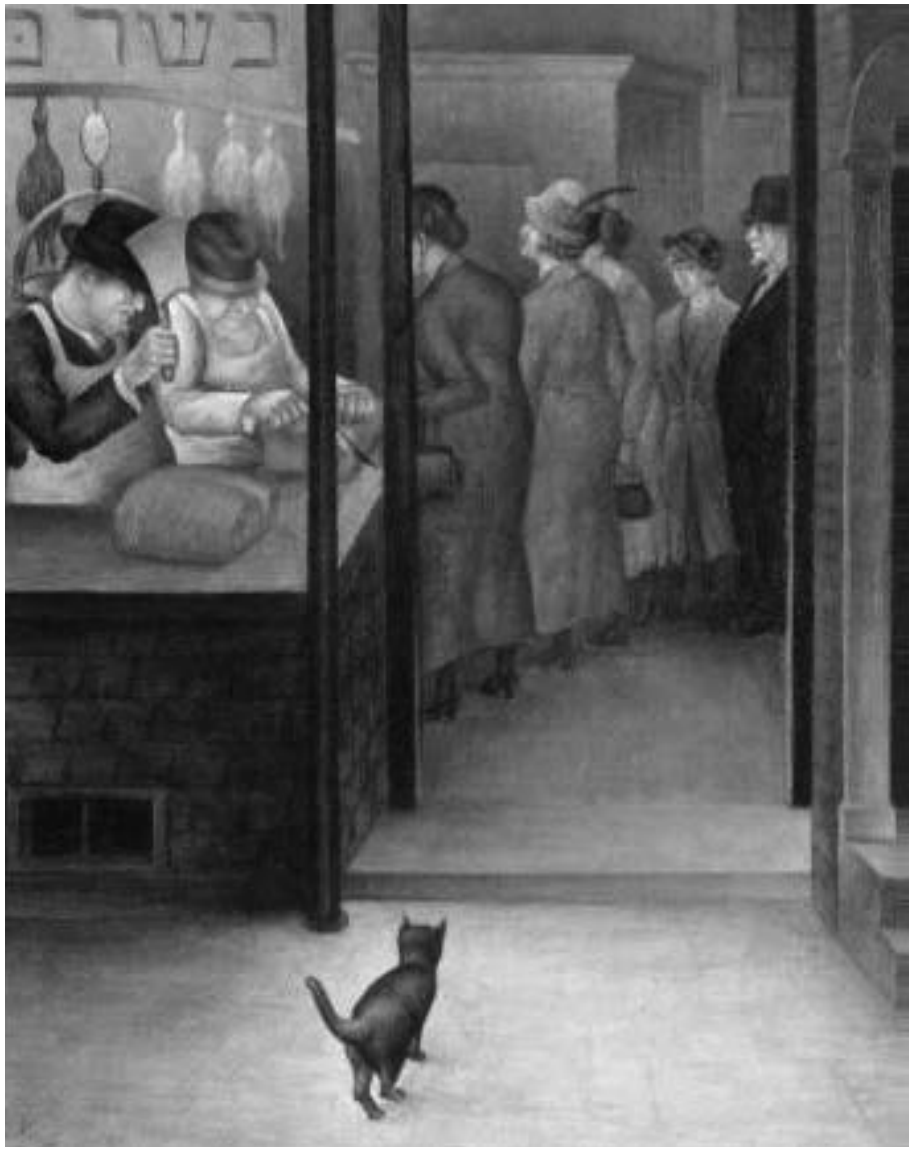
The present exhibition is a more intimate version of "From Pushcarts to Paradise," a comprehensive Kruse exhibition presented in 1997 at the Huntington Library in San Marino, California. Included are such characteristic genre paintings as "On the Fire Escape" and "The Butcher Shop." The former painting depicts an elderly woman standing on the fire-escape of a red brick tenement, washing her window; the latter shows a stray cat sauntering toward the open door of a crowded Kosher butcher shop. Limned in a mellow hues in an understated realist style, both paintings evoke vignettes of life in the artist's neighborhood with considerable insight, wit, empathy, and atmospheric charm.

Besides being a painter whose work made its way into numerous museum collections around the U.S., Alexander Kruse wrote books on drawing techniques and was art critic for the Brooklyn Eagle newspaper for over twenty years.

"Upper Chelsea" Anyone?

If Soho and Chelsea are established gallery districts, what would one call 49th Street between Eighth and Ninth Avenues? Hell's Kitchen? Clinton? Upper Chelsea? Nobody has really come up with a name yet, but some smart real estate shark surely will if galleries continue to open in the area. Long term residents like Jadite Galleries, at both 413 West 50th Street and 662 Tenth Avenue, and Hunter College/Times Square Art Gallery, at 450 West 41st, have recently been joined by Fountain Gallery, at 702 Ninth Avenue, and Gallery @ 49, 322 West 49th Street.

Gallery @ 49, owned by Monica Rotaru, an art historian, mounted one of the truly hot summer group shows that we saw over our bus-man's holiday of a summer vacation. One of the featured artists was Ralph Steadman, the British illustrator and fine artist who first became infamous in this country with his over-the-top illustrations for Gonzo journalist Hunter F. Thompson's book "Fear and Loathing in Las Vegas" and whose biting satirical drawings often appear in The New Yorker. Although he descends from a long line of English graphic artists that includes Hogarth, in more contemporary terms Steadman belongs to that pantheon of great graphic artists inhabited by the late Saul Steinberg and very few others. Like Steinberg, Steadman is an artist whose work is equally at home in magazines and on the walls of art galleries. For this show, in the true Gonzo spirit, he actually punctured the wall of Gallery @ 49 and scrawled a crude face on it to create an inspired outburst of a work on which he scribbled the phrase "The Sad Singer." Steadman also showed Lamda prints with titles such as "Sexual Gymnast" and "In the Mood," in which he mysteriously manages to distort photographic images of entwined males and females in a grotesquely expressive manner resembling his more familiar blot-splotched ink drawings.



Alexander Kruse, "The Butcher Shop" at Educational Alliance

Another celebrated British artist on the gallery roster is Paul Neagu, known for his performance pieces and complex conceptual works, as well as related hand-colored screen prints such as the one he showed here. Entitled "Monk IV," it depicted a tantric-looking male nude with an erection enmeshed within an Escher-like metaphysical maze. In England, Neagu has been termed "A Derridean Tornado" and is known as a conceptual shaman akin to Joseph Beuys. Like Steadman, his presence at Gallery @ 49 makes clear that this is a new venue to be reckoned with.

Widely exhibited American artist Barbara Bachner also made an impressive contribution with a group of abstract mixed media works in which Asian paper, window screening, acrylic, and ink created strong formal and textural contrasts. Especially striking for its mysterious lyricism was Bachner's poetic collage painting "That Which Won't Be Bound."

Mallorcan artist Marian Moratinos showed a grid of images silkscreened and painted on wood panels from her "Metropolis Series." In the manner of a cinematic storyboard, Moratinos' piece evoked the rhythms and movement of urban crowds with a combination of photo-derived imagery and freehand drawing and painting.

Although the fragmented images suggested the crazy simultaneity of city life, the overall grid achieved a striking abstract unity.

The narrative oils of Jeremy Willis apply the ambitiousness of history painting to the more complex consciousness of contemporary life. Willis' people move through cluttered interiors, engaged in mundane activities that take on mysterious, slightly surreal overtones in his vertiginously askew compositions. Like Eric Fischl, Willis sets up situations that hint at all manner of perverse subtexts, albeit without indulging in the older painter's obvious sexual sensationalism. Being the far superior painter, Willis can sustain our interest in his oils as much with his juicily pigmented surfaces as with his subject matter.

David Tobey, whose solo show in the same venue was reviewed in our last issue, was represented here by a small abstraction in an oval format that for all its diminutive scale conveyed the lyrical sweep and energy that makes his work consistently appealing. Braden Clary's oils on wood were also small in size but large in scope, getting a great deal of aesthetic mileage out of the interaction between centrally placed circular shapes and vertical drips.

The British photographer Sara Richards showed images, such as one print of a Volkswagen floating on water, in which incongruous situations and vibrant colors conspired to delicious effect. Judith Wilde's geometric oils had the stately majesty of abstract icons with their suggestion of severely cropped cruciforms and areas of gold leaf. Dianna Fitzgerald's large acrylic painting captured an inebriated jam session in a bistro with lively faux naif charm. Jorge Manuel Gutierrez displays a kind of sophisticated primitivism more akin to that of Jean-Michel Basquiat in his funky collage painting of graffiti-like faces and figures juxtaposed with vigorous gestural passages.

Also including first-rate work by Kevin Laverty, Carole Naggar, Laurel Garcia Colvin, Robert Deubel, Librado Romero, Anca Seel, Anna Socha VanMatre, Gerry Vichi, Willoughby Walling, and K.C. Davis (whose solo show is reviewed elsewhere in this issue), the overall quality of this summer group show at Gallery @ 49 made clear that "Upper Chelsea" should become a regular destination for serious gallery goers.

Peter Dean "Ducmanh," 1970

Duke Redux

Like Samuel Greenberg, the visionary Lower East Side bard who influenced Hart Crane before dying in a TB ward in 1917 at age 23, the Vietnamese emigre artist and writer Nguyen Ducmanh, a U.S. citizen since 1973, is a natural. After his wickedly audacious autobiography, one couldn't help wondering what Ducmanh—or "Duke," as he is known to his friends— could possibly do for an encore.

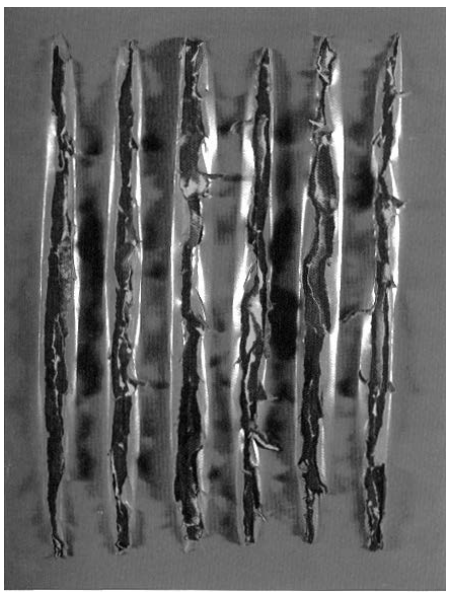
He answers with a book of equally outrageous poems in which his manic fractured English gains further velocity via line-breaks as terse as the slashing strokes in the Zen lunatic-cum-Abstract Expressionist canvases that he shows at Allan Stone Gallery, 113 East 90th Street.

