JUNE/JULY/AUGUST 2007 www.galleryandstudiomagazine.com VOL. 9 NO. 5 New York

GALLERY&STUDIO

The World of the Working Artist

WEIMAR DREAMS

GEORGE GROSZ, "BARBERINA"

FROM BERLIN TO BROADWAY AT THE MORGAN LIBRARY & MUSEUM (P.21)

PLUS: ART VS. EMPATHY (NY NOTEBOOK, CENTERFOLD)

Ulla Novina

Winds of Change #1, Italian Marble

Icons in Stone
On view through the Summer Months

Broadfoot & Broadfoot Manhattan Gallery
62 Greene Street, New York, N. Y.
646-808-7470

Alberto Jiménez

"Daily Still Life" Oil on Canvas 100 x 81

represented by
WORLD FINE ART GALLERY
511 West 25th Street, Ste 803
New York, N.Y. 10001
Phone: 646 336 1677 Hrs: Tues - Sat 12 - 6pm
www.worldfineart.com info@worldfineart.com

THE BROOME STREET GALLERY

Ground floor, 1,300 sq. ft. Exhibition space rental available

498 Broome Street, New York, NY 10013 Tel: (212) 941-0130

G&S NYC GUIDE

Everything Goes Book Cafe & Neighborhood Stage, at 208 Bay Street in Tompkinsville, Staten Island, continues to justify its name with a variety of free musical events, poetry readings, films, art exhibitions, and other community-oriented activities. On June 14 and 15, at 9 PM, Manhattan cognoscenti willing to brave the ferry can catch a performance piece involving lights, smoke, and audio by resident conceptual artist Steve Jones Daughs. Entitled "Mystic Portal," it is billed as "a celebration of the New Moon." Be there or be square!

While on Staten Island don't miss **Cynthia von Buhler: Show & Tell** at **THE STATEN ISLAND MUSEUM**, 75 Stuyvesant Place. Von Buhler, a resident of the Island, creates interactive sculptures and surreal three-dimensional works that have won her a wide following in the New York art scene. She is also author of a highly acclaimed Children's book, The Cat who Wouldn't Come Inside (Houghton Mifflin, 2006). Through June 17. Call 718.727.1135 for museum hours and information.

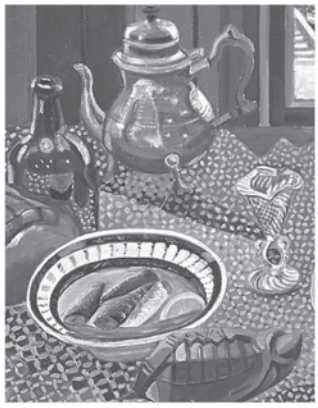
Al Hirschfeld Portraits on view at **THE ART STUDENTS LEAGUE**, 215 West 57th St., thru July 13. A former alumni of the League, Hirschfeld applied a line as sinuous as that of Aubrey Beardsley to the fine art of theatrical caricature. In a career that spanned more than 80 years, he became one of the most admired draftsmen in America. See an array of caricatures displayed for the first time, including Mick Jagger, The Beatles, and early media stars such as John Barrymore and Charlie Chaplin. www.theartsstudentsleague.org

(cont'd p.20)

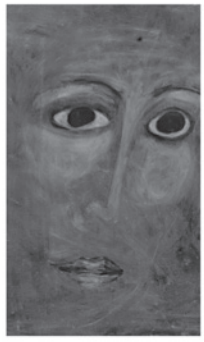
G&S Highlights

On the Cover:
George Grosz *(1893 –1959)* Barberina, *1925*
Watercolor on wove paper 25 1/2 x 37 1/4 inches (647 x 948 mm) The Pierpont Morgan Library, Bequest of Fred Ebb, Photography by Joseph Zehavi, 2006 © Estate of George Grosz /Licensed by VAGA, New York, NY
–See Weimar Dreams, page 21

Alberto Jiménez, pg. 15



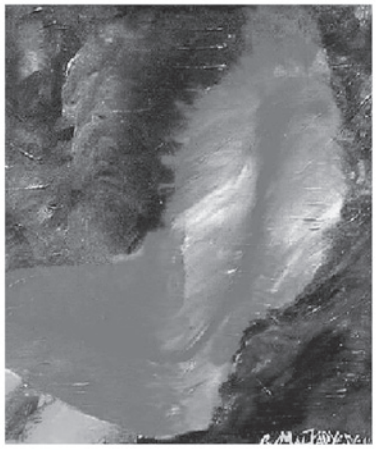
Stephanie Rauschenbusch, pg. 29



Verane Guerin, pg. 4

Ekatherina S, pg. 24

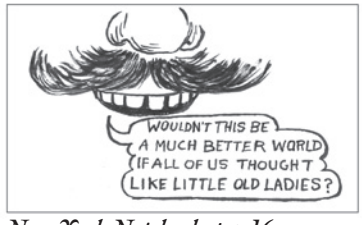
Miguel Sansón, pg. 20



Cornelia MacFadyen, pg. 4

Sawaka Nagae, pg. 5

Bugatti, pg. 14



New York Notebook, pg. 16

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

EDITOR AND PUBLISHER **Jeannie McCormack**
MANAGING EDITOR **Ed McCormack**
SPECIAL EDITORIAL ADVISOR **Margot Palmer-Poroner**
DESIGN AND PRODUCTION **Karen Mullen**
CONTRIBUTING EDITOR **Maureen Flynn**
www.galleryandstudiomagazine.com

The Sculptor Ulla Novina's Ancient Inspiration

To enter the cavernous exhibition space of Broadfoot & Broadfoot, at 62 Greene Street, and encounter the sculptures of the Swedish-born American artist Ulla Novina, on view through the summer months, is to feel oneself in the presence of the sacred. To put it quite simply, the forms that Novina coaxes with her chisel from massive slabs of marble are statements of grace. Without alluding to anything in the known world they command space with an innate majesty that makes the viewer hungry for the timeless narrative submerged within the surface of the stone. Their economy of form enhances their mute power.

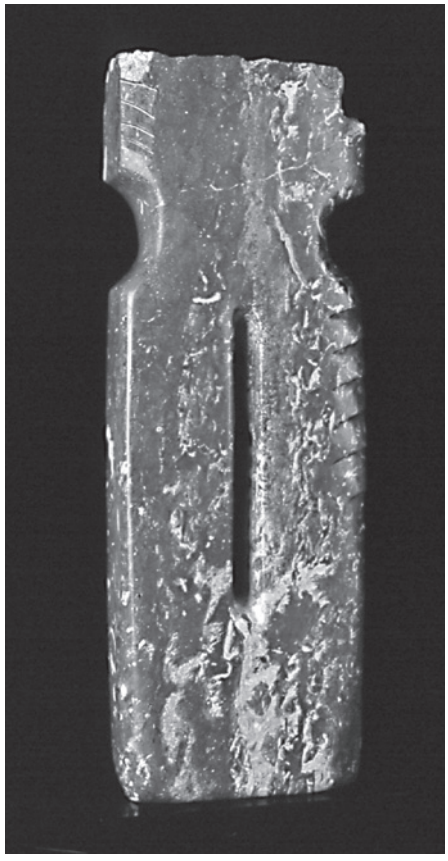
Skane, the province of Sweden where Novina was born is legendary for its expansive spirit and boisterous humor. Her biography tells us that she also spent some of her formative years in Varmland, a place of "mysterious forests and deep lakes," and also "the county of dreamers, storytellers, musicians, painters and sculptors."

Both places formed her personality as well as her sculptural sensibility. She is a gregarious woman, given to witticisms, wild enthusiasms, and easy laughter. But there is also a serene stillness at her center, a contemplative quality that makes it possible to imagine her sitting for many long hours in her studio, where every surface is covered with a thin film of marble dust, evoking the timeless silence of the snowy forests of her youth in Sweden, communing with monolithic slabs of stone until they tell her in their mute way what they will become.

For Novina has stated in no uncertain terms that she regards her stones as sentient beings. She speaks of the "connection" between herself and her materials and insists that the dialogue that she has with it is reciprocal: "Together the stone and I tell a story. . . .This awareness creates a feeling in me of kinship with the stone which I express in my art by integrating the natural with my sculptural statement. If successful, self and stone are held in shared embrace."

Admittedly, one does often not hear artists talking in such terms, passion being the last taboo in our current climate of cool irony. The last thing Ulla Novina is concerned with is adhering to the dictates of disposable culture. She is not working in plastic or styrofoam, after all; her medium has been around forever, it is, as a poet inspired by her work once wrote, "essential structure— the scaffolding of the planet," and taking inspiration from their source, her sculptures are built to last.

One feels their enduring qualities immediately on entering Novina's present exhibition, where thanks to the generous



"Vessel of the Muse"

scale of the gallery space (the polar opposite of the ubiquitous "white cube" that the real estate crunch has imposed on much of today's art), her pieces have plenty of space to breathe and exude an atmosphere of pregnant power. "Stately" is the term that springs most readily to mind.

The totemic work in red Italian marble "Vessel of the Muse" grabbed and held me first, not only because it is the one closest to the entryway, but because its tall vertical shape suggests an ancient tablet with an almost anthropomorphic presence. As one moves around the piece, dramatic tactile contrasts become apparent between the smoothness of the surface facing the door and its opposite side, where Novina has carved away the white stone to unearth the inner core of its white grain. The strokes begin within the vertical opening, suggesting a primitive fertility symbol—or perhaps, given the title of the piece, the very womb of the Muse, earth mother of all art—and spread outward over much of its surface. These ruggedly roughed-up textures, which contrast so sharply with fine strands of white on the opposite side, seem to speak of the intrepidness that is required for an artist to collaborate so boldly with the work of nature.

For Novina to presume to do so, however, is not a function of ego but of locating herself humbly within the very oldest tradition of human endeavor. Indeed, as William Zimmer, an art critic for *The New York Times* once pointed out in an essay on her work, "She sees as early antecedents manifestations such as imprints of hands on rock faces made by paleolithic people and slabs of rock that contain Viking runes—things that declare 'I am here.'"

Perhaps no piece of Novina's addresses our origins more explicitly than the piece that she calls "Lucy #1." The title refers to the name given by the famed anthropologist Louis Leakey to the most complete skeleton of an early ancestor of humans ever found, excavated in Ethiopia. Since this fossil is believed to be female, Novina refers to her as "our Primordial Mother," and pays tribute with this work in Mexican onyx, a material with an off-white hue, suggesting very old bone. Although Novina began her career with the human figure, first as a painter and then when she discovered her true vocation as a sculptor, she has evolved a personal vocabulary of forms that transcend literal representation. Yet, here again, the two roughly rectangular forms that she has carved into the stone, supported by a columnar "neck," are decidedly anthropomorphic, suggesting a primitive monument.

Even when suggestions of the figure are not explicit, as in "Morning Dialogue," a particularly craggy work in Italian marble, which she has scored along its top edge with deep grooves, a human element invariably enters into Novina's sculptural thinking. Here it takes the form of the imaginative dialogue she envisages between the contrasting deep maroon and taupe stratifications and striations in the stone at the time of their creation in prehistory.

And while it would be no more characteristic of Novina's mature aesthetic to imitate the superficial particulars of nature than to detail the individual features of the human figure, she creates a powerful material metaphor in "Forest Portals," in which two adjoining columns of dark Italian marble, carved with precise lines resembling runic inscriptions, celebrate the natural habitat of her Scandinavian ancestors.

Here, as in other pieces in this splendid exhibition, Ulla Novina also proves herself to be a worthy peer of her sculptural ancestors, Brancusi and his former student Noguchi, who once said, "Actually, the older it is, the better I like it. I don't know why, but perhaps it's simply because the repeated distillation of art brings you back to the primordial."

—Ed McCormack

Verane Guerin Makes the Human Face a Monumental Symbol

Although the more minimal modes of art are generally assumed to be irreconcilable with humanism, the gifted French painter Verane Guerin proved the exception to the rule in her recent exhibition at Monkdogz Urban Art, 547 West 27th Street, in Chelsea.

The human visage painted on a scale much larger than life is Guerin's ostensible subject; yet the physical properties of paint itself, as a surrogate for flesh, are every bit as essential to her vision. Guerin's faces almost always emerge from monochromatic color fields in generally somber hues. Although her colors are most often in an earthen range, even her reds are muted, although their textures and tones may range from the matte quality of a rag saturated with dried blood to more visceral clarets with considerable surface sheen.

Indeed, nuances of tonal modulation are important aspects of what Guerin's art is all about. Few other contemporary artists who paint on a similar scale pay such minute attention to subtleties of color, tone, and the ineffable qualities of "touch." While Abstract Expressionists and Color Field painters have been known to concern themselves with such things, precious few figurative artists make them as essential an element of their aesthetic as Guerin does. In this regard, an analogy can be made to the care that poets, as opposed to prose writers,

"Mara"

bring to the weight of words and sentences. For Guerin is most definitely a poet in paint, putting an exquisitely refined emphasis on the exact density and viscosity of the pigment that she applies to every section of her canvases, even while layering color in an apparently spontaneous manner, in order to secure the subtle contrasts that make her figurative compositions as subtly sensuous as the abstractions of artists such as Mark Rothko and Jules Olitski.

Nor do these qualities run counter to Guerin's figurative concerns. Quite the contrary, they enhance the emotional resonance of her large, looming faces, lending them a depth of feeling, a soulful suggestiveness, that one normally associates with the paint-handling of certain Old Masters, even though there is nothing traditional or academic about Guerin's style. Rather, she is a thoroughly contemporary painter, and while most of her compositions center on a single face filling almost the entire picture space, one would be more accurate to compare the ones that include two faces—or possibly two images of the same face—divided by a vertical line to Barnett Newman's abstractions consisting of a single stripe set against a dark, monochromatic color field.

Having exhausted the formal felicities which should appeal to connoisseurs, let us conclude with the expressive qualities that also make Guerin's paintings accessible to the layman: "Mara," in which two adjoining faces with prominent almond eyes emerge from an ocher ground, shadowed by darker earth colors and overlaid with a smoky network of brushstrokes, suggests a mystical apparition, while the single bearded visage afloat on a deep red field in "Belius" evokes nothing less than the "Shroud of Turin," the artifact bearing traces of a face that some believe to be the burial shroud of Christ.

In these and other paintings by Verane Guerin, the human face takes on monumental proportions, mirroring the soul and reflecting the mystery of consciousness and life itself. This is a profound and timeless subject, and the singular vision of this gifted French painter does it full justice.

—Ed McCormack

Cornelia MacFadyen's Transcendence

While Cornelia MacFadyen credits the Abstract Expressionists as a formative influence on her work, she has evolved a style that can only be termed visionary for its mysterious allusiveness. In this regard, MacFadyen seems a kindred spirit of the legendary and difficult to classify American original Forrest Bess, in her recent exhibition at World Fine Art Gallery, 511 West 25th Street, in Chelsea.

Like that of Bess, her method is deeply intuitive, as she makes clear in a recent artist statement: "People ask me how do I know what I am going to paint, and my answer is simple...I don't. My paintings are an expression of what is happening in my life."

As a student at the Art Students League and Pratt Institute, MacFadyen studied classical painting and came under the sway of the Impressionists. However, her eventual interest in Abstract Expressionism led her to her present style, which puts a similar gestural freedom to the service of an intensely subjective vision.

Where MacFadyen differs most markedly from her predecessors is in the mystical quality of her work, which recalls the early American visionary Albert Pinkham Ryder more readily than any Abstract Expressionist whose name springs immediately to mind. For like Ryder's, her paintings are easel scale, rather than especially large and rely more for their overall effect on an intimate, poetic quality than on the expansive gesture executed on a grand scale.

Rather than trying to overwhelm the viewer, her oils on canvas tend to draw him or her in, with their poetic forms, luminous colors, and sensuous textures. Yet there is much more to these paintings than their seductive formal and physical qualities. For MacFadyen's shimmering color fields evoke mystical atmospheres, and her seductive forms hint at a broad range of meanings.

In paintings such as "Rebirth" and "Lover," areas of vibrant red flow like molten lava, suggesting a fiery sense of passion, while other canvases such as "In the Fields" and "The Road Last Traveled," employ more subtle, muted hues to create a meditative mood. While the latter painting is especially engaging in chromatic terms, with its luminous pink, yellow, and blue saturations, other canvases such as "Sandstorm" and "Out Looking," employ almost identical color schemes—in this case red and yellow— to vastly different effect.

As with other abstract painters, there is often a suggestion of nature in Cornelia MacFadyen's paintings. However, it is no ordinary sense of natural events that one gleans from these works; rather, they project a sense of phenomenological occurrences like, if not exactly, meteor storms or shooting stars. There is invariably a hint of magic in her work, as though memories and perceptions are being glimpsed in flashes of intuition.

"Lover"

Very occasionally there is even a suggestion of the human figure, as seen in "The Dancers" or "The Sprinter." However, it invariably takes the form of a phantom presence, perceived subliminally on the outer edges of consciousness. For Cornelia MacFadyen is, above all, a kind of artistic shaman, transforming "what is happening in my life" into visions of transcendence.

—Maureen Flynn

Sawaka Nagae: A Painter's Visual Sonata at World Fine Art

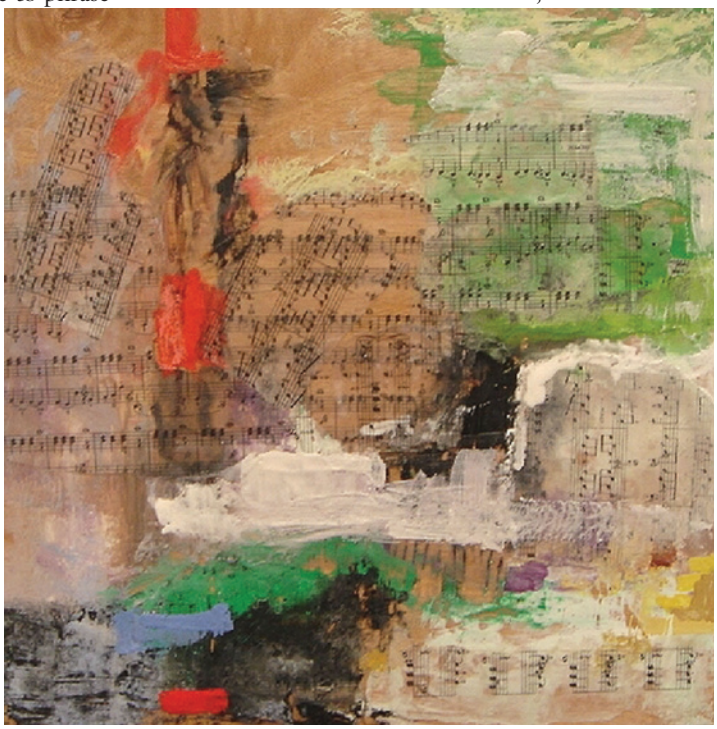
Walter Pater made his famous statement that "All art constantly aspires toward the condition of music" in an essay about the sixteenth century Venetian painter Giorgione (Giorgio da Castelfranco), who holds a momentous place in the history of art, although little is known of his life and only a handful of paintings have been definitively attributed to him. However, Pater was able to phrase this central thesis of the piece with such general certainty in full confidence that it applied all across the board. And the truth of his statement was to be borne out even more obviously in subsequent centuries. Sound, even more than sense, is the essence of poetry (some recent poetic movements such as Language Poetry, dispense with sense altogether), and surely since its very beginnings, abstract painting in particular has aspired to emulate the freedom of music. Indeed, some of the terms now used routinely in art criticism originated in musical discourse—"rhythm" being the most obvious example —while others, such as "chromatic," can be applied both to color in painting and to chords in music.

All of which brings us to one of the more successful examples of this synthesis: how the New York artist Sawaka Nagae explores the interrelationship between music, the most innately abstract of all art forms, and painting, in her series "From the Sonata Pathetique," seen recently at World Fine Art Gallery, 511 West 25th Street.

Working in encaustic on wood panels, Nagae often collages sheet music into the compositions in this series. However, she does not employ it as a symbolic or illustrative element in any obvious way; rather, the delicate notes become an integral part of her compositions, much in the manner that calligraphy is integrated with traditional painting in China and Japan. Yet, at the same time, she appears equally beholden to the more European aesthetic tradition; for her use of these elements also recalls how Kurt Schwitters employed ticket stubs and other bits of printed matter as purely visual elements in his "Merz" compositions. Indeed, Nagae effortlessly achieves not only a striking synthesis of Eastern and Western aesthetics (a tricky proposition which has eluded many of her fellow artists in this era of postmodern multiculturalism) but also an equally impressive synthesis of the visual and the musical.

"In this exhibition, I worked on my recent favorite piano piece, tried to construct the idea of tonal movement," Nagae asserts in an artist statement issued in connection with her show.

The tonal movement of which she speaks is especially evident in "Pathetique #1." Like the other works in the series, this painting is executed on a twelve by twelve inch wood panel. This is a modest size compared to the enormous productions favored by many contemporary artists since the advent of Abstract Expressionism made mural scale routine; yet, in Nagae's case, given her exquisite apportionment of space, the perfectly square format creates the illusion of much larger scale.



"Pathetique #3"

In "Pathetique #1, unlike most of her other works in which painterly elements come into play, the collaged musical notes themselves carry the full thrust of the composition. Juxtaposed in subtly staggered vertical and horizontal rows, they create rhythms that are simultaneously austere and lively, achieving the visual equivalent of a lilting melody. The absence of not only painted elements but any color other than the translucent amber of the beeswax in which the printed musical notes are embedded further enhances the spare, lovely austerity of the composition.

By contrast, in "Pathetique #2," the collaged sheet music appears only in the upper left and lower right portions of the picture, while the painterly elements (primarily gestural strokes of black, red, and brown on a yellow ocher field) create the sense of push and pull—or, to put it in more musical terms, point and counterpoint— that animates the composition. Here, too, there is a sense of flotation to the forms (particularly the bold black stroke toward the top of the painting, which can appear to be a stormier counterpart of the cloud-shaped collage fragment of musical notes above it, while the more angular red strokes at the lower right portion of the picture interact with the notations on the printed sheet music in a more staccato manner, suggesting how notes in a sonata can suddenly quicken and switch tempo from serene to strident.

Even more painterly is "Pathetique #3," where vigorously brushed strokes of red, blue, and green are employed, along with thick white impasto, to create a chromatic and tactile interplay with collaged musical notes that alternately vanish beneath and show through the thinner areas of paint in the manner of pentimento. In this composition, too, the verdant passages suggest the lyrical rural mood of the sort of musical form commonly referred to as a "pastorale."

Then there are "Pathetique #4," in which the sheet music again dominates the composition, interspersed with just a single bold green horizontal gesture; "Pathetique #5," where, conversely, the musical notes are all but obliterated by a veritable storm of painterly activity, as in an especially violent musical crescendo, and "Pathetique #6," where Nagae displays her subtlest gifts as a colorist with harmonious juxtapositions of reds, yellows, and blues that bathe the composition in glowing chromatic auras.

Like Bill Jensen, the artist to whom she seems most stylistically related, Sawaka Nagae employs the waxen surface of the encaustic medium to create a sense of weightless suspension. However, while Jensen alludes to nature, Nagae evokes the even more ethereal realm of musical composition through layered nuances that lend her intimate paintings a sense of infinite inner spaces, making them loom larger by far than their actual dimensions.

—J. Sanders Eaton

Sidney Harris Captures Midtown in Midtown

The cartoons need no introduction. Any regular reader of *The New Yorker* is familiar with the fluid line, literate wit, and angularly printed signature of S.Harris. What many may not know, however, is that besides also being one of our best gag cartoonists, Sidney Harris is also a gifted painter.

Both aspects of Harris's work will be featured in a two-part exhibition at The Berkeley Gallery, Berkeley College, 3 East 43rd Street. The cartoons will be on view from July 10 to 30; the paintings from August 1 through 31, with a reception for the artist on Tuesday, August 7, from 5:30 to 7:30 PM. Although both parts of the show are well worth seeing, this review will concern itself primarily with the paintings, since the cartoons have already reached a large audience and Harris's fine art deserves to be just as well known.

In the series he calls "Midtown," Harris has something in common with Edward Hopper, who was a successful illustrator before he became known as a painter. However, while most of Hopper's city scenes can be seen as moody meditations on loneliness and urban alienation, Harris's are all about the more densely layered hustle and bustle of Manhattan today. Yet even as he captures the manic energy of midtown at midday, Harris's style offers sundry pleasures

"Subway Blues"

for the viewer to contemplate in an unhurried fashion. Prominent among these are the sensuous vitality of his brushwork and the abstract underpinnings of his realism. Both are evident in such finely rendered details as the hints of cubistic structuring in the abruptly cropped portion of a shopping bag visible in the lower left corner of the composition that Harris calls "Subway Blues."

As arresting as this detail is, it does nothing to impede the overall flow of the composition, which takes in the entire length of a subway car, with poker-faced passengers reading newspapers and doing everything else humanly possible to avoid making eye contact with each other. Yet for all their isolation (which may be as profound as that of Hopper's people, albeit in a more crowded, vigorously stirred melting pot), they are nonetheless united visually by Harris's sumptuous brushwork and use of color (here silvery blue hues that evoke the metallic interior of a subway car) to meld disparate elements in a picture harmoniously. And in a related painting, "Subway diptych," comprised of two dynamically juxtaposed views of a train interiors, Harris's mastery of the pictorial tensions that Hans Hofmann called "push and pull" rivals that of any Abstract Expressionists.

His gift for making a composition compelling in formal terms, even while giving us the gritty particulars of a scene, is also evident in "42nd and Mad," where the thrusting diagonals and horizontals of construction scaffolding create a geometric context for the organic shapes of passing workers and pedestrians. Similarly, another composition called "Bikes" is animated by the movement of cyclists, shifting shadows, and foot traffic at a busy Times Square intersection.

Sidney Harris, who graces his paintings with the same distinctive signature that identifies his cartoons for *The New Yorker*, has an unsurpassed ability to orchestrate the visual cacophony of the modern metropolis, shaping its crazy simultaneity into impressively coherent aesthetic statements.

—Byron Coleman

The Living Line of John Porro at Agora Gallery

Although it has always been vitally important, the very armature on which visual art rests, only over the last couple of decades has drawing achieved recognition as a complete form of expression, rather than a vehicle for preliminary studies for work in other mediums. This evolution has come about largely thanks to talents such as John Porro, an artist born in London, now living in Scotland, whose works on paper can be seen at Agora Gallery, 530 West 25th Street, in Chelsea, from June 1 through 21. (Reception: Thursday, June 7, from 6 to 8 PM.)

"Seeing is Believing"

Given his background, one is tempted to compare Porro to David Hockney and, in a more general sense, to cite a great tradition in British draftsmanship that dates back to Blake and Fuseli, although Porro is reportedly more enamored of the German Expressionists and Egon Schiele. However, his drawing is more precise than that of most Expressionists and although his line can be as fluid as that of his Austrian predecessor, he employs it to evoke a more volumetric sense of form.

Perhaps the artist Porro seems most akin to for his deft way with the figure and sympathy for human foibles would be Toulouse-Lautrec, whose weary whores are recalled in this splendid contemporary draftsman's charcoal drawing of a middleaged female nude, "Tell Me What's Going to Happen" (which one admired on Agora Gallery's website prior to viewing the exhibition).

Like Lautrec, even when he employs water based media on paper in a manner that could technically be defined as painting rather than drawing, it is Porro's incisive draftsmanship that activates and animates compositions such as "Mikki" and "Ecstasy."At the same time, Porro reveals himself to be an appealing colorist in both works, employing a subtly harmonized palette of earth colors and fleshy pinks highlighted with piquant touches of brighter red and blue hues.

In "Mikki" we see a substantial nude female figure standing with her back turned to us, the ample contours of her buttocks anchoring the figure to the picture plane, while the narrower shape of her squared of shoulders, emphasized with soft blue shadows, adds complementary gravity to the upper portion of the composition. Although the figure's face cannot be seen, the posture of her body and her expressively enlarged, clawlike hands impart emotional tension to the image.

In "Ecstasy," on the other hand, there is a suggestion of autoerotic reverie, embodied by the figure of a bulky male nude. The pink, fleshy form, outlined by a jagged black line, appears to writhe on its belly, its face flushed a contrasting shade of red, its eyes screwed shut, one muscular arm stretched toward the viewer as it grips the edge of the bed. Although nowhere near as grotesquely distorted, the figure in "Ecstasy" can be compared to some of Francis Bacon's tormented voluptuaries.

A simpler sense of wonder comes across in the tender charcoal drawing, "Seeing is Believing," which depicts a pregnant nude kneeling and cradling her big belly in her hands with prenatal maternal pride. Here, as in all of his drawings, John Porro isolates an intimate aspect of humanity and renders it memorable by virtue of his ability to endow line with a sense of the monumental.

—Peter Wiley

2007 WestConn M.F.A. Candidates Shine at Blue Mountain

Savvy New Yorkers have come to look forward to the periodic Master of Fine Arts Thesis Exhibitions by graduate students of Western Connecticut State University, where Margaret Grimes and John Wallace, the two distinguished artists who co-coordinate the M.F.A. program, actually put the emphasis on painting rather than career planning or making art an accessory to one's social life. Once they have learned to paint, it is assumed that their students will make their way in the art world on their honest aesthetic merits, rather than on quirks of personality or a facile gift for publicity.