Like his prose, Ducmanh's poems are utterly fearless in both their confessional candor and their syntactical leaps, alighting on aphoristic gems such as "Try to understand woman/is like walk into a labyrinth/Live together but never know/When she swerves."

Although Nguyen Ducmanh climbed, genie-like, out of the bottle years ago, he still writes like a drunken monk from literati antiquity channeled through Kerouac's funky "Mexico City Blues." Roll over Rosews!

Kiyokatsu Matsumiya: Beauty Attracts Beauties

We are told that photographers and models flocked to Westwood Gallery, 578 Broadway, to use the paintings of Kiyokatsu Matsumiya as backdrops for fashion shoots during the Japanese



Kiyokatsu Matsumiya

painter's recent solo show in that Soho venue. This seems no wonder, given the vibrant fire engine-red hue that dominates most of Matsumiya's large, sensuous paintings in oil on thickly layered washi paper, which he attacks with his bare hands, creating rough tears with erotically labial-looking fibrous edges and revealing other colors hidden underneath. Although these tears might appeal to the fetish sense of the fashionistas, perhaps reminding them of artfully torn jeans and other distressing—or should one say "distressed"—clothing trends, they were probably even more drawn to the overall environment that Matsumiya's show created at Westwood Gallery. With freestanding columnular paintings on the floor as well as on the walls, the elegant space made the perfect backdrop for the lanky models to drape their leggy forms against.

Although no one was complaining about the beauties his beautiful works attracted, Matsumiya really didn't require living arabesques to add interest to his exhibition: His outdoor and indoor site-specific installations draw crowds in the thousands in Japan, where he has turned even corporate lobbies into avant garde environments with torn walls and other unexpected anomalies. We can't begin to imagine what Kiyokatsu Matsumiya will come up with for projects he is currently planning that will incorporate nature but we look forward to his future New York exhibitions with much anticipated pleasure.

The Apocalypse is Coming!

One of the major events in the history of the modern artist's book was the publication in 1961 of "L'APOCALYPSE de Saint Jean," a lavish limited edition edited by Joseph Foret containing original works by by Salvador Dali, Pierre-Yves Tremois, Raymond Carrance, and Frederic Delanglade, as well as original graphics by Dali, Tremois, Leonor Fini, Bernard Buffet, Leonard Foujita, Ossip Zadkine, Georges Mathieu, Jean Cocteau, Ernst Fuchs, and others.

This landmark livre de peintre is so shrouded in mystery that some collectors, having pursued it for decades without success, have come to doubt its very existence; to wonder if it is a myth, a phantom tome more mired in rumor than reality...

But on October 10th, in celebration of the one hundredth anniversary of Dali's birth, gallerist and collector Neil Zukerman promises to present "L'APOCALYPSE de Saint Jean" in an unprecedented exhibition at CFM Gallery, 112 Greene Street.

Leonard Foujita

The story of how this elusive masterpiece of book art came into Zukerman's possession and what it means to have it finally on view in New York City will be explored in depth in a cover feature in the November/December issue of Gallery&Studio.

"Face of Courage" in New York

In an earlier column some months back, we reported on "The Face of Courage," a traveling exhibition by thirty artists who painted posthumous portraits of uniformed rescue workers who died in the 9/11 tragedy, and will, at the conclusion of the tour, donate them to their families. We are pleased to report that the exhibition has found a New York venue and can be seen at Gallery 323 West, in the Elizabeth Foundation Studio Center, 323 West 39th Street, from October 17th through November 14th.

* * *

• CLASSIFIED • CLASSIFIED • CLASSIFIED • CLASSIFIED • CLASSIFIED •

SERVICES

PHOTOGRAPHY FOR ARTISTS Specializing for 20 years in quality slides & 4 & 5 transparencies of fine art. Bob Sasson, 212 675-0973

OPPORTUNITIES

PLEIADES GALLERY. Memberships now available in major Chelsea artist-run gallery. No commission on sales. Low fees. Updated mailing list. Multi-ethnic. Information: SASE to PLEIADES GALLERY. 530 W.25 St. (4th fl.), NYC 10001-5516 • (646) 230-0056.

Established Chelsea Gallery reviews artist portfolios monthly. Send sase or visit www.nohogallery.com for application form. Noho Gallery, 530 West 25th Street, New York, NY 10001. 212 367-7063

WWW.NEWYORKARTWORLD.COM is currently reviewing artists portfolios for web gallery showcase. 212 228-0657 E-mail info@newyorkartworld.com

17-yr.-old established midtown west international gallery, seeks new artists for next season. Street level. Share cost. Call 212 315-2740

WEST SIDE ARTS COALITION welcomes members from all areas. Visual arts exhibits, theater events, multi-media opportunites. Tel: 212 316-6024 e-mail: wsacny@wsacny.org

Soho Gallery is currently reviewing artist's portfolios. Please send slides, resume & SASE to: Montserrat Gallery 584 Broadway, New York, NY 10012.

NYC - Emerging Artists 2004, Fourteenth annual group exhibition. $9000 in awards. Deadline Oct. 30. Send SASE for prospectus: SlowArt Productions, 870 Sixth Avenue, New York, NY 10001.

DISTRIBUTION & DELIVERING

Efficient reliable driver/distributer, art mover with vehicle available to make your deliveries or moves. Personable, self-starter with art world references and reasonable rates. Call Alberto at 718 896-0389

MIND/BODY

THE COMPASSIONATE FRIENDS is a mutual assistance self-help organization offering friendship and understanding to bereaved parents and siblings. Don't hesistate to call our Manhattan Chapter for meeting information: 212 517-9820

THE ALEXANDER TECHNIQUE helps artists suffering from back & shoulder pain from poor body mechanics. Through subtle hands-on guidance, the Alexander Technique frees you from habitual tension, relieving back, neck, and shoulder pain and improving overall performance. NEW YORK CENTER FOR THE ALEXANDER TECHNIQUE, 212 529-3211

FOR SALE

J& B HOBOKEN RECORDS We buy and sell used BARGAIN/COLLECTIBLE 78 RPM and LP's – one or a thousand. 206 3rd St., Hoboken, NJ. 10AM-7PM daily. Call Jim & Beverly Hans 201 653-7392 e-mail: THREEHANS@aol.com

FOR RENT

GALLERY FOR RENT • Upper West Side, well equipped, by week, street level. 212 874-7188

Subscribe to *GALLERY&STUDIO* See page 2 for subscription form

Metaphor, Metamorphosis, and Magic in the Art of Luis Alarcon

Luis Alarcon is an enigmatic artist from Peru whose work can appear deceptively simple until one attempts to decipher its complex array of personal symbols.

In his exhibition at Jadite Galleries, 662 10th Avenue, from September 16 through 30, one may be struck initially by how attractive, almost decorative, Alarcon's compositions are, with their gracefully stylized figures and subtly harmonized colors. On closer inspection, however, the viewer gets caught up in an underlying narrative that, like the best poetry, provokes more questions that it answers. Indeed, Alarcon is a visual poet of the first order, a creator of semi-abstract pictorial metaphors that hint at a hermetic personal mythology.

The image of a woman figures prominently in Alarcon's paintings. She appears to be both Muse and Earth Goddess. Although nothing is spelled out in an obvious manner, there is also a strong, folkloric sense of the artist's Peruvian roots in these paintings. Elements of a landscape abound, a sense of desert and mountains and forests and the proud memory of the ancient Inca civilizations that once flourished on this land.

These cultural riches are reflected in the liberal areas of gold leaf that Alarcon employs in his compositions (which also imbue them with an icon-like quality) along with somber earth colors and strident areas of red, green, and yellow, as well as subtly modulated secondary hues.

Painting by Luis Alarcon

Even as they appear rooted in the land and its history, however, Alarcon's figures seem to exist simultaneously in the Jungian primal unconscious or dream space. The expressions of his willowy women are almost trance-like in their serenity, and they seem to have a weightlessness akin to some of Chagall's figures, even while their formal simplifications are more reminiscent of certain paintings by Modigliani.

Alarcon's muses, however, are modestly clothed in the manner of devout, if somewhat mysterious, peasants. Often, they wear elaborate hats, on the broad brims of which the landscape that they inhabit is mirrored in miniature.

A recurring symbol, seen on both the hats and the landscape itself, is a rudimentary house of the kind that children draw with what appears to be a large leaf sprouting from its chimney. There are also graceful forms that fly through the air and simultaneously appear to be birds and trumpets. In one of Alarcon's largest and most complex paintings, a woman wearing a brilliant red poncho seizes one of these hybrid bird/trumpet creatures and appears about to put it to her lips and blow a tune on it. Meanwhile, above her head, several little houses are lined up on the horizon with green leaves sprouting from their chimneys topped by orange flames.

Everything in Alarcon's paintings appears to be in a constant state of flux, of metamorphosis. His figures seem to inhabit a realm in which form has no boundaries; every creature and object is in a state of becoming something else.

And if his women are muses, earth mothers, and goddesses, Luis Alarcon himself seems to be a kind of painterly shaman whose brush spews a constant stream of metaphors and magical images, suggesting profound rituals and meanings just beyond the reach of reason.

—Peter Wiley

Matter and Spirit Grapple in the Art of Edward James Traub

Edward James Traub employs natural forms as a springboard to spiritual discovery in his oils, watercolors, and mixed media works, several of which were seen recently in a strong solo outing at Agora Gallery, 415 West Broadway, in Soho. Featured was a series entitled "Infinite Speed," in which the artist's intense responses to the natural world made for compositions distinguished by a unique coloristic luminosity.