Gulgun T. Aliriza

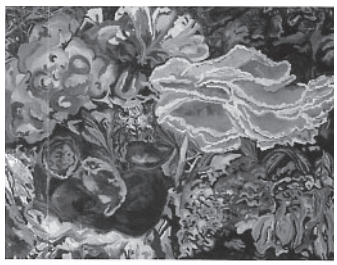
And the six young artists in this year's exhibition (which "represents art work generated through two years of intensive study," according to Grimes) give every indication of having what it takes to do just that, judging from the work on view at Blue Mountain Gallery, 530 West 25th Street, in Chelsea, from June 19 through July 7. (Opening reception: June 21, from 5 to 8 PM.)

Gulgun T. Aliriza, a native of the Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus, shows an oil on panel called "Winter Light," in which a woodsy landscape is made sumptuously palpable in thick, juicy pigment. Although Aliriza's extremely tactile paint application can remind one of the British painter Frank Auerbach, her brushwork is more fluid in the manner of de Kooning and her forms have a way of slipping in and out of abstraction. This feeling of flux plays with the tenuous nature of perception, animating Aliriza's composition in stimulating ways, even while her painting conveys a convincing sense of the nature subject at hand.

David Cerne

David Cerne takes a somewhat more realist stance in paintings such as "Checking to See Who is Following Me Looking Back at the Distant Fading Blue Atmospheric Sky Ridge." But as its intriguingly convoluted title indicates, he infuses scenes such as this view of telephone poles looming over an obscure country road and suggesting crosses at Calvary with an undertone of uneasiness. Cerne accomplishes this by virtue of a painting style that could almost be called "jittery," especially in his agitated handling of the large expanse of milky sky hovering oppressively over this desolate crossroads of Deepest Nowheresville.

In her acrylic painting on canvas, "How I Remember It," Ginger Hanrahan appears to view the floral patterns on an old, worn carpet through the magnifying lens of nostalgia for the intimate comforts and emotional security of childhood. (It is as enlightening to learn that Hanrahan's paintings are influenced by her previous work in handcrafted textiles as it is to ponder that the great watercolorist Charles Burchfield once supported himself as a wallpaper designer). Hanrahan, however, transcends sentimentality, transforming the sensual forms and earthy colors of her homey subject into a rich, muscularly delineated by overall abstraction.

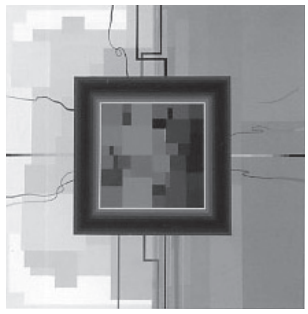


Ginger Hanrahan

Susan Lozoraitis juxtaposes the spiky form of a tall potted cactus plant with scruffy red graffiti in her politically pointed still life "Military is Proud to Kill Innocents." But the real bite of her oil on canvas emanates from her expressively awkward forms and vigorous paint handling, which imbue the composition with an edgy, aggressive crudeness reminiscent of late-period Philip Guston. Indeed like Guston, Lozoraitis achieves a perfect balance between abrasiveness and elegance.

Susan Lozoraitis

The only abstract painter in the exhibition, Derek Leka, employs a rectangular shape that recalls Josef Albers's "Homage to the Square" as the main motif of his acrylic painting, "Absolute Magnitude." There is a suggestion of Neo Geo, given the eclectic complexity of the composition, which also contains linear elements that wiggle like ribbons blowing in the wind, set against geometric color areas with a decidedly cybernetic quality. So while Leka sounds like an abstract purist of the old school when he sates, "My paintings are about the beauty of color, geometry, cleanliness and accuracy," there is a postmodern undercurrent in his work that jibes with Peter Halley's compositions of linked rectangles inspired by Jean Baudrillard's simulation theory. Such complex suggestiveness, couched in formal simplicity, compels one to look at abstract painting in a whole new way.



Derek Leka

It is also indicative of the pluralistic spirit of art today that the work of Betty Ann Medeiros, the only illustration graduate student in the show, stands up handsomely with the fine art on display. In her illustration for the tale "Twelve Dancing Princesses," Medeiros employs an accomplished realist watercolor technique to evoke a candle-lit costume scene in the tradition of N.C. Wyeth, Howard Pyle, and Maxfield Parrish, albeit with dramatic tonal contrasts reminiscent of Georges de La Tour.

The lamentable fact that another Golden Age of American illustration is unlikely, given that most art for reproduction today is hurriedly knocked out with Photoshop and other computer technology, makes Medeiros's work seem all the more refreshing and valuable. One can only hope that an artist this gifted at evoking character and atmosphere can help to revive the lost art of visual storytelling for a new era.

Betty Ann Medeiros

All six artists in the 2007 Western Connecticut State University M.F.A. Thesis Exhibition acquit themselves admirably in their different ways, demonstrating the tangible benefits of studying at a school that puts an emphasis on basic studio skills rather than art world schtick and careerism. This is something rarer these days than one might think, and their instructors are to be commended for pointing them in the right direction.

—Ed McCormack

"Reflection"

Joy and Struggle Energize the Intimate New Paintings of Dorothy A. Culpepper

Dorothy A. Culpepper has been swimming against the tide of art world fashion for several years now, and her work keeps getting stronger as a result of it. Those of us who have been charting her progress are hardly surprised; for it was clear from the beginning that Culpepper is, if one may extend the metaphor just a bit further, a long distance swimmer. She is obviously painting for posterity and the trends of the moment are hardly of concern to her.

Culpepper's solo exhibitions at Montserrat Gallery —first in its former location in Soho, and now in its new space in Chelsea, where her work can also be seen in the year-round salon exhibition— invariably provide surprises, even while remaining true to her long-held stylistic convictions. Her new solo show at Montserrat, 547 West 27th Street, which will run from July 5 through August 4, with a reception on Thursday July 12, from 6 to 8 pm., reveals that her commitment has not wavered.

Indeed, few contemporary painters have adhered so faithfully to the gestural mode pioneered by the Abstract Expressionists and fewer still have added so significantly to its living tradition. Culpepper appears to have been born to do just that, having a breadth of vision and a generosity of spirit that can only be seen as Whitmanesque, even in her new paintings, which are on an easel scale, as opposed to the near mural scale of some of her earlier compositions. Which is to say, even in these more intimate formats, the athleticism and the energy of her painterly approach can remind one of the all-embracing heroism of Whitman's poetic line.

Like the great poet, Culpepper is an artist at once avant garde and democratic. Her work sings of life's joys and struggles with such conviction that even those who are not knowledgeable regarding abstract painting, such as a friend who once visited one of her exhibitions with this writer, can be swept away by the majesty and the immediacy of her compositions. (To this extent she is a populist as opposed to an elitist, even while working in a manner that supposedly appeals primarily to the educated taste of those with a background in art history.)

Initially, Culpepper's work grabs the viewer by virtue of its palpable physical qualities: the deliciously tactile textures that she achieves with the skeins of paint that she pours and layers with such intrepid accuracy, as well as the nails, bits of glass, and other materials that she has been known to scatter over her surfaces. The rhythms of her gestures in the act of painting are solidified in pigment so that one can actually experience the sense of process in the finished product.

As with Pollock, de Kooning, and the others who proceeded her, process is of course entirely germane and pertinent to Culpepper's work to a degree one might not have thought possible at this particular point in art history. To encounter one of her paintings is to understand anew the meaning of the term "action painting." One experiences first hand the sense of movement and flux, the dance, if one will, that takes place in the painterly arena.

This dance was once thought to be comparable to a boxing bout or a bullfight; for it was couched in the macho language of the 1950s, when the New York School was in its heyday and male painters got the lion's share of the credit for the revolution that put American art on the map. Fortunately, in these more liberated and enlightened times such sexist metaphors are no longer needed or even the slightest bit relevant. Culpepper's approach is every bit as rugged and aggressive as that of any male artist around; yet her boldness can also be seen as balletic. Her "dance" truly transcends all the outdated and rigid gender associations with which critics once attempted to differentiate between masculine and feminine qualities in painting, just as her entire mode of expression escapes the subjective tag that is put on gestural painting, becoming something more than a record of personal experiences or impulses.

For while Culpepper's pictures are informed by the events of her daily life and the particulars of her biography as a woman and an artist (one thinks particularly of a moving series following the demise of her husband), the scope of her work is universal, embracing a wide range of intuitive associations that cannot and should not be pinned down to particular meanings. Yet her most recent paintings are tantalizing for the very reason that they invite specific interpretation nonetheless, due to what seems a literal breakthrough in the dense overall fields of thickly layered poured paint that have dominated Culpepper's work for quite a while.

One says "literal" because the apparent breakthrough takes the form of a semi-circular opening, like a porthole or the mouth of a cave in some paintings, as seen in "Three Planets and a Star," where the area surrounded by overlapping skeins of blue, red, yellow, and white is embedded with collaged objects (some circular, one star shaped) that suggest a nocturnal sky, a cosmic space, a Milky Way of pregnant possibilities. By contrast, in another recent painting, "A Garden of Green," the sense is of a more verdantly earthly space, owing to the thicket of layered green strokes laid down on a blue field surrounding an opening in which a paler aquamarine hue, overlaid with a semi-translucent green, suggests a distant fragment of sky and verdant land glimpsed from the deep heart of a forest.

While such impressions are bound, when viewing an abstract painting, to be subjective on the part of the viewer, it is clear nonetheless that something is evolving in Culpepper's aesthetic that bears close monitoring. Recently she appears to be working in areas of the composition for a new sense of space that allows her paintings to "breathe" in a new way. This is an exciting, some would say risky, departure for a painter who has relied for so long on the jam-packed tensions of compositions that read as densely layered energy constructs. A lesser painter would run the risk of draining away some of the energy by opening up an aperture at the center of the composition— of letting the air out of the picture, so to speak, at the same time as she was trying to let it breathe.

Culpepper, however, intuitively knows exactly how far to go in this direction, with the result that the energy in her new compositions shifts rather than abates in a way that makes for a whole new way of experiencing the space in her work. And she is able to do this not only with what I have referred to as "openings" in the picture plane but also with a new way of defining space on the picture plane itself, as seen in "Energy," where she employs splashy strokes of white and yellow to superimposed a roughly rectangular "frame" over a large part of a color field encrusted with variegated layers of deeper reds, purples, browns and blues built up with densely layered drips.

Another of Culpepper's most intense new paintings is "Reflection" (which may be the work which initiated the series, if indeed, she numbers her pieces sequentially, as they are finished), where characteristically rhythmic skeins and drips of brown, red, and pink are overlapped on a brilliant yellow ground, with a tangerine-colored orb at the center, which gives the impression of bursting into flame, since it is topped by an area of "marbleized" red and yellow hues. Here, too, the central form is loosely overlaid with slashes of white that roughly intersect at horizontal and diagonal angles.

By simply defining this space, Culpepper has opened it up just as radically as she does in the paintings where the window-like apertures contrast more obviously with the overall painterly energy field. Such decisions, apparently made spontaneously in the act of painting, are what make Dorothy A. Culpepper's compositions a source of constant fascination and excitement for those of us who regard the art of painting as an eternally vital endeavor.

—Maurice Taplinger

Group Show Brings Art from the British Isles to Chelsea

"United in Art," an exhibition of fine art from England, Wales, Scotland, and Ireland, presents a varied sampling of emerging and established tendencies from the United Kingdom and its territories at Agora Gallery, 530 West 25th Street, in Chelsea, from June 1 through 21. (Reception: Thursday, June 7, from 6 to 8 PM.)

Like Bill Jensen and Gregory Amenoff, Patrick Walshe imparts a visionary quality to landscape. However, Walshe delineates the lay of the land more faithfully than his American counterparts, even while imbuing his views of the Irish countryside with a misty metaphysical dimension. In paintings such as "Scenes from the City Glendasan" and "Scenes from the City The Lake," Walshe approaches Turner for his near mystical evocation of majestic landscapes through vigorous painterly means.

London painter Maureen Oliver explores complex spiritual themes in a deceptively primitivistic style. In "Tree of Life," an embryonic human form appears, as though seen through a circular window, at the center of a large tree, while the faces of a man and woman are cradled by its upper branches. In another intriguing painting by Oliver Vincent van Gogh sits at his easel like a solitary art saint, a bandage wrapped around his severed ear, painting "The Starry Night" while mocking phantom faces appear in the window.

Currently residing in Scotland, Baron Charlie Lush evokes a mood akin to Edvard Munch in "Women on the Path," with its small figures dwarfed by sinuous trees, while another painting entitled "Women on the Boat" creates a contrastingly festive feeling with fashionably dressed figures on the deck of an elegant cruise ship. Like Alex Katz, Lush is one of the few contemporary painters who can make serious art from stylish subjects.

Another artist from Scotland, Lee Robertson paints realist oils that resemble film stills with sensuous painterly surfaces. In "Only Nature is Divine," a moody young leading-man type appears to gaze up at the viewer from within an environment of scattered autumn leaves. In "Nowhere, Somewhere," a face framed by what appears to be an abruptly cropped car window creates dramatic tension. While suggesting a narrative, Robertson leaves it to viewers "to make up their own mind what is going on."

Although an autodidact, Mohammed Yasin Saddique has evolved a highly sophisticated semi-abstract style in which skillfully simplified cityscapes combine colors suggestive of stained glass with formal rhythms akin to the gemlike compositions of Paul Klee. However, Saddique conveys a more humanistic side of his artistic vision in a series of figurative works, inspired by a sojourn to Pakistan, in which he seeks to reveal "the story of anguish and hurt hidden behind a face."

The English artist Maggie C, whose paintings are inspired by subterranean volcanoes, states, "I'm trying to connect with nature and capture the energy that exists beneath our feet." In the powerful triptych "Lava Rush," with its thickly encrusted textures and vibrant red hues evoking an explosion, Maggie C interprets a violent facet of nature in strikingly abstract terms.

In sculptural installations with titles such as "Between a Rock and a Hard Place" and "Allegory of Abundance," Andrew Cooper deals with the contrasts and ironies of a scientific age. As designer of major architectural works for corporate and public spaces, Cooper has learned to stop the passing attention span in its tracks and capture the mass imagination through his manipulation of glass and other ethereal materials that lend his work a poetic quality rarely encountered in art so conceptually rigorous.

Also including work by Su Goddard and John Porro, two artists reviewed at length elsewhere in this issue, "United in Art" will interest not only anglophiles but everyone concerned with international trends in contemporary art. —Marie R. Pagano

Vivid Portrayals of Personal Sensibility

The journey from his South African origins to the artist's community of Williamsburg, Brooklyn, where he now lives and works, has obviously been a fruitful one for Kevin Connolly Gillespie, whose allegorical surrealism is included in the group show "Vivid Portrayals," at Agora Gallery, 530 West 25th Street from June 26 through July 17. (Reception: Thursday, June 28, from 6 to 8 PM.)

In the manner of Dali and Magritte, Gillespie employs a pristine, meticulous realism to imbue imaginative situations with a compelling verisimilitude. Landscape and the human figure are limned so convincingly that one accepts their anomalous aspects as factual representations of an existing world.

Gillespie succeeds splendidly in his stated strategy to "externalize the internal" in paintings such as "Guardian," where a slender, shadowy female nude appears to stroll down a stratospheric runway while luminous clouds fan out around her like enormous angel-wings.

As a professional restorer of paintings, Roger Renard has learned to assimilate the methods of the Old Masters and apply them to his own subjective vision, creating a highly original synthesis of the classical technique and contemporary sensibility. Thus in Renard's painting "Psyché-délit," for example, both the physical persona and the drug-induced visions of a young woman who appears to be a 1960s "flower child" inhabit the same sphere, just as earthly figures and religious apparitions frequently coexist in Renaissance paintings. In Renard's "Le Secret," a pair of lissome female arms reaches out from a background of fractured Cubist planes to embrace the figures of three smaller French soldiers, posing as though for an old photograph, as one might mentally embrace a cherished memory.

Although trained as an engineer, by dint of his own efforts Michael Hyman has acquired remarkable skills as a realist painter. He is also a sculptor and a photographer, and these disciplines also inform his paintings of female nudes. From sculpture he has obviously learned a great deal about volumes in space, which he employs to give the women in his paintings a palpable presence.

While Hyman's work is too personal to be termed "photorealism," his figures possess a photographic naturalism that marks them as contemporary, coupled with strong contrasts between light and shadow that heighten the visual drama of compositions. And that Hyman juxtaposes his naturalistic nudes with esoteric symbols drawn from Judaism, Russian Orthodox Christianity, and even comic book imagery, lends his realism a potent post-Pop panache.

The nudes of the Finnish artist Jarko emphasize painterly and tactile qualities that approximate in another manner the sensuality of his subjects. Jarko employs a variety of spontaneous techniques to capture a sense of immediacy that creates intriguing tensions between the actual and the representational elements in his art. For even while employing his skill in anatomy to bring his figures alive, Jarko often employs a monochromatic palette to undercut his realism in intriguing ways, as seen in the painting he calls "Let it Be," where the artist's use of silvery gray tonalities makes the statuesque nude almost appear as though she is fashioned from gleaming stainless steel.

Souda Traore, an artist of African ancestry who was raised in Switzerland but returned to the continent as a teenager to study at the National Institute of Fine Arts in Mali, now lives and works in Boston. Still, she steeps herself in African culture and journeys imaginatively back to the time of ancient Egyptians. Combining pastels, inks, clay, sand, and other materials, Traore creates haunting facial reliefs of the great Pharaohs, as well as of various mythical beings in an innovative technique that transcends the boundaries between painting and sculpture.

One of Souda Traore's most remarkable artistic traits is her ability to incorporate a variety of timeless ethnographic motifs within the context of a subjective, innovative, and eminently contemporary style.

—Maurice Taplinger

monkdogz urban art

monkdogz.com

"Global Tribes"

an extraordinary international group show
from June 7 through July 14, 2007

Opening reception on Thursday, June 7 from 5 to 8 pm

SÉBASTIEN AURILLON
ANTHONY BOLTON
PIERRE FAURET

KAZUMI NAKANE
HUNG VIET NGUYEN
LYNNE TAETZSCH

547 W 27 Street
Chelsea, New York
(212) 216-0030

Tuesday - Saturday
11 am to 6 pm
and by appointment

The Inimitable Touch of Catherine Malvezin

"Touch" is a term that was once paramount in painting. The best words that we have in English to describe the qualities to which it refers derive from the French: finesse, panache, felicity. Yet refinement and delicacy of execution often seem to be in short supply in contemporary art. Many younger painters, especially, seem to think such concerns are passé, no longer relevant. They are mistaken: Good painting never goes out of style, although it sometimes gets overlooked in a climate where art is marketed like fast food.

"Sevigne"

Fortunately, there are still artists like the French painter Catherine Malvezin to remind us of these enduring verities. Malvezin, whose work is on view in the year-round salon exhibition at Montserrat Gallery, 547 West 27th Street, is a painter of consummate technique. Equally well versed in landscape, still life, and the figure, she forges a link between the past and the present, assimilating many of the lessons of art history in a style possessed of impressive freshness and immediacy.

Malvezin's marinescape "Sevigne," for example, is especially notable for the artist's vibrant depiction of the light on water. Both the sky above and the waves below are dappled with luminous strokes of pale blue, purple and yellow that create dazzling chromatic harmonies and convey a convincing sense of sunlight and fresh air. At the same time the darker browns and subdued greens of the land masses on the shoreline lend a note of gravity to the picture, creating a perfect counterweight to the bouncy shimmer of its more ethereal elements.

Sensuality of form, clarity of color, and sensuousness of surface are the salient characteristics of Malvezin's still lifes, such as "Bouquet," where a rich profusion of flowers and fronds, practically overflowing a white pitcher decorated with subtly rhyming floral designs, is set against a dark red background as succulently painted as the subject itself. Indeed, the entire canvas is filled with tactile nuances and tonal modulations that bring it alive for the general viewer and offer an opportunity for deeper delectation on the part of the serious connoisseur.

Especially enjoyable in the latter regard is the larger canvas Malvezin has entitled "Esperance–Irak," where a single slender tree, its sinuous branches dotted here and there with delicate pink blossoms, appears against an expanse of deep nocturnal blue. While the decorative quality of the composition harks back to chinoiserie as practiced by van Gogh, Gauguin and other Post-Impressionists, the application of the pigment, in tactile vertical streaks, is of a succulence decidedly Western (and particularly French). In any case, it is an exquisite painting with a title that could be interpreted, in a topical contemporary sense, as a poignant plea for peace embodied in an affecting symbol of natural regeneration.

As a figure painter, Malvezin appears to prefer youthful, graceful subjects, as seen in her painting "Le danseur," where the male subject, striking a dramatic, half-reclining pose as he faces the viewer but peers off into the distance, has a languid, idealized quality akin to Elizabeth Peyton's ethereal portraits of rock stars. However, while the colors in "Le danseur" are similarly limpid, the strokes are more fluid, demonstrating the touch that makes Catherine Malvezin the far superior painter.

—Sandra Reade

A Group Show in Which the Human Spirit Manifests in Form

"The Manifestation of Form" features artists who have evolved distinctive approaches to the human figure, ranging from exacting portraits to symbolic fantasy, at Agora Gallery, 530 West 25th Street, in Chelsea, from June 1 through 21. (Reception: Thursday, June 7, from 6 to 8 PM.)

Shirley Lu, formerly of Taiwan, now living and working in New York, paints portraits of women that convey an unusual emotional and psychological depth. Almost always, Lu's women are glamorous, elegantly dressed, suggesting the heroines of glitzy popular novels. However, the artist penetrates their sleek facades and captures something of the the human vulnerability beneath the mask of makeup, as seen in her painting of a young Asian woman with dyed platinum blonde hair and an expression that is trying too hard to appear defiant. She resembles a modern version of "The White-Haired Demon" in an ancient Chinese myth about a beautiful young woman with pure white tresses who is possessed of evil powers. But the title of Lu's painting asks, "Is it Evil, Or Is it a Wounded Soul?"

Less ambiguous in meaning but equally effective is Lu's poignant painting "Foolishly Waiting," in which the forlorn female subject, wearing a black silk slip and seen from behind, rests her head on her raised knees, apparently lost in a reverie of a lover who has jilted her.

Sydnei Smith Jordan also employs the genre of the portrait to get at vital human issues, rather than to put a cheery face on her African-American subjects. Often, Jordan chooses a limited palette and utilizes severe cropping to infuse her compositions with drama, as seen in her painting "Jay-Z." Here the famous rapper's face, a brilliant shade of blue to symbolize emotional shading rather than reality, suggests the pensive mood of a public person caught in a rare moment of private introspection.

Smith Jordan, whose biography informs that she survived a "tumultuous childhood" also invests the face of the determined-looking woman in another painting called "The Eye of the Beholder" with impressive grace and dignity by virtue of her empathetic vision.

In contrast to how both Lu and Smith Jordan subvert the superficial conventions of the posed portrait to unveil the naked human soul, two other artists subject the human visage and figure to radical alterations in order to evoke meanings of a more symbolic kind:

Nina G. Nahkala, who was born in the Republic of Georgia, grew up in five countries of the former Soviet Union, and now lives and works in Finland, employs pale colors and softly diffused brushstrokes to evoke graceful, wraith-like female figures enveloped in luminous atmospheres suggestive of unearthly landscapes. The world that she evokes is a place of misty vistas and vast mystery, reminiscent of the rarefied realm of floating nymphs in Henri Fantin-Latour's "Daughters of the Rhine" or the brilliantly-lit paradise of Philip Otto Runge's "Morning." Like those great Symbolists, Nahkala envisions the idealized female figure as an emissary from an angelic world, and like theirs, her work inspires spiritual contemplation in the viewer.

Born in Berlin, Ilona van Hoek is also a contemporary Symbolist, albeit with a somewhat darker vision. Depicting scenes that resonate with shadowy sturm und drang like a visual equivalent of the Wagnerian opera, her work has been aptly compared to that of Hieronymus Bosch. In her oil painting, "Nord," for example, the disembodied face of a stern, sage-like presence with a white handlebar mustache, the tips of which trail off into the clouds, is suspended above a grim nocturnal landscape where a sea serpent swims between craggy cliffs. In another painting called "Flaschengeist" van Hoek again reveals her fertile imagination with a formidable figure of a woman, appearing suspended like an apparition in mid-air, who could be a lapsed saint escaped from a religious icon .

Like the other artists in this gem of a show, she has evolved a personal language with which to manifest the human spirit.

— Alyce Siegel

At Carrozzini von Buhler: Visions of Awakening

The young Italian artist and curator Stefania Carrozzini, who creates exhibitions under the auspices of D'Ars International Exhibition Projects of Milan, New York, and Beijing, has an unfailing instinct for what is "in the air," so to speak. Since she organizes exhibitions on three continents, her role requires a broad world view and she is, of necessity, in touch with developing trends in diverse artistic communities. Carrozzini has made her reputation by reflecting the eclectic climate of global art in the postmodern era. By and large, her exhibitions have been clamorous samplers of a wide variety of contending tendencies, reflecting the vital uncertainty of the present moment in art history. However, if Carrozzini's most recent exhibition, "Awakening," is any indication, something new may be in the air.

Nicoletta Casali

It would be premature to forecast that the art world may be turning away from the post-Pop irony and sensationalism which has prevailed for the past several years, setting a tone of hype and feeding the voracious appetite of the market without, as yet, resulting in a significant movement. However, Carrozzini assembles an exhibition of artists who approach painting, installation, photography, and sculpture from a refreshingly introspective direction in the recent group exhibition "Awakenings," at The Carrozzini von Buhler Gallery/CVB Space, 407 West 13th Street.

"In practicing art we are not trying to just live up to some kind of ideal—just the opposite," Carrozzini states in her essay in the extensive exhibition catalog available at the gallery. "We're just being with our experience, whatever may be."

As befits the subject of consciousness, the experiential thrust of the show is overwhelmingly abstract. Painters such as Dino Aresca, Thula, and Rosy Sgro reinvigorate color field and gestural modes of expression with a passion that indicates more than a passing infatuation with or nostalgia for the subjective stance of Abstract Expressionism and its European counterpart Tachisme. All three artists share in common a love of sumptuous color, rich texture, amorphous form, and overall composition descending from Jackson Pollock by way of Jules Olitski. Each in their different ways generates a sense of untrammeled lyricism: Aresca with a swirling composition of predominantly blue and red hues; Thula with a tactile intermingling of earthy tonalities and glittering gem-like highlights; Sgro with bold areas of liquefied color that woosh and flow like violet ocean waves. Taken together their work suggests, if not a nascent movement, a renewed faith in the kind of pure painterly endeavor once espoused by Clement Greenberg as a moral imperative for advanced abstract art.

Equally uncompromising in another manner is Rosaspina Buscarino Canosburi's neo- minimalist oil in which a darkly painted shrouds of canvas are wrapped loosely as the perennial mourning garb worn by traditional Italian widows around a stark black panel. The piece has the grave presence of a monumental meditation on mortality, yet its force derives more from the artist's handling of materials than from literary associations or the type of literal interpretations in which writers such as yours truly are sorely tempted to indulge.

An intriguing amalgam of painterly and photographic elements comes into play in the work of Roberto Franzoni, who layers images intricately in his photos printed on canvas. Here, a woman (or possibly a doll like effigy of a woman) is seen in the lower portion of the composition, as though through a shop window on which the word "LIKE" is written in splashy graffiti style with the rough outline of a male head and torso serving as the letter "I," its spinal column exposed in the manner of an X-ray. While one would not hazard a guess as to the specific meaning of the piece, its highly allusive complexity is at once daunting and compelling.

The notion of still photography as a form of performance art is conveyed in the work of two artists: in an engaging image by Nicoletta Casali, we see the figure of a woman in virginal white garb casting her shadow on the wall in a circle of light, while two wing-like forms hover above her head, leading one to assume that she is being visited by angelic apparitions in a dream. By contrast Alessandra Spranzi shows us a toy soldier aiming his rifle out of a coffee cup which has apparently shattered as an egg does when a chick is born, an impression enhanced by the yellow coloration of the tiny figure. In the background the blurred image of a woman whose breakfast table has apparently turned into a battlefield raises her hands like a prisoner of war. Here, the suggestion of motherhood as a form of domestic captivity invites the conclusion that awakenings can as often be rude as enlightening.

Annamaria Chiarvetto, on the other hand, creates an unambiguous mood of utmost serenity with her softly diffused abstract photographic image of possible floral origin, suffused with soft pink, green, and white tonalities, perhaps suggesting a heavenly awakening. And a bronze sculpture by Gianfranco Meggiato, while created in the most substantial of materials, comes across nearly as ethereally, with an intricate web of shapes surrounding a central orb like fragments of cloud or mist partially veiling the moon.

As is her practice, Stefania Carrozzoni contributes an image for the cover of the exhibition catalog that encompasses the theme from a curatorial perspective. This time it is an exquisitely simple image of a single flower, set like a logo against a gold field to evoke the proverbial Buddhist lotus of awakening.