A palette of hues predominantly in the blue and violet range enlivened the ethereal watercolor called "Endlessness," its composition consisting of horizontal bands of closely harmonized color. Although the wavering quality of the colored bands evoked a strong suggestion of sky, a landmass in the middle distance, and a flowing body of water, the composition also worked splendidly in purely abstract terms.

Traub, however, is an artist whose spiritual bent seemingly compels him to celebrate the known world, at least as a point of departure for transcendence. Thus one can never regard even his most abstract-looking works as mere explorations of form and color. Rather, they appear to be visionary journeys in the manner of Albert Pinkham Ryder, Forrest Bess and other solitary figures who eschewed mainstream trends and fashions to pursue the poetic yearnings of their own souls.

In a painting such as Traub's oil on canvas "Nurenberg Glow," for example, luminous colors simultaneously suggest earthly and numinous meanings. Which is to say, while the composition again evokes a sense of sky and water (here with horizontal streaks applied in a more gestural manner and infused with a heightened sense of light), it also conjures up a mood of spiritual elevation that transports the viewer beyond a specific sense of place.

Natural objects such as pieces of driftwood or bones are the subjects of other paintings, in which Traub imbues them with a portrait-like presence. Indeed, in the work in oil on wood called "Driftwood Time," the crevices and configurations on the surface of the bleached-out wood are lovingly delineated in a manner that evokes an inexplicable empathy in the viewer. Like the wrinkles in the skin of an elderly person, these textures bespeak experience and the ravages of time.

A similarly compelling quality can be seen in "Bone Time," a work in oil and charcoal on canvas which invites favorable comparison with certain works by Georgia O'Keeffe, although Traub's palette is darker and more intense, and the vertical format of his composition contributes further to the uniquely emblematic power of the image. In contrast to the aforementioned landscape-based paintings with their ethereal compositions and more or less gestural paint application, "Bone Time" partakes of an almost Precisionist manner to capture the sinuous shape of this object, its shadows and hollows so suggestive of mortality, its contours contrastingly sensual.

"Bone Time"

Edward James Traub has been quoted as referring to his works as "wrestling matches," and while it was made clear in context that he was referring to "the conflicting ideologues of the culture around him," he also seems to be grappling with more existential questions as well. It is these that imbue his work with the ambiguity and tension that account for much of its power.

—Stuart Leslie Myers

May DeViney: Welcome to the Doll House of Aborted Dreams

May DeViney is an artist with many axes to grind. Even when she indulges in irony it is not of the fashionably cool, hipper-than-thou kind. Rather, it is spurred by genuine passion—even anger. DeViney's righteous indignation over glaring social inequities comes across contagiously in her new solo exhibition "Schism," at Viridian Artists, 530 West 25th Street, from October 14 through November 1.

DeViney's works are intricate, meticulous affairs that can be more accurately described as tableaux, rather than assemblages, since each is a painstakingly constructed and painted miniature world. In some recent pieces, the stage on which the action takes place is a thrift store knickknack shelf, which the artist has transformed for narrative purposes, much as that other dime-store alchemist Joseph Cornell transformed Woolworth's trinkets into imaginative realms in his boxes.

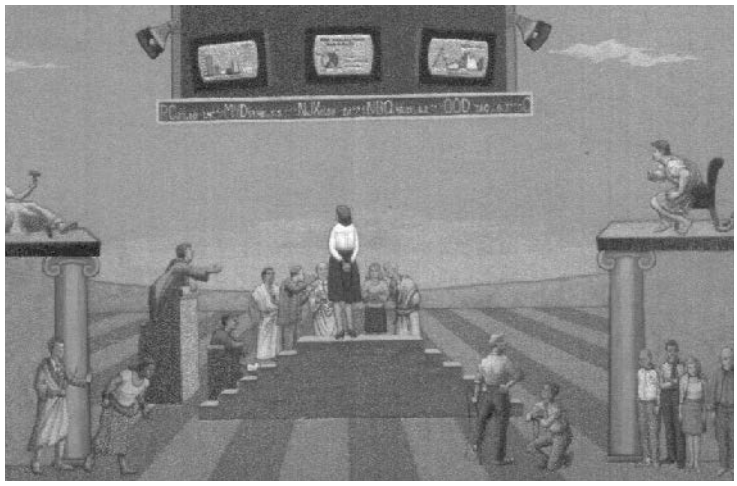
The shelves that DeViney chooses, with their different levels, are perfect vehicles for manifesting her preoccupation with those societal schisms and divisions that separate the haves from the have-nots, bosses from workers, the domiciled from the homeless, the slightly eccentric from those who conform to arbitrary "norms."

Like metaphysical doll-houses, albeit with flatly painted figures and 3-D props, DeViney's little worlds are populated by a cast of characters with clearly defined stations in life. Costumed in a combination of ancient and modern styles, they engage in dramas that, as the artist herself puts it, "underscore the consistency of human lives over time."

Thus the setting of DeViney's mixed media piece "The Market" is a combination stock market and slave market, where tiny figures, bound by shackles, are placed on the block and evaluated by their "superiors," some of whom wear Roman togas over their business suits. As prices scroll by overhead, tiny men and women, dressed for success yet accessorized by their chains, are bought and sold in an environment where classical columns and video monitors coexist without incongruity. Although more austere in a manner suggesting both the sterile halls of corporate America and the architectural details of the Renaissance, some of the scenes DeViney envisions are as hellish in their own way as the infernos of Hieronymus Bosch.

That DeViney's painting style, with its precise forms and bright colors, appears to be modeled on a synthesis of the frescoes of Piero della Francesca and Marvel Comics realism, makes her scenes all the more compelling. In a world where neatness counts, her hopeful yet hapless little people try to toe the mark; yet fate seems to have other plans for them. In "The Dinner Party (Saints and Ain'ts)," the serving women sport halos along with serenely smiling countenances, as they traipse from one level of the intricately configured assemblage to the other, cheerfully subordinating themselves to their "betters," who carouse at a long table suggesting a debauched version of "The Last Supper."

Halos also encircle the heads of the single figures in DeViney's icon-like portraits such as "Our Lady of the Bisquick" and "Our Lady of the Launderette," which wryly parody the tedious domestic tasks to which so many women have been unfairly relegated down through the centuries.



"The Market" (Detail)

In the former painting, the angelic housewife, wearing a cheerful apron over her Renaissance robes and a potholder mitt on one hand, displays a baking sheet filled with gingerbread men, each with its own tiny halo. Dangling from the baroque contours of the elaborate gold frame, various household utensils add to the biting irony of the image.

In the latter painting, another domestic martyr sports a "do-rag" under her halo, as she puts a pink towel through the wringers of an old fashioned clothes dryer, while other laundry flaps from a clothesline strung between marble columns in the background. Here, a miniature pair of men's briefs and other items hang from tiny clothespins affixed to the chain supporting the frame. As always, considerable visual wit leavens but does not contradict the very real indignation that DeViney expresses about injustices on both the corporate and home fronts.

Nor do the abuses of organized religion escape the notice of this artist who often adopts and updates the formats of religious icons for secular purposes, as seen in "Juggernaut," which moves off the wall to inhabit sculptural space. The title refers to an idol of the Hindu deity Krishna drawn in an annual procession in a huge wagon, under which fanatical worshipers have been known to throw themselves to be crushed, but in its broadest sense means any belief that elicits self-destructive devotion. Here, DeViney applies it to Christian fundamentalism, with a golden figure, resembling a televangelist, holding a black book and striding out of a stylized church on which a circular LED display flashes conflicting images of hellfire and heavenly light. The steeple bears the painted image of a benignly gesturing hand, while its upper facade of the church is decorated with an image of The Last Supper suggesting one of those old paint-by-numbers pictures. The golden figure treads on steps paved with pages from the Bill of Rights and the Constitution, which, as the artist puts it, "both allows and constrains the juggernaut of fundamentalism."

While the current political climate causes many of us to worry about the seeming slow erosion of the separation of church and state, no other contemporary artist has addressed our concerns as succinctly as May DeViney does in this witty and alarming sculpture.

Although they were not assembled when the show was previewed, May DeViney's second solo show at Viridian Artists will also feature two mixed media floor installations dealing with characteristically complex social subjects: the plight of the homeless and the life cycle of women. In the first, a rusted shopping cart filled with worldly belongings —that ubiquitous symbol of homelessness— will figure poignantly; in the second the piece de resistance will be a doctor's examination table with stirrups in the childbirth position, its sides decorated with Gothic arches containing images of a woman traversing the stages from maidenhood through childbirth and child rearing to old age and death.

If this sounds ambitious, it is wholly characteristic of May DeViney, one of those rare contemporary artists willing to take on Big Subjects and able to invest them not only with real emotional resonance but also with considerable visual and aesthetic interest.

—Jeannie McCormack

Exploring "Down Under" and Elsewhere at Agora Gallery

What Australians and Israelis share in common is a rugged pioneer spirit. Which may be why Tamir David, who was born in Israel and has traveled widely, seemed so much at home among five artists from Australia in the recent group exhibition "Out From Down Under and Beyond," at Agora Gallery, 415 West Broadway.

Tamir David is an autodidact whose portraits and figure paintings in acrylic, pastels, and mixed media are possessed of a stark power. He employs pastel as a full-fledged painting medium, rather than a drawing tool, realizing its full potential for strong color and subtle modeling. In David's "Intense 2," the head of a glamorous black woman who resembles the singer Grace Jones exerts a hypnotic spell; in "Untitled 2," a female nude creates a lissome living arabesque.

Ian Banksmith, who works in Melbourne, demonstrates that Australian art has evolved into mainstream abstraction with his luminous compositions in which elements of geometric and color field painting coexist harmoniously. Working in enamel on canvas, a medium that enhances the natural luminosity of his style, Banksmith creates paintings such as "Horizon" and "Electric Landscape," in which a poetic natural allusiveness flirts tantalizingly with a stringent formalism.

Stephen Nova is another painter who proves conclusively that Australia, once dominated by a local variety of figurative expressionism, now produces abstract artists with a sophisticated aesthetic strategies. Austere and meditative as the compositions of Mark Rothko, Nova's paintings possess a beauty at once brilliant and brooding, somber and spiritual, with their horizontal minimalist forms afloat on richly modulated fields of color.

Then there is Stephan Herve Cappon, one of the first artists in Australia to boast a degree in computer art. Cappon's mixed media works on canvas create a fine balance between technology and natural forms. His canvases give the appearance of having been created with criss-crossing beams of light, so ethereal are the shapes and colors he conjures to create his dynamic abstract compositions. Especially striking in this regard is "Dusk," with its densely layered grid of linear forms and radiant hues.

One should not get the impression, however, that Australia's tradition of vigorous figurative painting is by any means exhausted, for two painters in this show reinvigorate it impressively: The painter who signs his work with the single name Hamish creates powerful anatomical anomalies, as seen in the oil on canvas called "Eyes," in which a voluptuous female figure appears to metamorphose in mid-air into an abstract form in a composition enlivened by considerable gestural energy. Hamish also demonstrates that he can create excitement with a more traditional approach to expressionistic composition in "Twyned," a composition centered on two affectionate female nudes limned in a palette dominated by soft blue hues.

Jacinta Maree Stewart has her own strong style, which she employs primarily to create images of angels in a manner as distinctive as that of Georges Rouault, whose bold outlines and stained glass-like colors her compositions in acrylic on canvas recall. Stewart has her own unique approach, however, inspired in part by her close association with the young children she teaches in weekly art workshops. Indeed, few adult painters achieve the refreshing sense of freedom that we see in Stewart's paintings— albeit informed by an innately sophisticated aesthetic sensibility.

—Marie R. Pagano

Encountering the Lyrical Abstractions of Norma Heisler

As the critic Bruno Palmer Poroner has taken great pains to point out, there is a genre of painting that almost invariably gets labeled Abstract Expressionism, even when in, the case of particular artists, it would be more accurate to use the term Lyrical Abstraction. Artists such as James Brooks, whose approach to the gesture is considerably less violent than that of either Pollock or de Kooning is one such artist, and so is Norma Heisler, whose paintings were seen recently at Montserrat Gallery, 584 Broadway, in Soho.

As an historically aware contemporary painter, along with the gestural elements which link her to the New York School, Heisler has also assimilated some of the qualities of Color Field painting into her work. Indeed, her abilities as a colorist are considerable and add to the buoyancy of her forms. This is particularly clear in a painting such as "Rain," where luminous yellow hues evoke beams of light in an ethereal composition closer in spirit to the Color Field paintings of Jules Olitski than to the strident exertions of the Abstract Expressionists. The chromatic subtlety of Heisler's palette is equally effective in "Sky and Sea," another canvas in which her lyrical tendencies come to the forefront.

Another important aspect of Heisler's paintings is her ability to evoke natural phenomena without becoming unduly descriptive. A sense of rolling hills, mountains, or clouds is evoked through her ability to create compositional rhythms, yet even paintings with titles such as "Colorful Island" or "Southeast Sunset" remain essentially abstract. The rhythmical qualities in her compositions result, in some paintings, from her combination of soft, smoky forms overlaid with sinuous linear strokes that emphasis the sense of movement in her oils on canvas. One gets the sense not so much of a specific landscape but of the natural elements and energies that activate atmospheric conditions. It is as though Heisler is painting the landscape from the inside-out, rather than simply delineating the lay of the land, so to speak.

Thus, her paintings have a mystical quality that often makes them appear transcendent, as in "Rain Forest," where a cloud-like white form glows through shimmering green hues. Here, as in all of Heisler's best paintings, it is clear that her use of oils on canvas, rather than the more modern medium of acrylics favored by many other artists today, lends her colors a unique subtlety and refinement and adds to the glistening richness of her paint surfaces. She exploits the qualities of the older, more traditional medium to their fullest, creating succulent effects and permeating her canvases with a sense of light, with atmospheric nuances.

All of these qualities work in concert to invest her paintings with a visual poetry that is perhaps more difficult to pinpoint than the sense of color, texture, shape, and rhythm that makes her compositions succeed in strictly formal terms. Yet these poetic qualities are nonetheless present in her work and contribute greatly to making Norma Heisler one of our more accomplished Lyrical Abstractionists.

—Peter Wiley

Savoring Ed Brodkin's "Home-Made Metaphysics"

Ed Brodkin is an anomaly among abstract painters in that he endeavors not only to offer aesthetic delectation but also to instruct. His project embraces a plethora of world cultures, from which he extracts essences and meanings that he transforms by virtue of his wide-ranging imaginative and technical resources and presents anew to both delight and enlighten us. Indeed, so sharp is the intellectual content in Brodkin's art that the critic reviewing one of his exhibitions invariably feels that he has met his match in terms of being called upon to interpret the content of an artist whose work not only speaks eloquently for itself but one who is unusually adept at verbally articulating his intentions .

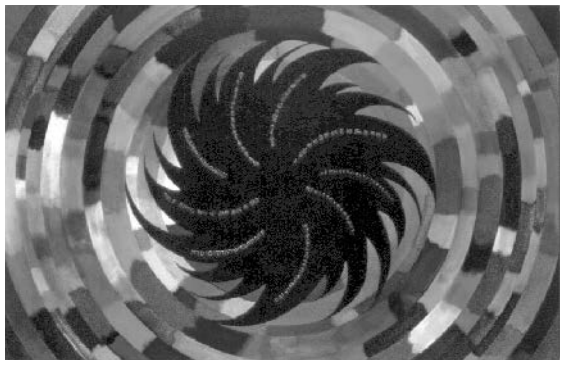
This focused approach, deliberate without being the least bit pedantic, is especially evident in Brodkin's newest solo show, at Pleiades Gallery, 530 West 25th Street, from October 14 through November 1, with a reception for the artist on Saturday October 18 from 3 to 6 PM.

One of Brodkin's abiding interests is semiotics, as reflected in his statement, "From the earliest pictographs in China, in Egypt, in Mesopotamia and the Americas through its myriad transmutations, man's efforts at recording and disseminating information, scientific, economic, political, spiritual, etc., have created wonderful forms that are beautiful to look at and full of promise."

In the present show, this artist's synthesis of intellectual rigor, sensual form, and sensuous surface is at its most successful. His qualities as a colorist also come to the forefront, particularly in the acrylic painting that he calls "Whisperings." Any artist who can employ the word "halations" to describe the precise effect he was going for, as Brodkin does in relation to this painting, has to be acutely attuned to chromatic subtleties. And indeed, the spectrum of hues swirling about the central black form in this composition do appear to be composed with light rather than pigment, even while the textured paint application has a palpable physical presence. By contrast, the dark shape at the center, which could resemble the blade of a circular saw with its sharp-pointed protrusions, would suck the eye in like a black hole, if not for the letter forms from several languages—Cuneiform, Early Greek, Punic, Early Hebrew, Chinese, Arabic, Aramaic, Mayan, and Hindi—radially enscripted in white paint on its surface.

Such scholarly elements function in Brodkin's work not only as semiotic signifiers but also as aspects of a visual vocabulary fully as complex, esoteric, and quirkily original as that of the late Alfred Jensen. Brodkin goes even further, however, in terms of enlivening his sign language with shaped supports that create the illusion of "3-D" effects, although they are actually cut from single boards covered with canvas or other fabrics.

A major new work called "Babel," for example, creates the illusion of two outer panels jutting out at angles like double doors opening to reveal a third panel swarming with a multicultural, multicolored "cacophony" (to use Brodkin's own term, which slyly suggests a "babble") of letters, symbols, pictographs. While calling attention to the simple beauty of these forms that humankind has devised as communication tools, by their jumbled configurations Brodkin also implies the eternal elusiveness of coherence and meaning.



"Whisperings"

Another dynamic new mixed media work called "Nineteen Stars" appears to have been painted on three thick slabs or stele, although it too is actually flush with the wall. Here, the effect is of thick overlapping tablets adorned at their blackened edges with nineteen varied pictographs signifying stars. Although the three slab-like divisions are glazed with primary hues, subtle hints of secondary colors bleed through. Knowing that these subliminal glimmerings are created with smudged paint rags that Brodkin has glued to the support adds to the pleasure of viewing the work. For it is wholly characteristic of Brodkin's simultaneously down-to-earth and transcendent approach to link the daily detritus of the studio, where mundane materials are transmuted through the alchemy of art, to a larger cosmological scheme, as implied by the stellar symbols. Part of the fun of Brodkin's work is sharing in the pleasure he so obviously takes in such home-made metaphysics.

What immediately strikes the casual viewer on entering a gallery filled with Brodkin's work is the sheer visual impact and inventiveness of his paintings, which vary so much in format and approach that whatever stylistic continuity they may have seems to be predicated solely on the character of the man who made them. For Brodkin appears much too enthralled by the process of artmaking, and the adventure of discovering what riches his fascination with signs and symbols will yield if he allows it full reign, to contrive a stylistic signature. Yet so consistent is his vision and so committed is he to his subjects that an overall unity emerges almost despite his tendency to venture out intrepidly on almost every limb that presents itself to him.

To encounter Brodkin's work, then, is to enter a kind of Barthesian funhouse of formal variations and special effects amplified by his carnivalesque use of color (the swirling spectrum of "Whisperings," for example, conveys all the kinetic charge of a spinning roulette wheel), as well as the bold use that he makes of universal symbols—such as the gilded numerals in a painting entitled "Arabesques." This is a large triptych in acrylics and enamel, a favored medium whose lacquer-like sheen he exploits to its utmost, along with intricate Islamic designs delineated in white that enter at the edges of a staggered grid to interact with the gold numerals. Here, Brodkin is intent on calling our attention to the rich beauty of Islamic culture, with the numbers emphasized as "a reminder of their Arabic origin, when the Roman numerals of Europe had not yet incorporated the idea of 'zero'."