—Ed McCormack

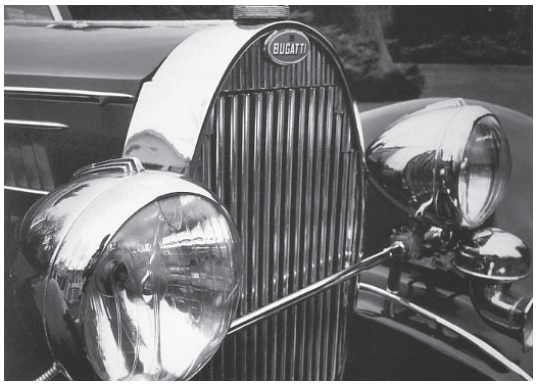
Bugatti: A Work of Art Finds its Proper Context

Marcel Duchamp really started something in 1917, when he attached the title "Fountain" to a urinal and scandalized everybody by sticking it in an exhibition. Elevating ordinary objects to art status simply by declaring them art has been a staple of Conceptualism ever since. And now that we're all shockproof, all kinds of people get away with elevating all kinds of things. If it's in a gallery, it must be art...right?

Well, no, Sparky, not really. Like Duchamp's famous pisspot, most of the "readymades" exhibited today remain mere gestures, nothing more. Not that anybody is knocking gestures; wasn't it William Butler Yeats who said "A poem is made with a mouthful of air?" (Maybe he should have said "hot air," but you get the drift.)

However, there are certain "found objects" that really can be seen as works of art —at least now that the term "multiples" has entered the parlance. But in order to appreciate them as such, we still have to put them in an art gallery. This is one of the rare instances when the concept that context is everything suddenly means something.

I'm talking about the two Bugatti automobiles on view at Allan Stone Gallery, 113 East 90th Street, through June 28. No dealer's showroom or even auto show would do for these creations of Ettore Bugatti (1881-1947), a Milanese aesthete, inventor and automobile manufacturer who grew up in a



family of artists. Ettore had artistic ambitions himself, but felt outclassed by his younger brother Rembrandt (no kidding!), a gifted sculptor. So he went to work in the motor business from 1898 to 1909, and later, after opening his factory in France, turned out to be an artist in his own right.

From 1910 to 1939, the gallery press release tells us, "Bugatti cars swept the racing car circuits of Europe, amassing an overall victory total that has yet to be surpassed." Impressive as that record is, however, it is not the reason the vehicle caused a writer for Vogue to have a hormonal reaction and come up with the phrase "Italian stallion." But to these critical eyes the lean gleaming machine at Allan Stone is a hell of a lot sexier than Sylvester Stallone. And it certainly doesn't have that plastic "new car smell" that so many people seem to get off on. Inside, it has that mellow old leather fragrance, like my wife's family's tack room before they sold their Virginia horse farm.

Allan Stone's obituary in The New York Times, earlier this year, told us "At one point he owned untold numbers of de Koonings and nearly 30 Bugatti automobiles." At the time, it struck me as almost blasphemous to mention cars in the same breath as de Koonings.

Then I went over to the gallery yesterday and was much taken with the big Bugatti and the "Baby Bugatti" (a child-scale working model so named because Ettore built the first one for his five year old son, before wealthy Europeans started demanding them for their own little pamperlings). I even ogled the elegant grill and the shiny crankshaft, displayed on pedestals like the elegant sculptural objects that they are, and finally arrived at the conclusion that a work of art is a work of art. Period. —Ed McCormack

The Adventurous Aesthetic of the Spanish Painter Javier Iturbe

"I have been searching for a subjective and intimate message among different shapes and images, so that the spectators create their own idea," states the Spanish artist Javier Iturbe, whose paintings are on view at Agora Gallery, 530 West 25th Street, from June 1 through 21. (Reception: Thursday, June 7, from 6 to 8 PM.)

As his statement indicates Iturbe's method is deeply intuitive. Reversing how most other painters proceed, he apparently begins with abstract forms that evolve into complex figurative compositions, as he discerns recognizable subject matter among the areas of line and color that he lays down on the canvas.

Although self-taught, Iturbe cannot be classified as an "outsider," since he was trained in a related field, architecture, and his paintings are highly sophisticated, both in overall structure and refinement of technique. Iturbe has also mastered anatomy to the point where each of his figures is convincingly detailed and possessed of its own unique characteristics. However, due to his skillful color modulation and the fluidity of his forms, each element in the composition melds harmoniously into an essentially abstract whole.

At first glance, seen from a distance, his paintings could almost appear nonobjective: configurations of shard-like shapes given overall unity by a contemporary variant on

"Like Ulysses did, we have always to look for new adventures"

the fractured planes of cubism. Then the figurative elements come into focus and the painting takes on new meaning, the energetic flow of figures and symbols suddenly seeming reminiscent of Baroque and Rococo art.

The plasticity of his forms can also call to mind El Greco, as though Iturbe has looked long and hard at the master's paintings in The Prado and discovered how to adopt some of their qualities to a more contemporary form of expression without sacrificing his own originality. He manages this synthesis especially well in the complex composition entitled "Like Ulysses did, we have always to look for new adventures." This is an especially intricate canvas, in which the forms, figures, and such details as old-fashioned sailing ships, winding bodies of water, and a majestic landscape suggest Ulysses' long and arduous journey, described by Homer in the Odyssey, home to the island of Ithaca, after the fall of Troy. However, it can also be interpreted as a reminder of the artist to himself to keep soldiering on and discovering new methods and subjects for his art. Ulysses, after all, was renowned for his ingenuity and his daring, qualities which Iturbe has already cultivated in his painting.

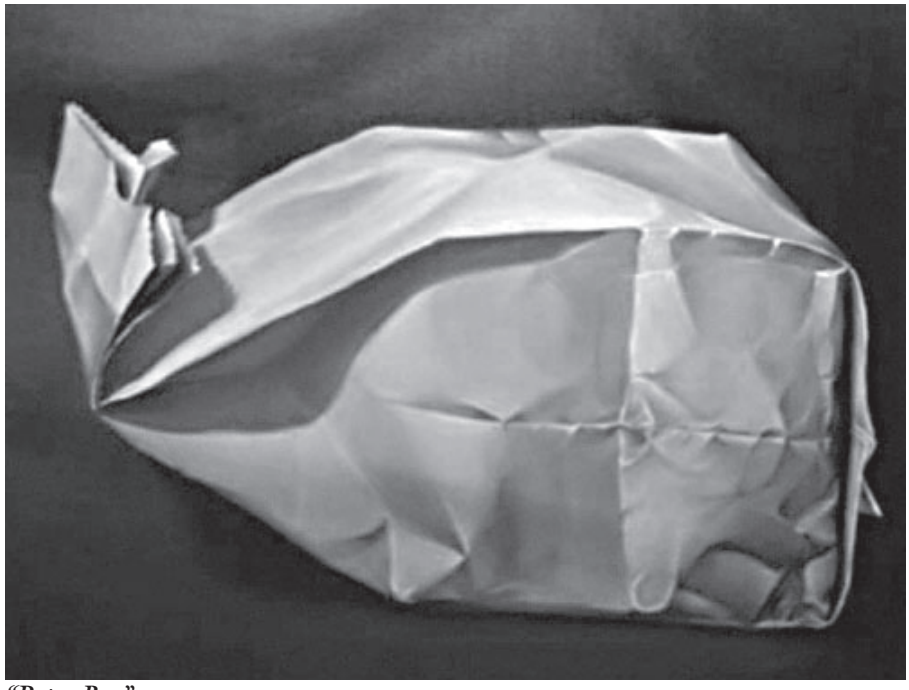
By contrast a more carefree mood comes across in another oil on canvas by Iturbe called "Carnival in Venice," where the intermingled figures, objects, and forms take on a more abstract aspect, clustered on an aqueous green background. And while a more somber atmosphere dominates the large canvas called "Life squeezes ourselves and...also chokes," it is one of Iturbe's most powerful compositions in formal terms, with its deep blue hues and angular geometric forms contained within a long horizontal format.

Aphoristic titles, some more explicable than others, add a literary (but not too literal) dimension to the work. However, it is finally his ability to invest symbolic subject matter with a visual impact to match its mystery that makes Javier Iturbe an artist to be reckoned with. —Francis Kiesler

Alberto Jiménez: A Young Spanish Realist Comes to New York

For a long time, when we thought of modern Spanish art, the name of Antonio Tapies came most immediately to mind, and one would have got the impression that "Informalism," as it was known in the United States, was the only movement worth noticing. This was never totally true, of course; for while they may have been less publicized, many other schools of art existed simultaneously in Spain and continue to thrive today.

Realism, for example, is alive and well, judging from the paintings of Alberto Jiménez, seen recently at World Fine Art Gallery, 511 West 25th Street. Jiménez harks back to the great classical tradition of Goya and Velasquez, albeit from a modern perspective that enables him, in one instance at least, to verge on Pop by prominently including a can of Coca Cola in the oil on canvas entitled "Daily Still Life."



"Paper Bag"

A simple paper bag also becomes the focal point of another painting, in which its folds and shadows are so meticulously delineated as to lend this common object a symbolic significance akin to a loaf of bread in a still life by one of the Flemish masters. At the same time, as this painting perhaps illustrates most clearly, Jiménez is as fully cognizant of the abstract qualities in art as that other well known realist Andrew Wyeth, who once said that, contrary to popular belief, his paintings are "full of little abstractions."

Indeed, strong abstract qualities are present in all of Alberto Jiménez's paintings, but they are particularly evident in his architectural subjects, such as "The Night is Living," a dramatic composition focusing on a magnificent old house lit up like a birthday cake and glowing out of darkness, and "Metropolis," where the piece de resistance is a dome set against a luminous sky. Then there is "Las Rozas," a somewhat anomalously expressionistic departure for Jiménez, in which the stucco structures of a sleepy little town bend and sway in a rubbery fashion, taking on a tipsy, almost anthropomorphic quality. Similarly, in a canvas called "Madrid," he demonstrates that he can also loosen up when he cares to and adopt a vigorously "gestural" style with a composition, predominantly in earth colors, in which the city is evoked in slashing strokes.

More typical of this artist's characteristic manner, however are paintings such as "The Square" and "Meeting Point," where impressive architectural structures and statuary are rendered with photo realist precision. And that Jiménez can evoke the human figure every bit as convincingly can be seen in paintings such as "The Desire" and "In the Dumps." The subject of the former painting is a rear view of a lithe young woman nude from the waist up with a white clothe covering her hips. Here, Jiménez displays not only his skill in anatomy with the graceful curve of the model's spine, as she raised her arms to adjust her blonde mane, but also his mastery of classical drapery in his handling of the folds and shadows in her makeshift sarong.

The latter painting, "In the Dumps," is another matter entirely, for it depicts a young man kneeling on a city sidewalk, a handkerchief tied around his arm, as he apparently injects himself with heroin. Here, too, the artist's dramatic use of shadows heightens the drama of the subject, as does the setting, which suggests an area near some rundown tenement stoop. Various comparisons can be made to Jiménez's treatment of this contemporary social problem, ranging from Goya's great paintings of outcasts and grotesques to Walker Evans's powerful photographs of Depression-era America. Indeed, Jiménez makes of this abject figure, kneeling in the shadows to indulge his addiction, a monumental symbol of human weakness.

That said, it would appear that such subjects are relatively rare in the oeuvre of this artist, who is not primarily a social realist (although he is obviously capable of making affecting social statements when moved to do so). Rather, Jiménez is generally attracted to that which is beautiful, rather than that which is anecdotal. The American poet William Carlos Williams expressed it well when he said, "Not in ideas, but in things." For even the most inanimate subject comes fully alive under Jiménez's brush in his still life, landscape, and architectural paintings.

It would appear that, with the resurgence of interest in realist painting worldwide, Alberto Jiménez has emerged at precisely the right moment in art history. While modernism increasingly devalued representational skills, the postmodern era has seen art such as his given its proper due. Among the current crop of realists, Jiménez is in the first rank for his ability to combine objective observation and subjective vision in a thoroughly satisfying synthesis. For he possesses an unusual ability to invest what he sees with subtle nuances of feeling that are absent in the work of many realist painters today.

Indeed, many contemporary realists seem to deliberately play down the subjective element in art in order to achieve a depersonalized quality that they hope will align them with the "cool" aesthetic of geometric painting and minimalism. Quite the opposite, however, is true of Jiménez, who is more than willing to put a good deal of personal feeling into the most ostensibly impersonal subjects. And his work benefits immensely from it, in terms of the emotional connection that the viewer is able to make with his paintings.

Indeed, the reactions that his work has received in exhibitions in Madrid (where he has thus far exhibited most widely), as well as in Holland, Sweden, and now the United States, as well as the prizes he has been awarded from prestigious art museums and cultural organizations, indicate that Alberto Jiménez is a young painter thoroughly in tune with his times. One can only look forward to his future exhibition here and abroad with the certainty that he is an artist whose career will be well worth watching.

—Peter Wiley

On the Dilemma of the Rembrandt and the Little Old Lady and the Everyday Tension Between Ethics and Aesthetics

by Ed McCormack

Over the years I have learned that when my wife enters the room where I write and clears her throat she usually has an announcement to make that I am not going to like. This time it was that her favorite aunt, who had been ailing for some time, had taken a turn for the worse, and we would have to take a brief trip to Virginia. The good news was that there was an Amtrak train that stopped in the same county as the hospital, and if we left early enough in the morning, we could visit for an hour or two, then turn right around and be back in New York the very same night.

Flying would have made the trip faster and less arduous, but that was out of the question. Jeannie's one phobia had always been a fear of flying, and I swore off it several years ago myself when I gave up drinking, along with the kind of journalism that had always made both drinking and flying necessary. In fact, I never knew how phobic I was about flying, socializing, and a lot of other things until I was faced with having to do them without benefit of my customary anesthesia.

Granted, my phobias are nowhere near as severe as those the composer Allen Shawn describes in his recent memoir "Wish I Could Be There." Unlike him, I don't have to prepare myself for a short walk by carrying such "safety items" as a supply of Xanax, a bottle of ginger ale, a cell phone and a paper bag of the type Shawn once had to breathe into to calm himself after suffering a concussion. But I can certainly identify with his confession that the prospect of taking any trip, however short, makes him "almost frozen with anticipatory anxiety for weeks or even months in advance."

Jeannie generally tries to shorten my periods of anxiety by not informing me too early of trips she is planning for us, although I always know that they are looming somewhere up ahead, along with impending dental appointments and other things that keep me in a state of low-level angst a good deal of the time. While my wife does insist that I visit the dentist for regular checkups and cleanings, guilt-tripping me into it by bringing up the many thousands of dollars my past neglect of my teeth has cost us, under ordinary circumstances she does not pressure me to visit Virginia with her. I do so voluntarily, however reluctantly, because the self-induced guilt I would feel about not accompanying her, along with my concerns for her safety (besides being unsettling, travel really can be dangerous, I tell myself, trying to put my phobia in a logical light) would make me even more uneasy if I remained behind. At least if there were a

Notebook

fatal train wreck, goes my codependent reasoning, we could continue our journey to whatever comes next together, rather than separately.