The device of imposing elements of another culture into the context of contemporary Western abstraction, as signifiers at once peripheral and significant, is also employed successfully in another major painting by Brodkin entitled "Anatolian Mists." In this work in acrylic and collage, the halved discs of Turkish tiles the artist photographed while visiting that country enter at the edges of eleven colored rectangles of various sizes arranged in an irregular grid. Although balanced and harmonized in a dazzling overall composition, each of the rectangular divisions functions as a discrete color field painting composed with loosely scumbled and scraped layerings of vibrant hues that Brodkin suggests "might be hinting at the very many tribes and civilizations that have criss-crossed and replaced each other over time on the Anatolian peninsula."

These "hints" that Brodkin gives us call to mind a point by made that other great semiologist Roland Barthes' in "The Pleasure of the Text." In order to seduce us, Barthes says, signs must "dance flirtatiously before the eyes."

In the paintings of Ed Brodkin signs are the ultimate sirens, seducing us at every turn.

—Ed McCormack

"Animals" at Allan Stone Gallery

As its title indicates, "Animals," a recent group show at Allan Stone Gallery 113 East 90th Street, was a veritable menagerie of varied pleasures. That the exhibition juxtaposed primitive and folk art from the gallery's considerable collection of such artifacts with contemporary painting and sculpture seemed characteristic of the gallery's catholic curatorial philosophy.

One never knows quite what to expect at Allan Stone, where emerging artists are often featured in group shows alongside the established masters, such as de Kooning, Kline, and Cornell, with which the gallery made its initial reputation in the early 1960s.

Such democratic eclecticism invariably makes for a lively visual dialogue, as seen here where "Cow," a large realist oil on canvas by Don Nice shared the bill with an anonymous American folk art sculpture in painted wood of a bovine with similar markings. One also noted the symbiotic relationship between neoprimitivism of "Gus the Goat," an energetically painterly work in oil and wax on canvas by gallery artist James Havard and two African sculptures depicting species such as sheep or rams, in carved and painted wood. The contemporary Southwestern painter and his anonymous African counterparts shared a similar ability to evoke the essences and presences of such closely related ruminants with notable ruggedness and simplicity.

Depicting a more familiar subject from an city dweller's perspective, Kathryn Spence captured a scattering of sparrows with crumpled newspaper, string, and wire. Spence's use of such detritus seemed an inspired choice of materials to evoke a poetically poignant sense of the hardscrabble existence endured by these tiny creatures in the urban environment.

Birds were particularly prominent in this show, perhaps due to the combination of ethereal and down to earth qualities that have always made them appealing to artists. Other avian subjects included David Beck's kinetic mixed media construction "Dodo," memorializing the comic awkwardness of that now extinct flightless species; a trio of dapper ceramic penguins by Jack Earl; a whimsical drawing in charcoal, ink, and pastel by the gifted young Scottish artist Derrick Guild of birds perched on a bicycle; small oils of single birds by Walt Jurkiewicz's and Robert Rasely, both as meticulously executed as Flemish portraits; a stainless steel sculpture of a turkey by George Gutarra, its feathers sticking out like quills on a robotic porcupine; and two colorful parrots created by James Grashow from wood, cardboard, and paint. Grashow was also represented by "Dog Metamorphosis" and "Fish Metamorphosis," life size hybrid creatures created with mixed media, combining human and animal features with characteristic wit.

Animals exhibition at Allan Stone Gallery

Distinguished gallery artist Wayne Thiebaud weighed in with a beautiful little 1974 oil called "French Fish," in which the luminous yet lifeless subject appeared on the verge of being wrapped in the white paper that it was painted on, creating a casually trompe l'oeil effect.

Thiebaud's masterful little picture, Steven Brown's very large pastel of a white horse, objects like a Cameroon buffalo helmet-mask, a towering Kwakiutl totem with eagle wings from the Pacific Northwest and various antique carousel animals and elegant early American weathervanes were juxtaposed with genuinely bizarre creations, such as a fearsome carved wood gorilla in a plastic bubble by an unknown British prison inmate.

High art and artful oddity achieved a fascinating parity in Allan Stone's highly entertaining exploration of the animal kingdom.

—Ed McCormack

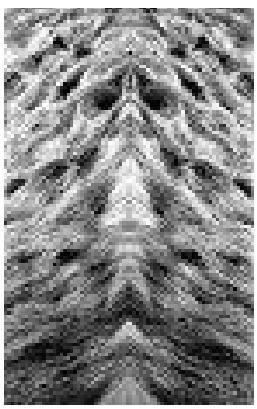
John Arabolos Unearths Nature's Underlying Symmetries

John Arabolos, whose work was seen recently at Agora Gallery, 415 West Broadway, makes black and white mixed media images with an intricacy and obsessiveness that calls to mind the legendary California elaborate ink drawings of Bruce Connors.

Remarkably, however, Arabolos achieves his effects through photographs that he takes of natural patterns, which he then manipulates through mysterious processes that transform them into compositions which can only be termed visionary abstractions.

One of those rare anomalies, a visual artist who can articulate his intentions verbally, Arabolos calls his compositions "the study and investigation of chaotic patterns found in nature, whose similarity (form randomness) have been altered through the deliberate application of symmetry to their existing matrices."

In a sense an artist who speaks of altering the patterns of nature is playing God and had better be good. John Arabolos happens to be very good; thus the images that he arrives at are ultimately more faithful transcriptions of natural phenomena than all but the best landscape paintings, in that they capture the metaphysical reality of nature,



"Grassland Series 1"

rather than merely its outward appearance.

In some of Arabolos' compositions, such as "Indigenous Series 1," and "Fetish Series 1," the definition of nature includes the human figure, images of which emerge from the artist's intricate linear networks. Here, the lines conjure up the notion of nerve endings and indeed the entire cosmology within the human body every bit as effectively as the transparent figures in the paintings of the psychedelic artist Alex Grey. In Arabolos' compositions, however, the figurative images are more totally enmeshed in overall abstraction, suggesting the unity of inner and outer realities. The figure is seen as indigenous to the entire universe and to the swarming cosmos of organic matter that surrounds it, each nerve ending and cell connected to the stars and the planets, as well as to the soil to which all organic matter ultimately returns.

Indeed, the repetitive quality of natural patterns is indicated in other works as well where the sense of landscape is more dominant. In a work such as "Grasslands Series 1," for example the main thrust of the composition simultaneously suggests verdant hills and the rhythms of moving water. Yet within the flow of the wavering forms one can also read figurative allusions to skull like faces. Such interpretations, however, are admittedly subjective, in much the same manner as the widely varying images that different individuals will discern in a Rorshach test.

Arabolos, who teaches design at the University of New Haven, obviously intends for his compositions to provoke ambiguous responses and to conjure up different strokes for different folks, so to speak. And as titles such as "Indigenous Series," "Fetish Series," "Totemic Series" and "Heteromorphic Series" Arabolos' compositions are also meant to evoke a sense of many different cultures and various stages of the life cycle. Indeed, the art of John Arabolos embraces a multicultural aesthetic and encompasses a wide range of vision.

—Laurel Foster

Angst and Transcendence in the New Paintings of Amy Banker

It is not every emerging painter who gets hailed as "a distinguished American artist" by an established mentor like Knox Martin, who went on to predict that his former student at the Art Students League, Amy Banker, would become "a leading force in the 21st century art world."

Indeed, attempting to live up to such kudos could become a burden for an artist less innately gifted as Banker, whose third exhibition at Ezair Gallery, 905 Madison Avenue, is from October 1 through 31, with a reception on October 8 from 6 to 8 PM.

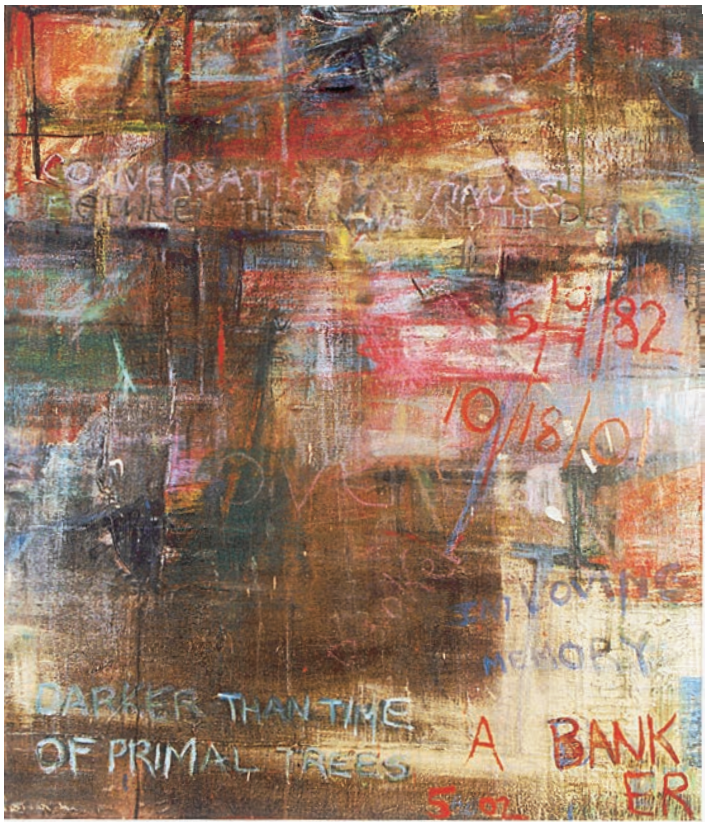
Amy Banker, however, seems to regard the praises of Martin and others with engaging equanimity. She is hip enough to know that any painter is only as good as her or his latest painting. So she works diligently in a manner laudably unbeholden to contemporary trends or tendencies, mining the mother lode of "American-type painting," to appropriate Clement Greenberg's definition of Abstract Expressionism, and refining a personal style that expands it into the postmodern arena.

Critic Vivien Raynor of the New York Times has written that Amy Banker "attacks the canvas with a bravura recalling that of de Kooning," and the resemblance does not end there. Banker's palette of fleshy pinks, singing yellows and brilliant blues can also recall the Abstract Expressionist master's when she works in her higher chromatic register. Yet she is no acolyte of de Kooning or anyone else, for her range as both a colorist and a creator of forms is remarkably wide and inimitably her own. And the same can be said for her influences, which extend far beyond visual art.

Indeed, Banker has stated, "I cannot help but be influenced by philosophy, poetry, literature, psychological symbolism, fairy tales, music, myths, conceits, and metaphors, especially of strong feminist models—women's roles in a changing time throughout the centuries."

In regard to the myriad influences that she allows to seep into her canvases, Banker is the quintessential postmodern painter. For her eclectic permissiveness, particularly in relation to her literary influences, would have been antithetical to the ethos of the Abstract Expressionists, whose only relation to anything literary might be in their adherence to the poet William Carlos Williams' dictum: "not in ideas but in things."

In some of her most recent paintings Banker goes much further, employing fragmented scrawled texts as integral elements of the composition, as seen in two large paintings called "Anna" and "Memoriam." The former painting, in oil and acrylic, is scroll-like in format and brushed freely onto raw unprimed linen, the roughness of the brown surface contributing to its power. Here, the painter seems to be simultaneously baring her soul and covering her tracks, with words and phrases such as "the heart," "soul is free," "slow languors" and "fear" half obscured by impetuously painted gestures. Although these fragments of language have an emotional plaintiveness about them, the colors that Banker employs—luminous streaks of yellow, green, and red— have a contradictory gaiety, as if to indicate beams of light streaming through the soul's dark night in a process of spiritual regeneration.



"Memoriam," 2003

From its title alone, one can assume that the latter painting in oil on canvas is elegiac, and this impression is reinforced by scrawled dates and phrases such as "Darker than Time" and "In Loving Memory." Here, the ground of the painting is darker, with layered concentrations of somber hues built up in layered strokes. Yet here, too, areas of light break through the overall darkness and for all the poignant sadness expressed in the works, the texts are illuminated in brighter colors. Amy Banker seems to be telling us that even in our darkest hours there can be glimmerings of hope, a sense of transcendence may see us through.

"Memoriam" is a brilliant and powerful work, not only for the strong sentiments it injects into an abstract context, but for its formal beauty which, for all the frenzied impetuousness of the artist's graffiti-like paint handling, finally projects a stately, majestic presence recalling certain works by Mark Rothko.

Texts are absent from other recent paintings by Amy Banker, such as "Faust" and "Grand Opera," both in oil and acrylic on canvas, yet there is a strong sense of subtle meanings hidden beneath their layers of boldly brushed color. In "Faust," brilliant reds, pinks, and greens, mediated by flashes of yellow, converge around an area of dense crisscrossed black strokes toward the upper left part of the composition. In "Grand Opera," more intricately woven yellows, pinks, purples, and frosty greens are concentrated toward the center with spacious areas of raw canvas left bare at the edges. And while there is less literal evidence of angst in these two paintings than in the previous pair—or for that matter, sin another vigorous new work called "Othello," boldly inscribed with Shakespeare's phrase "After Such Great Wrath Comes Such Great Love" —they are no less suggestive of self-questioning and spiritual struggle.

Other highlights of Banker's new show include a series of paintings called "Lincoln Center." In one, large areas of white, set against raw linen, seem to capture a sense of both the pristine marble, glass, and concrete architecture of the New York cultural complex and the musical events that occur there. In another, there is the suggestion of light streaming through stained glass. Yet another painting in the series evokes the flags and poster that announce the events at Lincoln Center with buoyant areas of color brushed onto the canvas in bold streaks.

In the final analysis, Amy Banker's best paintings are all about courage embodied in the gesture. She is a true action painter in that each stroke that she applies to the canvas seems to emanate directly from her nervous system yet to be informed by her intellect as well as her emotions. Indeed, it is this confluence of intelligence and soul that makes Banker an artist who could very well fulfill the highest hopes that her admirers and champions have for her.

—J. Sanders Eaton

Soho Gallery Hosts Award Winning Artists from Japan

In Japan, as everywhere else in the world today, it would be difficult to pinpoint a particular style or tendency which holds sway among emerging artists. The eclectic spirit of postmodernism still seems to prevail, judging from the works to be seen in the 8th Japanese Art Award exhibition of the Art Academy Japan. The organization, dedicated to promoting contemporary Japanese art, presented an exhibition of selected artists at the Ueno Museum in Tokyo last December and brings the award winning artists to New York this Fall.

The exhibition, in conjunction with World Peace Art Exhibition New York, Landmark on the Park, 160 Central Park West at 76th Street, can be seen at Cast Iron Gallery, 159 Mercer Street, from Sept. 16 through 20.

Hatsumi Takaishi, "Wish"

Michiyo Kato, "The Poem of Mae Nam"

Two of the artists who caught our attention were Hatsumi Takaishi and Michiyo Kato, both of whom combine recognizable subject matter with strong abstract attributes.

A prize-winning illustrator and animator as well as a fine artist, Hatsumi Takaishi combines acrylic and pastel on canvas in "Wish," which depicts the stylized figures of two children with their arms raised over their heads. In contrast to the bold composition, which is enhanced by abrupt cropping, the color is relatively subdued and almost monochromatic, featuring various subtly harmonized ocher hues. The acrylic paint is thinned to a translucent consistency and applied like watercolor in luminous washes that work in concert with granular shadings of pastel. The modeling effects that Takaishi achieves with the technique enables her to make the shadows and folds in the garments of her figures a prominent feature of the composition, creating abstract patterns that compel us quite apart from her subject matter.

Capturing an affecting sense of childhood memory, Hatsumi Takaishi's painting has a dreamy, enchanted quality auspiciously in keeping with the wistfulness of its title.

Michiyo Kato, a Japanese painter who has lived for extended periods of time in Bangkok, Thailand, shows an oil on canvas called "The Poem of Mae Nam" that reveals her to be an exquisite colorist. Her ability to combine subtly modulated, harmonious hues is seen to particular advantage in the sky which dominates the composition of this luminous landscape. Looming over a low horizon-line where tall palm trees rise from distant islands and a light-flecked body of water, brilliant yellows and pale pinks mingle with delicate blues to evoke a sense of intense sunlight burning through mists.

Through the sensitive application of delicate oil glazes, Michiyo Kato achieves a chromatic shimmer akin to the great British visionary Turner's "tinted steam." Although an Asian sensibility is evident in her work —a lyricism that can be likened to certain aspects of Chinese and Japanese ink painting— Kato's technique is contrastingly Western, in that no lines are visible: Her visual poetry is achieved with amorphous areas of color that coalesce to evoke an appealing atmospheric poetry.

This engaging exhibition also includes works by Sono Ishikawa, Kiichi Izumi, Mieko Ito, Hisao Onami, Fumio Ohashi, Mitsuru Kachi, Nobuo Kurosawa, Shuji Sakamoto, Ko Sato, Katsuhisa Suzuki, Toshitaka Takahashi, Keiko Taki, Shinsen Hashimoto, and Matsuko Momose.

—Peter Wiley

Sculptor Siena Porta's New Zen Vernacular

Although some Western artists have adopted Asian modes and materials with varying degrees of success, it would seem that an occidental artist who is a serious adherent of Zen Buddhism must find a "middle path," so to speak, in order to translate spiritual transcendence into terms true to his or her actual cultural origins.

The Beat poets Gary Snyder and Philip Whalen are exemplary in this regard. Snyder's lifelong commitment to Buddhism began when he spent a year studying in a monastery in Japan as a young man, and Whalen was actually ordained as a Zen priest and went on to become the abbot of the Zen Center in San Francisco. Both, however, retained a strong sense of the modern American vernacular in their verse, even while emulating aspects of Basho and other ancient zen poets.

Given the obvious contrasts between the aesthetic conventions of East and West, an American visual artist who wished to incorporate his or her Buddhist practice in a fresh, contemporary manner would appear to be facing a much more difficult challenge. The sculptor Siena Porta, however, succeeds admirably in doing just that in her solo exhibition "Just Sitting (Shikan Taza)," at Noho Gallery, 530 West 25th Street, from September 2 through 20. (There will be a reception for the artist on September 13 from 2 to 5 PM.)

Porta, a resident of New York who has been affiliated with zen centers here and in San Diego since the early 1970s, creates sculptural installations that are thoroughly contemporary and very much in the Western tradition. Yet her sculptures, as she herself puts it, have "deep roots in my zen practice, which has shaped my artwork for decades."

While the swift calligraphic strokes of zen ink painting have influenced many abstract painters (most notably Franz Kline), aside from temple figures there is no sculptural tradition to speak of for contemporary artists to draw upon. Porta's most immediate predecessors, then, are artists such as George Segal and Edward Kienholz, who create tableaux in which sculpted figures are combined with other elements in an overall environment. Porta, however, relies less than these older Pop and Funk-Assemblage artists on found objects and specific furnishings that recreate the sense of a literal setting, as in Segal's Chinese laundry or Kienholz's simulation of a Los Angeles barroom. Rather, the figures and other elements in her installations function symbolically to express universal truths, as opposed to making obvious social statements and conveying a sense of psychological isolation or existential alienation.

"Shikan Taza" (Just Sitting)

At the same time, the inclusion of televised images of guns and war along with life-size sculptures of figures seated in "zazen" (zen Buddhist meditation) in her new installation at Noho Gallery makes clear that Porta does not see her spiritual practice as a means of turning a blind eye to the turmoil and suffering of the world. Quite the contrary, by presenting a serene contrast to her more disturbing images, her meditating figures cast the violence in high relief and suggest a possible antidote to it.

Yet, far be it from a zen practitioner like Porta to preach moralistically, even while focusing an unflinching eye on the ills of society. Instead, her enlightened wit winks sagely when she includes among the sculptures in her newest installation the lifesize figure of a zen teacher which was decapitated by vandals when it was originally installed outdoors at Adelphi University. After all, as she comments in a recent artist's statement, in zen practice to "lose one's head" merely means to transcend intellectualization!

Although Porta's sculptures, which are created with polyurethane, are modeled in a quite realistic manner, she often applies paint to them in expressionist, anti-naturalistic strokes. An earlier sculpture, presented in a group exhibition at Noho Gallery, for example, featured a procession of three ruggedly modeled monks enlivened by slashes of red that united them with a loosely painted landscape on a large canvas that served as a backdrop.