So there I was, grumbling as usual, as we boarded the train before sunrise in Penn Station. In the bag with my tea I was carrying a muffin as well as a bagel, because this imposition gave me the right to overindulge, and my backpack was bulging with more books (most of them review copies sent by the publishers) than anyone could possibly read during a train ride several times as lengthy as the one we were about to undertake.

Along with the aforementioned "Wish I Could Be There" (which I had skimmed and found of little literary interest but was carrying as a kind of fellow phobic's amulet), I had the Australian critic Clive James' nearly 900 word doorstop of a tome "Cultural Amnesia: Necessary Memories from History and the Arts"; "Charles Burchfield's Seasons," a profusely illustrated monograph on the underrated American Scene painter by Guy Davenport (which I was hoping would help make me better able to appreciate the charms of nature and out of the way places); "Walter Benjamin: Selected Writings, Volume Three," because Benjamin, who enjoyed such a rich inner life before being driven to suicide by the Nazis, never fails to remind me that intellectual rigor can be bracing even in the worst of times; and "World Poetry," a hefty anthology of verse from antiquity to the present, since reading poetry, for me, is like mentally fondling secular rosary beads— an almost prayerful activity that can fill the agitated moments between nervewracking distractions and sometimes allay dread.

But even with my own "safety items" aboard, I couldn't stop obsessing about not being home at my writing desk, although the deadlines into which I normally try to consolidate all of my other anxieties were hardly so near as to cause serious alarm.

Three or four hours into the trip, however, I had finally relaxed enough to almost enjoy gazing out the window at all that my agoraphobia normally prevents me from seeing. To someone who regards Manhattan Island as the center of the universe, even a few cows in a field can seem like some exotic revelation.

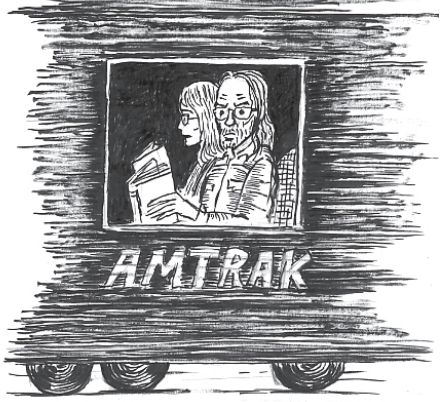
But my pastoral epiphany terminated abruptly when a woman I took at first to be Dolly Parton decked out in train conductor's drag came down the aisle announcing in a hog calling drawl that we would be facing major delays due to a derailment outside of Charlottesville.

* * *

"How in the world did you-all get so old?" Jeannie's aunt exclaimed faintly, the tears of reunion still wet on her cheeks, as we hovered over her hospital bed hours later than we had expected to arrive.

Frail, stuck with intravenous drips and plastered with uncomfortable-looking medical suction cups though she was, her eyes still twinkled and her sly sense of humor had not deserted her.

Nor did she betray even a hint of self pity, after we had been there for awhile, when she



said,"Well, you always know it's coming..."

And then, following a long, thoughtful pause, during which she presumably looked "it" right in the eye without flinching, she said, "I've had a long, good life."

* * *

Who was it that once said to me, "Wouldn't this be a much better world If all of us thought like little old ladies?"

Oh yeah, Geraldo Rivera, several years ago, during a commercial break in a TV studio, after we had watched one of his fellow newsmen interview an elderly woman who had somehow found it in her heart to forgive a man for conning her out of her life savings.

By then, I had already invested over a week in following this showboating media sob-sister around, collecting his sanctimonious pronunciamentos for a profile that I had been assigned to write for *Rolling Stone*. But even after I had warned him that nothing would be off the record —it was my practice, indeed a point of principle with me, to write about whatever I heard or saw— he brazenly made me privy to an extramarital dalliance he was having with the wife of a prominent politician.

In fact, from the way Geraldo flaunted his affair with this elegant older woman —inexplicably taking me along on an assignation in her Park Avenue apartment and answering her questioning glances by introducing me, not as a reporter, but as his "my friend Ed"; retiring with her to some distant part of that palatial pad for much longer than it took me to view the politician's impressive art collection; then joking on the way down in the elevator about having needed to have his "pipes cleaned" —one would almost have thought that the Willowbrook whistle-blower subconsciously wanted to have the whistle blown on himself. Either that or his boastful male ego was recklessly out of control.

Why else, having been forewarned, would a media-savvy type like him have trusted any journalist—much less some hippy loose cannon from *Rolling Stone*, a publication notorious for exposing the sleazy underbelly of the establishment —to ignore such a scoop?

The only thing standing in my way was that Geraldo had also introduced me to his then wife, Edith, with whom I had spent a pleasant couple of hours in their home. The daughter of the novelist Kurt Vonnegut, "Pie" (his fawning pet name for her) was a pretty, guileless young artist who reminded me of my own wife, from whom I was sadly separated at the time, due to my own lousy male behavior. And I didn't see how I could write this piece truthfully without bringing her to grief.

Call it a failure of professional nerve aggravated by my own emotional turmoil, but by the time we were standing in that television studio and Geraldo made his characteristically mawkish remark about little old ladies, I had already decided I would probably have to just give up on this story.

And while I would have liked to have felt noble about having made this difficult decision, what I really felt was fear that, by putting someone else's feelings before my own ambitions, I myself might be starting to think like a little old lady.

* * *

I had already been drawing for as long as I could remember when I read somewhere, as an adolescent, that Queen Victoria had once said, "Artists are dangerous; they can mix with anyone."

This made a strong impression on me because it suggested that an idle habit of mine might become a means of escaping what I considered to be my lowly origins and joining the only aristocracy that still seemed to matter: that of the creative intelligentsia.

Although my childhood ambition had been to draw and write a syndicated comic strip, buoyed by the praise of public school art teachers I began frequenting museums and thinking of myself as "an individual with a special, quasi-divine gift," to employ Andrew Martindale's term for the status artists (previously on a par with armorers, shipbuilders, and tailors) attained in the late Middle Ages. But rather than owning up to feeling snobbishly superior to my working-class relatives, I preferred to feel that I was rejecting their "bourgeois values."

Perpetrating this self-deception, I might have realized had I thought about it, required elevating my entire family almost as far above our actual social station as I had recently placed myself.

* * *

Sitting by wife's aunt's bedside while she and Jeannie reminisced about things too familial to hold my interest, my mind wandered to another elderly woman whom we had encountered recently in the atrium at Citicorp Center, on Lexington Avenue, where we stopped for a cup of tea.

I had been vaguely aware of her at a nearby table, looking up at me from time to time, then frowning and working furiously in a large sketchpad. Finally, she asked if I would mind staying still for a few minutes while she drew my portrait.

"I'd really rather not, since I'm naturally antsy and we're gonna be leaving soon anyway," I told her; then, suddenly recognizing a look of disappointment flickering over her features, ventured tentatively, "Mrs. Braverman?"

"Eddie?" she said just as uncertainly, now seeing vestiges of the punk kid she once knew through the gauze of years and gray hair, and getting out of her chair to embrace me. "Eddie McCormack! Well, I can see you're still as uncooperative as ever!"

Then, turning to my wife, she said, "When I taught at Seward Park High School on the Lower East Side, Eddie was my most gifted student. I still have one of his paintings of jazz musicians on my wall at home. But he only went to two classes: Art and English. At the end of every term his English teacher and I had to go around to all the other teachers and beg them to pass him. They'd all say the same thing: 'Who is he, I don't even know what this kid looks like!'"

Though shrunken and stooped, she still had her hearty laugh. "Do you remember, Eddie, how I went to bat for you when Mr. Nanis was threatening to kick you out of school?"

Mr. Nanis, the principal, was a whiny, self-righteous little guy, of whom I am reminded whenever I see and hear our billionaire mayor, Bloomberg, on the news.

"Why do you stay in school anyway?" he would ask every time he summoned me to his office. "Why bother even making me expel you? Why don't you make things easier for both of us and just quit? Why did you bother getting transferred back here, after getting that scholarship to Music and Art? A boy with your talent... A boy who throws away such an opportunity...You know what I call such a boy? I call him a meshugena!"

In fact, it had not been easy getting transferred back to that Blackboard Jungle holding pen from the prestigious High School of Music and Art. It caused a lot of head shaking and head scratching on the part of the pencil pushers at the Board of Education, where I had to appear in person to earnestly plead the case for my backwardness.

Of course, I didn't tell them that I hated having to get up an hour earlier and take the subway all the way uptown to 135th Street and Convent Avenue; or that I missed cutting classes and spending most of the school day smoking cigarettes, drinking Cokes, and sketching in my notebook at the Grand Dairy Restaurant, right across the street from Seward. Nor was I about to confide that I didn't like being in a school where talented kids were a dime a dozen and there was no one like Mrs. Braverman doting over me and telling me what a prodigy I was. And I certainly wouldn't admit, even to myself, that I might have felt a little outclassed among all those Music and Art preppies, most of whom were obviously from more affluent and cultured backgrounds than my own.

I simply made a threat that never would have worked with Mr. Nanis: "If you don't let me go back to Seward, I swear to God,

I'll quit school the minute I turn sixteen!"

* * *

"We had such a good time when Maddy and I visited you all," my wife's aunt was saying now in her hospital bed, referring to a few years earlier, when she had still been well enough to come to New York with her daughter to attend Jeannie's graduation from N.Y.U. You could see how proud she was of her grown niece for going back to school and getting her degree, as she helped out in the kitchen at the party in our apartment after the ceremony.

It had to be the first time this elderly woman, who had come of age in the segregated south, had ever fraternized with people of so many different racial, religious, political, and sexual persuasions. And surely some of the snippets of sophisticated New York conversation she was hearing had to seem alien, even profane, to her southern, churchgoing ears. Yet she seemed altogether at ease, as she busied herself doing what she had done so well for so many years: bustling about, getting food and drink for people, and doing her level best to make everyone feel at home. She did so in our narrow, unconventionally furnished, art-crowded railroad walk-up on the top floor of a tenement in Yorkville as naturally as she had always had in her own rambling Norman Rockwell house in rural Virginia.

The last time we visited her there, a few years earlier, I had been been constipated for days, as I invariably am when I travel. I'm certain this has to do not only with the gut-knotting tension of being wrenched from my natural habitat, but also with having to leave most of my many hundreds of books behind. (Strange as it may sound, there's something about the smell of books, particularly old and musty ones, that actually has a laxative effect on me.)

Anyway, I was so cranky and miserable that Jeannie finally had to ask her aunt if anyone was available to drive us into town to a drugstore, although matters relating to the lavatory are generally avoided in that genteel, practically antebellum area of the Virginia horse country. But my wife's aunt told her that there was no need to go into town, reached up into a kitchen cabinet, and, feeling around behind some cereal boxes, produced a large can of Metamucil, which she slipped to me discreetly with a commiserating smile. And while I felt slightly humiliated, like some geezer with "tired blood" in a 1950s TV commercial for Geritol, I was deeply grateful to the dear old girl for sharing her private stash with me.

Indeed, it is for the memory of countless such kindnesses, administered unselfishly over the course of a lifetime, even when they strain deeply ingrained notions of decorum, that we cherish such women. Which is why seeing my wife's favorite aunt again, lying in her hospital bed with such brave and good humored acceptance of the lonely journey we all eventually must take, finally made me ashamed of how churlish I had been about making this simple trip. Although no longer young, I sometimes remind myself of Garrison Keillor's ludicrous character "A Young Artist Named Bob." I, too, often feel beset and wax petulant when everyday duties stand in the way of my assumed artistic destiny. Blame it on Mrs. Braverman and every other early enabler who made me feel special and exempt from responsibilities such as attending class or visiting sick relatives.

Now, however, chastened by seeing my wife's aunt facing the transfer from hospital to hospice care with such courageous good cheer, I cringed to recall that moment on the train when Dolly Parton came flouncing up the aisle to inform us of the delays up ahead. Childishly annoyed at this new inconvenience, the first thing that ran through my mind was that old question: What would you save first from a burning building, a Rembrandt or your grandmother?

For while I was not as remorseless an aesthete as W.H. Auden, who immediately answered, "A Rembrandt is worth any number of little old ladies," I did ponder the dilemma longer than any decent person ought to.

Contrasts in Black and White Make for a Bold Photo Exhibition

Purists who still believe that black and white is the most artful form of photography could take heart from the recent exhibition "Noir et Blanc," curated by Jean Prytyskacz at Broadway Mall Community Center, the exhibition space of the West Side Arts Coalition, on the center island at Broadway and 96th Street.

Janice Wood Wetzel employs digital photography creatively in her floral studies, alternately blurring edges, casting details in high contrast, or employing pixilation to produce a plethora of intriguing abstract effects. Harry Peronius does the opposite, opting for crystal clarity to bring out the textures in closeups of a leathery face studded with white whiskers or the prominent veins in a bony hand.

Walkways between buildings and the shadows that they cast create all-enveloping spaces in the pictures of Irmgard Kuhn. Pedestrians traversing them appear trapped in Escher-like mazes, suggesting the depersonalizing aspects of modern urban life.

Brunie Feliciano's gelatin prints focus so microscopically on bubbling oozing substances that they create an unearthly sense of abstraction. Flowing forms and areas of light and shadow evoke a mysterious realm of liquescent special effects.

The wildlife scenes of Jennifer Holst stress the intimate integration of her animal subjects with their environment. Especially striking are Holst's images of a lioness alertly guarding her cubs and an elephant herd rhyming visually with the mound-like forms of the surrounding hills and foliage.

Scott Weingarten's prints on etching paper of locations in Brooklyn and Manhattan distort and warp architectural and sculptural forms from vertiginous angles. Dynamically, buildings sweep skyward and cobblestones and old trolley tracks loom as though reflected in a funhouse mirror. Conversely, curator Jean Prytyskacz's painterly photos approach scarred and scrawled city walls with the eye of an Abstract Expressionist or Jean Michel-Basquiat. Eschewing illusory perspective, Prytyskacz emphasizes the two dimensionality of the picture plane to complement the matter-of-fact flatness of her subjects.

Jeff Kwan evokes more mystical urban scenes with nocturnal images of illuminated phone booths and storefronts glowing out of darkness, as pedestrians flit between the shadows like phantoms. Or else he focuses on square columns outside an empty office tower to create a mood as silent as an Egyptian tomb.