The synthesis of sculpture and painting is a feature of Porta's present solo show as well, for her monumental figures are juxtaposed with an eight by seven foot canvas of a landscape —albeit painted in a more exacting, less gestural manner than the earlier piece. Here, too, the figures, particularly the figure of a woman in a tee-shirt and slacks seated in the lotus position, with legs crossed and hands clasped in front of her abdomen, are more detailed and expressive, after the manner of her stately 1998 sculpture of two standing monks in long robes, poetically titled "From a Withered Branch a Flower Blooms."

The newer seated female figure, which the artist conceived as a symbolic self-portrait incorporating a likeness of her mother, also has an impressive sculptural presence in its own right. Indeed, one of the things that distinguishes Porta's pieces from the work of other installation artists is that each of their separate components has an autonomous aesthetic appeal. For although she employs installation as a context for her pieces, it is obvious that she is first and foremost a fine sculptor in a tradition that existed for centuries before it occurred to anyone to create the type of mixed media tableau which has become a prominent genre of contemporary art. In this regard, Porta's sculptures present a durable contrast to the work of artists such as Kiki Smith, whose pieces have a flimsy, fly-away quality and could not stand up as completely realized art objects outside of an installation context.

Indeed, although Porta's recent figures are fully clothed and depict ascetic activities, the nudes of Maillol come to mind as kindred prototypes for their round, smooth contours and impressive physical presence. And that such imposing physicality flies in the face of all our expectations regarding Zen Buddhism only makes the work of Siena Porta all the more remarkable.

—Ed McCormack

Greg Manley's Sumptuous Neo-Modernism

In an era when many art schools have replaced studio instruction with courses in theory, conceptual strategies, and art-biz politics, it is heartening to encounter an artist like Greg Manley, whose work speaks eloquently of the joys of the studio, and could set a positive example for art students today.

In his recent exhibition at Agora Gallery, 415 West Broadway, Manley, whose work is in numerous private and corporate collections in Canada and the U.S., made clear that a grounding in solid modernist aesthetics can still provide a foundation for innovating exploration on the part of an artist attuned to art history, yet possessed of a singular sensibility. Also informed by his wide-ranging experience in architectural design, Manley's paintings update the spirit of the Bauhaus, reintegrating abstract and social concerns in a personal visual vocabulary that enables him to create compositions of great formal power.

Areas of sumptuous primary and secondary color are employed by Manley with a joyous boldness and pure delight in the act of painting reminiscent of Hans Hofmann. Particularly exemplary in this regard is the oil on canvas called "GSM 12," in which brilliant red, yellow, purple, green, and blue hues enliven a composition built on blocky rectangular shapes whose interactions create a dazzling chromatic effect. Here, the symmetry of the perfectly square format also complements the formal thrust of the geometric forms. Since a square, like a circle, is infinite in that its dimensions are uncircumscribed, Manley's choice of such formats for some of his paintings also enhances the exquisite sense of scale that gives even his medium-size canvases the power and presence of much larger works.

"Day Day Happy Day"

This same superb sense of scale can also be seen in paintings such as "GSM 10" and "GSM 11," in which Manley employs less regular forms to create a sense of cubist fracture with sharply incised strokes converging to dissect the picture plane on vibrantly colored grounds. In addition, Manley's finesse with the brush also restores the sense of "touch" that is absent in so much recent painting, providing us an opportunity for delectation of surface refinements increasingly rare in postmodern art.

In another canvas, quite large, called "Day Day Happy Happy Day," boldly stylized figurative elements figure prominently. In this oil on canvas in a vertical format, a single figure, its simplified contours delineated in a flowingly organic manner akin to both Picasso and Matisse, yet updated by Manley in a timely manner, is juxtaposed with a similarly stylized vase of flowers, a starry blue sky, and other upbeat images that evoke a whimsical mood in keeping with the picture's title. Here, in particular, the design skills that Manley obviously developed in his professional life are applied to create a painting whose decorative appeal enhances its emotional content.

In fact, one of the more exciting facets of Greg Manley's approach is that he does not seem to find it necessary to leave traces of the visible world out of his abstract compositions. Quite the contrary, he employs ideas and observations from his daily life as an impetus for achieving a stunning synthesis of form and feeling. —Robert Vigo

Kandace Barnes Melds Music and Abstraction

Popular music does not tend to translate well into other art forms. As Hugo Lindgren noted in a recent issue of the New York Times, the rock and roll novel is "not a genre with a great track record." Nor has rock and roll fared particularly well in the visual arts, for that matter. True, there are semi-talented amateurs like Ron Wood, the Rolling Stones guitarist, who paints what he knows best, but no one is suggesting that "Woody" quit his day job.

California artist Kandace Barnes, however, is not only a musician herself, but a sophisticated painter who moves easily between figurative and abstract modes of expression. Her background gives her paintings of musicians an authenticity that sets them apart from the work of others who have attempted to capture the spirit of the rock and roll. Her special gift is for creating images that evoke not merely specific musicians but a more universal sense of the genre itself.

"Magic Garden"

In Barnes' recent exhibition at World Fine Art Inc., 511 West 25th Street, one of the most striking examples of this was her painting "The Muse." A work in watercolor, ink, and pastel, it depicted a young man casually strumming an acoustic guitar. Seen in profile, his head down, he appears to be engrossed in either tuning the instrument or working out the first tentative chords of a song he is composing. Although the image has a photorealist quality, the artist's boldly blocked-in brush work imbues it with a deliberately out of focus quality that sets the mood and dispenses with unnecessary detail.

The fact that the musician's features cannot be clearly discerned gives the image an iconographic power. He could be anyone from the very young Elvis, still driving a truck and dreaming of cutting his first record; to the teenage John Lennon in his greaser days in Liverpool; to the late lamented Jeff Buckley, or any future rock star in a still unknown garage band on Long Island... What Kandace Barnes captures so effectively in "The Muse" is the primal moment when a young artist makes a serious commitment to his instrument and a rock and roll legend is born.

Similarly evocative is another mixed media painting by Barnes called "Lift Up Your Voice," showing a female singer in performance. Eyes closed, long hair cascading over her shoulders, she sings into a microphone jutting into the left side of the composition, set against a dark background suggesting the cavernous space of a large arena. Even in relative close-up, Barnes' slightly blurred technique renders the singer's features indistinct: Is it Janis Joplin? Ani Difranco? Patti Smith? That the singer cannot be readily identified makes the painting more powerful, less a personality portrait than an icon of all the talented women who have made rock and roll history.

In order to fully appreciate the elements that make Kandace Barnes' images of musicians so effective, it is important to also familiarize oneself with her abstract paintings. For it is in them that the formal armature supporting her figurative work comes to the forefront most dynamically.

Witness the mixed media painting Barnes calls "Conversation," with its muted earth colors set off by stark areas of black and white and its muscularly interwoven organic forms writhing energetically. Barnes cites Chagall, Picasso, and Kandinsky as artistic influences and while she has obviously been inspired by these masters, she has clearly learned just as much from music, judging from the churning rhythms of this composition, which could just as easily evoke the pounding power of a John Bonham drum solo as the cursive contours of Picasso or the swarming forms of Kandinsky. Barnes translates those musical rhythms into a visual idiom all her own in this vigorously executed abstract composition. Equally forceful its rhythmic thrust is another powerful composition, predominantly in rich earth colors, appropriately called "Whirlaway."

To make a musical analogy to another mixed media painting by Barnes entitled "Magic Garden," which was the literal centerpiece of her recent show at World Fine Art, one would have to come up with a more lyrical example than the powerhouse drummer for Led Zeppelin. Perhaps only the classical composer "Vivaldi" would do as a musical model for the vivacious mood that Barnes evokes in this composition of vibrant green, blue, and purple hues, laid down in a flurry of succulent brush strokes. In purely visual terms one could also make comparisons to the shimmering quality of Monet's water lilies.

Kandace Barnes, however, puts the stamp of her own inimitable aesthetic sensibility on this gorgeously animated composition, which reveals her strong spiritual side, with its sense of natural forces transformed in vibrant abstract terms.

In both her figurative and abstract modes it is finally their formal virtues that distinguish the paintings of Kandace Barnes. Indeed, the fact that some of her portraits of musicians are commissioned works suggests that their subjects might be recognizable to one more knowledgeable of pop music than this writer. Nonetheless, as in her abstract paintings, it is her ability to invest such pictures with qualities that transcend their subjects that makes her compositions more profound than the sum of their parts.

—J. Sanders Eaton

Hilda Green Demsky's Innovative New Works on Mylar

It is always exciting when an artist whose work one has been following with great interest takes a surprising new direction. This is especially true when the new direction, while unanticipated, appears inevitable in retrospect.

A fine case in point is Hilda Green Demsky, whose dynamic new solo show can be seen at Pleiades Gallery, 530 West 25th Street, from October 13 to November 1, with a reception for the artist on Thursday October 16, from 6 to 8 PM.

Demsky's oils on canvas won her a Fulbright Fellowship, as well as a grant from the National Endowment for the Arts. A less adventurous artist might choose to rest on those kind of laurels and continue to work in the same medium, fearing to risk "arguing with success." But while Demsky also includes work on canvas, she takes a quantum leap forward in the new oils on mylar that are the primary focus of her new exhibition.

In some of the pieces, the heavy sheets of mylar are suspended from wires; in others, they form free-standing cylinders. Together, they create an overall installation that envelopes the viewer in a walk-through environment, evoking a sense of the terrain the artist herself traverses when she hikes for miles with her sketch pad among mountains and waterfalls.

For years, Demsky has found inspiration for her vigorous oils in the movement of free-flowing water, applying Abstract

"Time is like the flow of water"

Expressionist brush pyrotechnics to a natural phenomenon, creating large, bold canvases which are simultaneously realistic and possessed of an autonomous painterly qualities.

More recently, she hiked the Shenandoah National Park and the gorges of the Finger Lakes District of New York on fellowships from the Virginia Center for the Creative Arts, The Ragdale Foundation, and Skidmore College. The resulting body of work enables Demsky to move into the space of sculpture and installation art in one fell swoop, while sacrificing none of the painterly delectation that has distinguished her work from the beginning.