Departing slightly from "noir et blanc" with sepia tones that still qualify as monochromes, Alice Ng creates a lyrical frieze with four adjoining pictures of tree limbs that create a calligraphic effect. In one panel, a single bird, its beak open in song, adds a note of magic to the whole.

Texture is the focal point in the pictures of Deena Weintraub, in which closeups of wheat grass, wildflowers, weeds and other growing things reflect the rich tactility of the natural world. The human presence is felt but unseen in Weintraub's eerie image of a migrant worker's cabin almost engulfed by its overgrown surroundings.

A veritable carnival of grotesque masks and actual human faces (one wearing an elaborate headdress) emerges from the pictures of Eliud Martinez, suggesting an exotic orgy of nightmarish visions. Martinez seems a photographic counterpart of the Belgian Symbolist painter James Ensor.

Glamour and art's playful embrace of artifice are sent up in Richard Zapata's photographs of a beautiful woman with dark eyes and full lips striking a variety of self-conscious poses to evoke predetermined moods. One of the most witty shots shows her wearing a fur vest and leather boots to impersonate a chic modern cave woman. —Maureen Flynn

Spanish Artist Miguel Sansón Makes His N.Y. Debut at Gelabert

Angelic imagery goes back a long way in art history, from medieval manuscripts to the New Age craze of today. Few artists, however, have embodied this time-honored subject as imaginatively as the Spanish painter and sculptor Miguel Sansón, whose solo exhibition is on view at Gelabert Studios Gallery, 255 West 86th Street (at Broadway), from June 5 through 23. (Reception: June 5, 5 PM.)

"Conexion" –detalle

The theme of show is "Angels and Masters: Movements that Elevate the Spirit," and the title seems especially apt, given the uplifting spirit of Sansón's art, which can only be compared to that of his fellow countryman Joan Miro.

Comprised of paintings, sculptures, two of the thirty-four of his unique "chair sculptures" that Sansón created for the internationally exhibited Sent-Arte collection, and twenty preliminary studies, this is the first New York exhibition of this celebrated Spanish artist who has a sculpture of an angel measuring 8 meters high and other related pieces on view at the Lucía Bosé Museum in Los Angeles. The quality of these pieces inspired Lucía Bosé to call Sansón "the poet of works in metal," and the description is accurate. For the formal metaphors that he creates in metal are indeed as poetic and buoyant in their own manner as the mobiles of Miro's American friend Alexander Calder.

One of the more whimsical aspects of Sansón's work is that—to this viewer, at least—his angelic figures often resemble giant insects as much as they do human figures. In his paintings, especially, where he employs a sinuous line, bright primary colors, and fanciful stylized forms can appear to have some of the physical characteristics of the preying mantis or the centipede— albeit with only the prerequisite number of human limbs!

They could also resemble extraterrestrials—which angels technically are, although not of the science fiction variety. Yet their gold-leaf halos are intact; beams of light often emanate from their long, tentacle-like arms, and the rainbow-colored feathers of their wings seem an especially heavenly touch. Other symbols with which the angels are juxtaposed, such as a stylized eye and skillfully juxtaposed abstract geometric shapes, add to the somewhat surreal feeling of Sansón's paintings.

From the earliest days of culture, angels have figured in artistic iconography as symbols of invisible forces. Gothic art expresses the protective aspects of the angel-figure, while the Romanesque tends to put the main emphasis on its otherworldly nature. Miguel Sansón's paintings and sculpture appear to encompass both aspects of this enduring symbol in equal measure, for his angels appear at once benign and sublime.

In the final analysis, however, it is primarily for their aesthetic attributes that the works in this exhibition should appeal to a sophisticated New York art audience, and these are considerable. Chief among them are Sansón's graceful and spare sense of form and space in both two and three dimensions.

Renowned in Spain and elsewhere abroad as an artisan as well as a fine artist, Miguel Sansón has won numerous international awards for his innovative furniture designs, including the prestigious Medallion of Extremadura. This first solo exhibition at Gelabert Studio Gallery gives New Yorkers a comprehensive sampling of his multiple talents.

—Byron Coleman

G&S NYC GUIDE

opportunities

12 YEAR ESTABLISHED CHELSEA GALLERY. Quality exhibitions, location and marketing. Currently reviewing artists. Online information requests: http://www.worldfineart.com/inforequest.html

WEST SIDE ARTS COALITION (WSAC) established 1979, welcomes new members from all geographic areas. There are approximately 14 exhibits per year for Fine Arts, Photography, and Craft Arts. Music, Poetry, Theater and Dance programs available. Contact information: Tel.- 212-316-6024, email- wsacny@wsacny.org or website- www.wsacny.org. Or send SASE to the West Side Arts Coalition, PO Box 527, Cathedral Station, New York, NY 10025. Visit our ground floor gallery at 96th Street & Broadway (on the center island) New York City. Open: Wed. 6-8pm, Sat.& Sun. 12-6pm.

20 YEAR ESTABLISHED MIDTOWN GALLERY seeks new artists for next season. Street level. Tel. 212-315-2740 jaditeart@aol.com

ESTABLISHED CHELSEA GALLERY reviews artist portfolios monthly. Send sase or visit www.noho gallery.com for application form. Noho Gallery, 530 West 25th Street, New York, NY 10001. 212 367-7063

PLEIADES GALLERY Join our community of artists at this prestigious artist-run gallery to exhibit your work and advance your career. Memberships now becoming available. www.pleiadesgallery.com – or SASE to Pleiades Gallery, 530 W. 25 St., 4th fl. NY, NY 10001-5516, Tel.- 646-230-0056

MONTSERRAT CONTEMPORARY ART GALLERY is reviewing artist portofolios for its new Chelsea Gallery. National and International artists are invited to submit. Sase, slides, photos and brief artist bio. Send to: Montserrat Contemporary Art Gallery, 547 West 27 street NYC 10001

MANHATTAN ARTS INTERNATIONAL HEALING POWER OF ART
Currently seeking artists for our "Healing Power of Art" juried online exhibition beginning September 1. Download prospectus at http://www.manhattanarts.com/Gallery/Healing2007/Details.htm or send SASE with request for Healing prospectus to Manhattan Arts International, 200 East 72 Street, 26th floor, New York, NY 10021. Tel: 212.472.1660. Email: info@manhattanarts.com. Deadline: August 1.

CALL FOR ENTRIES - INTAGLIO PRINTMAKERS THE ETCHING SALON 2007
ELIGIBILITY, Artwork produced in New York by artists currently living or working in New York State. ELIGIBLE TYPES OF WORK, Only original intaglio prints including etchings, aquatints, mezzotints and may be submitted. Maximum paper size 22^2x30^2. METHOD OF SUBMISSION, By slide one submission only Slide Due: September 7, 2007 ENTRY FEE, A non-refundable entry fee of $40.00 is required for submission of your slide. CURATOR, Mr. David Kiehl, Curator of Prints, The Whitney Museum of American Art Exhibition Dates: November 4th through November 14th 2007, The National Arts Club For an email version of the entry prospectus write: info@nysetchers.org Or mail a self addressed, stamped envelope to: New York Society of Etchers, Inc 120 West 86th Street, Suite 7A New York, N.Y. 10024

GELABERT STUDIOS GALLERY
offers artists the opportunity to showcase their work in a unique, elegant Upper West Side setting. Fully equipped gallery for rent on weekly or yearly basis. Top quality lighting. Call 212-874-7188 for rental details or visit our website: www.gelabertstudiosgallery.com. Gelabert Studios Gallery, 255 W. 86th St. (at Broadway), New York City 10024.

Weimar Dreams: "From Berlin to Broadway" at The Morgan Library & Museum

by Ed McCormack

Unlike Aubrey Beardsley, who reveled in and modeled his persona on the decadence of England in the 1890s, Otto Dix held the decadence of Germany in the 1920s up to ridicule at arm's length. While Beardsley employed an ornamental line to celebrate what Camille Paglia called "the tainted flora of the late phases of culture," Dix stabbed at the paper as if to impale the pretensions of his era with his pen.

Yet Dix as much as Beardsley demonstrates Havelock Ellis's thesis "The difference between a classic style and a decadent style is that the first is beautiful because the parts are subordinated to the whole; the second is beautiful because the whole is subordinated to the parts."

Nowhere is this more clear than in "We Want Bread" (1923), an ink drawing by Dix in the exhibition "From Berlin to Broadway: The Ebb Bequest of Modern German and Austrian Drawings," at The Morgan Library & Museum, 225 Madison Avenue, through September 2.

Not only does Dix subordinate the whole to its parts in this depiction of stark social contrasts between the ostentatious patrons of a Berlin cafe (their features ranging from Aryan-simian to Semitic-aqualine) and a ragtag procession of impoverished protesters passing outside its window, he also supplies stylistic templates for two distinctly different later draftsmen: the New Yorker cartoonist Saul Steinberg (an exhibition of whose drawings preceded this show at the Morgan) and the theatrical illustrator Harry Hirschfield. For while the features of a woman seated at a table on the right hand side of the composition are strikingly similar to those of Steinberg's anthropomorphic felines, her male companion could easily pass for one of Hirschfield's caricatures, from his exaggerated profile right down to the stippled textures of his tweed jacket, which trails off in an elegant linear manner at the shoulder, compelling the viewer to complete the figure through visualization.

In the case of Harry Hirschfield, particularly, it is interesting to speculate on the question of influence, since Fred Ebb, who bequeathed the forty-three drawings and watercolors in the exhibition to the Morgan in his will, moved in the same theatrical circles as the illustrator. A successful Broadway lyricist who collaborated with the composer John Kander on several hit shows, including "Chicago" and "Kiss of the Spider Woman," Ebb started collecting expressionist drawings and watercolors in the mid 1960s, while researching the team's hit musical "Cabaret," which takes place in Germany in the twenties and thirties.

Otto Dix (1891 –1969) **We Want Bread!** *1923 India ink over traces of graphite pencil on wove paper 15 1/4 x 16 3/4 inches (387 x 426 mm) The Pierpont Morgan Library, Bequest of Fred Ebb, Photography by Joseph Zehavi, 2006 © 2006 Artists Rights Society (ARS), New York/VG Bild-Kunst, Bonn*

But don't be deceived into idealizing the demimonde of Weil and Brecht by the smarmily seductive invitation to "Come to the cabaret" that Ebb wrote for Joel Grey, whose character could have been inspired by the sallow-faced, tux-clad master of ceremonies in Emile Nolde's watercolor "Conferencier" (ca. 1910-11).

In the chapter of his long out of print memoir "An Autobiography" entitled "The Weimar Republic," George Grosz recalls: "It was a completely negative world, with gaily colored froth on top that many people mistook for the true, the happy Germany before the eruption of the new barbarism. Foreigners who visited us at that time were easily fooled by the apparent light-hearted whirring fun on the surface, by the nightlife and the so-called freedom and flowering of the arts. But that was really nothing more than froth. Right under that shortlived, lively surface of the shimmering swamp was fratricide and general discord, and regiments were formed for the final reckoning."

Even more vividly descriptive than his prose, however, is Grosz's watercolor "Barberina" (1925), in which grotesquely made up and overdressed patrons of a real life Berlin cabaret posture like animated cadavers. While Grosz captures the social preening and the "lively surface of the shimmering swamp" in luminous watercolor washes, Otto Dix skewers its subterranean lowlife in "Pimp and Girl" (1923), where his linear treatment of the mustachioed ponce with dangling cigarette and his languorous naked hooker owe something to Grosz's ferociously satirical portfolio of drawings "Ecce Homo," published a year earlier.

Along with Max Beckmann and Rudolf Schlichter (represented here with the ca. 1922 watercolor "Neapolitan Street"), Grosz and Dix were leading figures of the Neue Sachlichkeit (New Objectivity), a movement initiated between the two World Wars by a group of Berlin artists disillusioned with the disengaged distortions of the Expressionists and dedicated to a more pointed social realism.

Also included in the group was Jeanne Mammen, who combined an acidic vision with an especially refined watercolor technique and was to gain a belated cult following among feminists in the 1970s for her lesbian subjects. In contrast to her tender depictions of love between women, the title of Mammen's watercolor "The Joy of Nature" (ca. 1930) calls ironic attention to the obvious discontent of a frumpy heterosexual couple languishing on a park bench. Another picture, "Cafe Reimann" (ca. 1931), originally created as an illustration for a gay and lesbian guide to "Immoral Berlin," depicts a more fashionable and perhaps more jaded pair of male and female voyeurs sitting at a cafe table, smoking and surveying the sur-

rounding scene through slitted eyes.

While the barbed realism of the Neue Sachlichkeit may have initially jibed more harmoniously with the literary bias of a Broadway lyricist researching local color, Ebb's taste apparently broadened as he encountered earlier German art. For, along with Nolde's "Conferencier" (a rare urban subject for an artist better known for primitive themes), he also collected pre-World War I drawings and watercolors by Expressionists such as Erich Heckel, Ernst Ludwig Kirchner, Otto Mueller, Max Pechstein, and Karl Schmidt-Rottluff, as well as their disaffiliated contemporaries Ludwig Meidner, Christian Rohlfs, and Karl Hofer. Kirchner's watercolor "Figures on a Busy Street" (1914), with its tension between geometry and gestural energy, and Heckel's "Seated Man (Self-Portrait)," 1912, showing the influence of African masks, are among his most outstanding Expressionist acquisitions.

Max Beckmann (1884 –1950)* Nightclub in New York, 1947** ***Pen and ink and watercolor on laid paper 10 1/4 x 14 3/8 inches (260 x 363 mm) The Pierpont Morgan Library, Bequest of Fred Ebb, Photography by Joseph Zehavi, 2006 © 2006 Artists Rights Society (ARS), New York/VG Bild-Kunst, Bonn

Perhaps influenced by Barbara Streisand, a fellow collector for whose film "Funny Girl" he wrote lyrics, Ebb also acquired works by the Austrian artists Oskar Kokoschka, Gustav Klimt, and Egon Schiele. In fact, along with Streisand and other showbiz types like Billy Wilder, Ebb was among Schiele's first American collectors. He purchased eight of his drawings, including "Self-Portrait" (1910)," in which the artist's head is set eerily afloat on an otherwise bare sheet of paper, as well as several figure drawings in the spare, sinuous linear style for which he was known, some with an expressive emphasis on disproportionately large hands.

Although Schiele's drawings are often overtly erotic, here he is upstaged in that regard by his early mentor Gustav Klimt, whose two exquisite line drawings,"Seated Nude"(ca. 1907) and "Seated Woman with Raised Skirt" (ca. 1909-10), are both provocatively posed, with parted legs and the pubic patch prominent for being the only filled-in area of the composition.