Indeed, working on mylar enables Demsky to extend and enhance the painterly dynamics in her work, since its transparency allows for unpainted areas of the composition to provide layered glimpses of other compositions nearby, which shift and change as the viewer moves about in the gallery space. This creates a kinetic effect, a sense of flux approximating the actual movement of water, which is further enhanced by the fact that the suspended pieces curve down toward the gallery floor and have a tendency to move and shift slightly of their own accord. Thus, Demsky's energetic brushstrokes seem to shimmer all the more, set off by the sheen of the clear plastic.

Perhaps the most innovative aspect of Demsky's new exhibition is that she has achieved such a complex and seamless synthesis of expressive realism, abstraction, sculpture, and installation, merging diverse twains that would have seemed irreconcilable.

Yet, in her works on mylar, as in her compositions on canvas, the ultimate success of her venture finally rests on her unfailing ability to conjure up the whooshing force and velocity of luminous blue water and bubbly white foam cascading over the rocks of a fall or revolving in the vortex of a whirlpool.

In fact, it is her innate virtues as a painter that make this new body of work by Hilda Green Demsky, so unexpected and yet so logical, a significant step in the ongoing development of this important postmodern painter.

—Lawrence Downes

For K.C. Davis, Old Doors Are Portals to Aesthetic Discovery

For certain artists, a chance occurrence can result in a fruitful new direction. One of the more dramatic examples would probably be when Jackson Pollock first took notice of the drips on his studio floor...

For the contemporary artist Ken Davis, who paints under the name of K.C. Davis, the career-changing epiphany occurred when, in the process of renovating two houses, he came into possession of 60 old doors. Davis had been painting for as long as he could remember, but something in his approach was immediately altered when he started applying paint to their rough, weathered surfaces. What started as an experiment became a liberating discovery. The prominent grain, the knotholes, and other imperfections in the old wood —as well as bits of hardware, such as keyhole plates, hinges, and latche —inspired him to become bolder in his paint application. Working with large brushes, he laid on pigment with a new sense of freedom, eventually moving on to barn doors whose size inspired him to open up his compositions to monumental scale.

The imposing physicality of even K.C. Davis' regulation-size door paintings is mightily impressive in his New York solo debut at Gallery @ 49, 322 West 49th Street, from September 6 through October 6. The ruggedness of the support complements the rustic quality of landscapes such as "Autumn's Here," where the vertical composition makes the door seem a literal portal to the season. The door's vertical slats mirror the stately beauty of tall trees climbing to a vibrant blue sky. Behind them a whitewashed house has a poignantly faded grandeur. There is a sense that only ghosts reside here now, making the title of the picture seem more than a matter-of-fact proclamation. The texture of the wood suggests the structure's peeling facade.The gray bark of the tall trees out front seems similarly ghostly. Even the autumnal hues of their sparse leaves give off a sense of melancholy, as do the clumps of arid ocher grass sprouting here and there from the dirt of the front yard.

In "Autumn's Here," K.C. Davis achieves a sense of poetic desolation that can only be compared to Andrew Wyeth. Davis, however, eschews the older artist's tight technique and fussy detail, evoking the scene with a bravura boldness that makes it no less emotionally affecting and far more appealing in pure painterly terms.

Indeed, an exhilarating painterly vigor redeems even the starkest images in Davis' oeuvre, as seen in "Ron's Tree," where the juicy succulence of his brushstrokes brings to life a bare-limbed tree in a snowy landscape. Here, the main element of the picture is centrally placed, its branches

Oil on Wood By K.C. Davis

brushed against sparkling white snow and pale winter sky with great gestural energy. Here, too, the rectangular panels of the door create a kind of phantom grid beneath the paint surface that Davis exploits skillfully to bolster the formal power of his composition. Indeed, he invariably utilizes the panel divisions, moldings, and other set features of the doors in this manner, to add visual and tactile interest, as well as to emphasize the underlying abstract qualities that animate his paintings, making them much more than mere pictorial representations of particular themes or places.

"Wiscossett, Maine" is especially exemplary in this regard, with clustered, gaily colored bungalows creating a casually updated sense of cubistic fracture in a panoramic horizontal composition. With great gestural flair and characteristic boldness Davis "nails" the light, space, and crisp quality of the air in a quintessential New England town. Equally evocative is "Island Home," a more isolated view of a lone house and pine trees on a rocky shore above a shimmering, swiftly flowing body of water, the irregular shape of the door adding to the composition's rough vigor.

Cubist structuring also figures prominently in "Free Speech," a lively view of flag festooned highrise buildings and milling crowds in midtown Manhattan, which has an impressionistic intricacy akin to some of Childe Hassam's urban vistas, albeit with a vivacity all Davis' own. Similarly strong are Davis' European panoramas, such as "Sienna," with its lively patterns of stucco houses and villas nestled in a hillside, and "Tuscan Afternoon," a tall vertical view of a narrow street, a church steeple, and shadows that projects a stillness akin to one of de Chirico's surreal Italian plazas.

Although landscapes and townscapes tend to dominate Davis' oeuvre animal and human figures occur as well. Especially engaging are paintings in which the black and white spotted hides of cows grazing in verdant fields create lively abstract patterns. One particularly bold composition features a single spotted calf standing in tall grass. It is painted on a slatted door hung horizontally, the rectangular metal lock at the top suggesting a house in the distance, the dead bolt its chimney. The winning little bovine peers out at the viewer imploringly, which makes its wry title all the more affecting: "Veal?"

One of Davis' most dynamic figurative subjects is a painting of a bicyclists on a tall vertically hanging door. The figure, seen from behind, spans almost the entire length of the door, the dimensions of which emphasize its human scale. With the background brushed in broad gestural strokes, the painting's boldly generalized forms are reminiscent of those in the compositions of Richard Diebenkorn, David Parks, and other members of the California Figurative School. Here the rider's bright red shorts and the stripes on his white sweat-socks are piquant accents in a composition that effectively applies the gestural dynamics of Abstract Expressionism to a figurative subject.

K.C. Davis is a painter's painter, an artist whose work offers a great deal of delectation, not only in its overall thrust, but in the subtle nuances of its brush work. His discovery of old doors as painting surfaces gave him just the impetus that he needed to bring his gift for energetic and engaging painterly pyrotechnics to the forefront. Already well known in New Jersey, where he has shown in local galleries and won numerous awards, Davis makes an auspicious Manhattan solo debut in this superb exhibition in one of the city's more exciting new venues.

—J. Sanders Eaton

DONO

Presents

1.618

Giacomo di Bovino (1481-1543?)

Works from the *far side* of the Renaissance

"Magdalene's Marionette"

October 1 through October 25

Phoenix Gallery

568 Broadway, 6th Floor
New York, N.Y. 10012
Tues - Sat 11 - 5:30
www.phoenix-gallery.com 212.226.8711

Exhibit of Sumi-E (Japanese Brush Painting)

Koho School of Sumi-E

Works on Paper by
Koho Yamamoto, Sensei
And Her Students
October 25, 26 & 27;
November 1, 2 & 3
2-7 PM

Opening Reception
Sat., October 25, 5-7 PM
Westbeth Artist Housing, Studio A101
55 Bethune St. (Lobby Entrance)
Bethune at Washington St., West Village
For Information call: Koho School of Sumi-e
212-673-5190

Agora Gallery

SPONTANEOUS FIGURATIONS
OCTOBER 17 - NOVEMBER 8, 2003
Reception: Thursday, Oct. 23, 6-8pm

✶

Abraham Michael Dayan
Sir Mbonu Christopher Emerem
Willie Louis Reed, Jr.

415 West Broadway, 5th Floor SOHO, NY NY 10012
212-226-4151 / Fax: 212-966-4380
www.agora-gallery.com • www.art-mine.com
Tuesday - Saturday 12 - 6 pm

THE BLUE HOUR

A Fine Arts Exhibit
curated by Meg Boe Birns
September 10-28, 2003
Reception Sat. Sept 13, 2:30-5:30 pm

Farhana Akhter Meg Boe Birns
Astrith Deyrup Myrna Harrison-Changar
K.A. Gibbons Patricia Hagood
Carolyn Simons Kaplan Leanne Martinson
Young Me Maryann Sussoni
Marlene Zimmerman

West Side Arts Coalition BROADWAY MALL COMMUNITY CENTER
Broadway at 96th Street, NYC (on the center island) 212-316-6024
Wed. 6-8 pm/Sat. & Sun. 12-6 pm

Magic Flute No. 1 - 2003, Acrylic & Oil on Canvas, 24 X 24 in.

AMY BANKER

"Alchemy of Vision and Song"

October 1 - 31, 2003

Reception:
Oct. 8, 6-8pm

EZAIR GALLERY

905 Madison Ave.
New York, N.Y. 10021
(212) 628-2224 Fax: (212) 628-7828
Tues - Fri 12-6pm

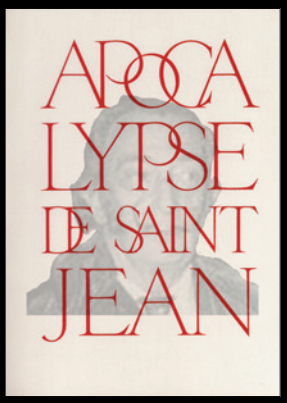
ALLAN SIMPSON

"Winter, Hudson River" Oil on cvanvas 18" X 32"

Urban Metaphors: Machine, Nature & Design

By Appointment: 718 274 9619

ALLANMaryS@AOL.com



Edited by Joseph Foret, 1961
Salvador DALI
Leonor FINI
Leonard FOUJITA
Pierre-Yves TREMOIS
Ossip ZADKINE
Georges MATHIEU
Jean COCTEAU
Ernst FUCHS

In Celebration of the 100th Anniversary of Dali's Birth

Starts October 10, 2003

CFM Gallery

112 Greene Street, SoHo, New York City, 10012
Tel: (212) 966-3864 www.cfmgallery.com Fax: (212) 226-1041
Sunday Noon to 6pm Monday thru Saturday 11am to 6pm
info@cfmgallery.com