Klimt's slender, graceful figures have a brazen yet aloof allure that contrasts sharply with the awkward matter-of-factness of Oskar Kokoschka's "Reclining Female Nude" (ca. 1911-12), the abject nakedness of the stocky subject in Max Pechstein's gouache "Kneeling Woman" (1909), and Karl Schmidt-Rottluff's angular "Seated Nude" (ca. 1915) with its oversize head, symbolizing, according to Schmidt-Rottluff "the seat of the psyche."

Although nudes are well represented in the collection, Ebb purchased only one landscape: Otto Mueller's "Landscape with Trees and Water" (ca. 1923). Not surprisingly, this mundane work in colored chalks and gouache was an uninspired choice, given the antipathy toward nature that caused the lyricist to turn right around and make a beeline back to Manhattan the one time he visited his writing partner John Kander's country house. (He may still have been recoiling from the visit when he penned the lyrics "Sties and stables sure are smelly / Let me sniff some kosher deli / Brightly lit by pretty city lights.")

With the rise of fascism, the Weimar era was in its last gasp by 1932, the year the Neue Sachlichkeit draftsman and printmaker Karl Hubbuch produced his India ink drawing ""The Film Star Spends Two Minutes in Her Parents' Garden." Like a butterfly alighting in a garbage dump, the blond bombshell appears to be slumming in her own past as she sits in the cluttered little yard, admiring herself in the mirror of a compact and applying lipstick, while neighbors gawk through the chain-link fence, their haggard appearance seeming a presentiment of future newsreels showing concentration camp victims behind barbed wire.

That same year, George Grosz, realizing it would be dangerous for him to remain in Germany, accepted an invitation to emigrate to New York and teach at the Art Students League. Later he would quip, "I left because of Hitler. He is a painter, too, you know, and there didn't seem to be room for both of us in Germany."

Apparently, the Weimar sensibility was a portable state of mind, judging from the leering female guitarist in Grosz's watercolor "Musicians" (1932), painted on arriving in New York, where he found faces to rival those in his Berlin scenes. In another watercolor by his fellow exile Max Beckmann, "Nightclub in New York" (1947), the floor show features two sinister clowns in dunce caps, each gripping one leg of a female performer, as though about to sunder her like a wish-bone, while a jazz combo fiddles and thrums in the background. Come to the cabaret!

Other unexpected pleasures of the collection include "Railroad Workers II" (1915), a watercolor by the German-American artist Lyonel Feininger, in which the angularly abstracted figures toting a tie could be taken for pall-bearers carrying a coffin; "Savior's Face with Open Eyes" (1923), a geometric composition by Alexei Jawlensky; Paula Modersohn-Becker's "Half-Length Portrait of a Peasant Woman" (ca. 1899), a charcoal and colored chalk drawing combining classical realism with the darkly evocative quality of van Gogh's "Potato Eaters; and "Rheumatics" (1927) a characteristically scratchy pen drawing of a stooped old man and his equally decrepit hound by the eccentric draftsman Alfred Kubin, who was a contemporary of the Weimar artists but

eschewed their cafe society for the darker haunts of his gothic imagination.

Most of the German painters in the Ebb collection who held teaching posts in art academies and universities were fired from them, had their works confiscated from museums, and were forbidden to paint after Hitler took power in 1933 and snuffed the artistic freedom of the Weimar period. Many were driven into exile and some had the dubious honor of being included in the infamous "Degenerate Art" exhibition held in Munich in 1937. Presumably these drawings and watercolors survived only because they remained well hidden or because even Nazis and philistines are reluctant to destroy anything that may have a monetary value. However, they have not been shown publicly in thirty years, making this an especially valuable exhibition.

Like "Glitter and Doom: German Portraits from the 1920s," which closed earlier this year at the Metropolitan Museum, "From Berlin to Broadway" offers glimpses of a fertile artistic epoch on the verge of being abruptly aborted. That in some unsettling ways it resembles our own era makes this show as timely as it is provocative.

* * *

Karl Hubbuch (1891 –1979)* The Film Star Spends Two Minutes in Her Parents ' Garden, *ca.1932 Reed pen and India ink heightened with white on wove paper 25 1/4 x 20 7/8 inches (640 x 531 mm) The Pierpont Morgan Library, Bequest of Fred Ebb, Photography by Joseph Zehavi, 2006

"Art from Detritus:" Funky and Fabulous

It is hardly earthshaking or even original to liken art to alchemy; yet the analogy applies so literally to the exhibition "Art from Detritus: Recycling with Imagination" that one is obliged to forego cleverness and state the obvious.

Partially funded by the Puffin Foundation, and on view through June 24 at Synagogue for the Arts Gallery Space, 49 White Street, the show was curated by Vernita Nemec, Grand Dame of the Art from Detritus movement. Also known as the performance artist Vernita N'Cognita, Nemec has brought together over 40 of her colleagues in the movement for this stunning survey of creative recycling. Not only do they practice what Nemec refers to as "aesthetic ecology" but demonstrate that some of the most trenchant statements on American society seen anywhere today are being made from its abundant waste materials.

Nemec herself shows a characteristically powerful piece called "Don't Shoot." Poignantly juxtaposing a delicate painted bird with a grainy newspaper photo of a hand gun on a long vertical field of patterned security envelopes, it combines the lyrical qualities of an ancient Chinese scroll with the jolt of today's headlines.

Rachel Leibman comments acerbically on suburban domesticity in "Postpartum House," an intricately crafted collage assembled entirely with images clipped from mail order catalogs. It's a two-dimensional cutaway dollhouse with every piece of furniture and utensil in place, every bug snug in the shrubberies, and a "lady of the house" who looks as trapped and as wigged out as one of The Stepford Wives.

One can only wonder at the private meaning that the date "May 14, 2007" has for Ed Herman, whose wall assemblage of that name, composed with wire mesh, long metal poles, and a pair of women's suede boots, comes across as a kind of portrait. A notorious supermodel doing community service for the Sanitation Department comes most immediately to mind—a subjective reading, admittedly, but an apropos theme for a detritus show!

Don't even get me started trying to decipher "Another Story," by Joan Criswell, a veritable Valentine of unsettling debris that includes a partially decomposed animal skull and a pair of real, ritualistically crossed, disembodied deer hoofs and projects a mood of curdled romance as morbidly engaging as The Rolling Stones song "Dead Flowers." Less mysterious but just as ingenious for their transformation of found materials are Lisa Gross's "Jonah in the Whale," in which the mouth of a plastic pouch with a zipper for teeth morphs into the monstrous maw that swallow's Jonah and his boat; another fanciful sea creature called "Shimmering Swallowtailed Bubblebelly" constructed by David Edgar from colorful plastic containers; and "Linoleum Landscape with Eclipse," a by May de Viney, in which the common floor covering and costume jewelry add to the surreal atmosphere of a Washington D.C. cityscape. Apparently, Carol Quint is also haunted by events emanating from the Nation's Capital, judging from "The White House," a spooky architectural construct of real chicken bones and plastic skeletons. And a dollhouse regurgitates shredded paper in Kathy Smith's "White Trash," hinting at secrecy and covert activities in a more"down home" environment.

Eric Stanley's "AM Wizdum 1" suggests the mind-bending babble of early morning radio of the abrasive Imus/Stern variety, with intricate swirls that turn a flattened, blackened Cheerios box into a psychedelic mandala. By contrast, innocence is embodied by a tiny dress covered with miniature Hershey's candy wrappers and juxtaposed with balloons and toys in Lynda Andrus's "Childhood Days."

Other artists exploit the formal properties of refuse to create intriguing abstractions such as Elizabeth Morisette's color field composition of vertically stacked pink, purple, and green zippers; Kathleen King's bubbly "Flotsam Fantasy," created with acrylic, plastic, and metal circles; Marjie Zelman's semiotic word/image symbols on torn scraps of newspaper affixed to transparent plastic; Kazuko's graceful calligraphic configurations of tree branches suggesting landmarks for lost travelers; and Ursula Clark's mobile incorporating found plastic, coated wire, feathers, and expired MetroCards.

Also including other excellent and highly entertaining works too numerous to mention here, this 17th Art from Detritus exhibition places Nemec and her colleagues not only in the forefront of aesthetic ecology but in the vanguard of all that is funky and fabulous in contemporary art.

—Ed McCormack

"The Female Gaze" Takes Center Stage

For several centuries we have looked upon the ordinary miracle of the human female form though the licentious distorting lens of what art historians refer to as the Male Gaze. Only relatively recently have women artists begun to examine their own bodies and give us more intimate and truthful images of one of art history's most familiar subjects.

Characteristically, Ekatherina Savtchenko, who has dispensed with her surname for artistic purposes and prefers to be known simply as Ekatherina S, comes at this subject from a unique angle in her two photographic projects "Mystery of Woman" and "Unity: Identity," on view at A. Jain Marunouchi Gallery, 24 West 57th Street, from June 21 through July 5, with a reception on June 21 from 5:30-7:30 PM. (The exhibition will travel to Oslo, Norway, in August and to the Museum of Contemporary Art in Shanghai, China, and the Imperial City Art Museum in Beijing in September and October.

"Nymphe 1"

Working in the hybrid medium that she calls "painted photography," her exploration of issues specifically related to gender began with a series of male nudes entitled "Mystery of Man" in which, as she puts it, "I was interested in the feminine qualities of the man, like a fragility, emotional depth, fantasy and narcissism." Conversely, in her female nudes, she is inspired by what she calls "their masculine sides"— the qualities of "energy, power, individuality, and independence" normally attributed to men. The vehicle through which she explores a synthesis of androgyny and classic female beauty is her own nude body as well those of her female friends, of whom she says, "They come from different countries, continents, cultural traditions and religions."

Ekatherina S herself was born in Russia, holds a German passport, lives in New York, works in Spain and China. She calls herself a "citizen of the Universe" and, in the nude autoportraits of her "Identity" series, she is seen holding her passport behind her back in a picturesque Spanish landscape. Very much in the pluralistic spirit of postmodernism, this embodiment of multiculturalism within a single individual, like her hybrid medium, and the merging of male and female personality traits that she celebrates in her work, is expressed in the title "Unity: identity," which she states "is about the national and international aspects of the personality."

The androgynous element in her work is one of its most profound manifestations for what it tells not only of how the way we view women's bodies today differs from the myopic stereotypes of the centuries-old Male Gaze, but also of how women have redefined their sexuality. For unlike most women of centuries past the women that Ekatherina S photographs and then envelopes in luminous, translucent veils of color via hand-painting, display their bodies proudly.

"They enjoy very much to be a beautiful woman," she assures us in her Russian-inflected English, and indeed it is obvious that they see their beauty not as something to be exploited solely for the pleasure of men but as something to be explored for their own enjoyment and ultimate empowerment. Given the bodily shame traditionally imposed upon women, with the dubious quality of "modesty" elevated as a virtue and serving not only to salve male insecurity but also to instill humility in matters of intellect as well as dress and deportment, this is a far more potent expression of selfhood and, somewhat paradoxically, a far more androgynous statement than if women were to eschew makeup and adopt masculine modes of dress in the manner of some earlier feminists. For these women are most definitely feminists, albeit modeled more on, say, the proud self-assertion of the pop personality Madonna than the political activism of Kate Millet.

This is a postmodern strain of feminism that does not find it necessary to repudiate eroticism; rather it embraces the erotic aggressively, as seen in the sequence Ekatherina S calls "Passion," in which a voluptuous brunette model who bears a more than passing resemblance to the young Sophia Loren is engulfed in auras of a red hue so visceral they could suggest the inner environment of the womb itself. Call it, if you will, the Female Gaze, for no longer is the model represented languishing in some innocuous setting such as a forest or her boudoir as a passive object for the voyeuristic delectation of the male viewer, as she has habitually been seen down through art history. Here, she is at last an active participant in the dynamics of desire, neither a bovine innocent like Renoir's rosy milkmaids nor forbidden fruit like the pubescent Lolitas of Balthus, but a being fully

in the Painted Photography of Ekatherina S

aware of her power to both inspire and enjoy passion on equal terms with men. And it is equality rather than exclusion that these pictures seem to invite, a world in which the power games of the past are absent from the relations between women and men, both in and out of the sexual arena.

Indeed, equality was already an operative principle in the large paintings that Ekatherina S showed at Westwood Gallery in Soho a few years ago, before photography came to play such a prominent role in her work, in which angularly stylized male and female figures both exhibited the same lithe athleticism as they engaged in exertions of an ostensibly mythic nature harking back to the graceful hunters in prehistoric cave paintings.

And while in the present pictures, the message has become more explicit and urgently contemporary, there is still a mythic component to the work that comes across particularly in the sequence of images "Dance of Earth," which takes on a Dionysian dimension, with the artist as a blond nature sprite alternately surrendering her nubile nakedness to the earth, swinging from a tree branch, or straddling a sapling as though about to mate with it. Documenting an outdoor dance performance that she gave in Spain, accompanied by the Chinese pianist Tian Jiang, the sequence, intended to reenact an "ancient ritual of fertility and symbolize the connection to Mother Earth," As an expression of natural unity, the sequence has a primitive directness that strikes one as refreshing and intrepid, given the calculated climate of our present cultural environment.

Yet that Ekatherina S is also capable of classical restraint when she abandons her vibrant yellows and fiery reds for more subdued blue and greens in the sequence she calls "Nymphe," where light and shadow flickers over shapely torsos, buttocks, and limbs, lending living flesh the cool quality of marble statues viewed through the translucent waters of a shallow lake. Only the navel-ring and the pubic hair in "Nymph 1" and what appears to be a black thong bikini bottom entwined around the knee in "Nymphe 3" removes these timelessly comely images from antiquity, locating them firmly in the present.

At the same, despite the suggestiveness of such details and the palpable eroticism innate to any image of a well-proportioned naked body (which one would have to be either a politically correct prude or simply dead to deny!), there is an ethereal—one dares say even a "spiritual"— quality to this sequence that may or may not be indicative of the superior Female Gaze.

"Identity 5"

This is just one among several interesting questions that Ekatherina S raises in this sequence and others in her "Mystery of a Woman" and "Unity: identity" photo projects. And since art is all about raising questions, rather than answering them, that is as much as we can expect from any exhibition.

—Ed McCormack

María Faraone Views an Eternal City

The Argentinean artist María Faraone apparently has a special relationship with Venice, Italy, judging from the paintings from her "Carnaval de Venecia" series, on view in the year-round salon exhibition at Montserrat Gallery, 547 West 27th Street, in Chelsea.

Faraone, who has exhibited widely in Buenos Aires and around the world, has painted memorable pictures of other exotic locales, as well as acclaimed portraits of historical figures such as Eva Peron. However, Venice seems especially well matched to her aesthetic sensibility. For it is among its ubiquitous canals, baroque architecture, and grand public plazas that Faraone finds some of her most fanciful imagery, especially during Carnaval, when throngs of costumed revelers from all over the world turn the picturesque city into a fantasyland where dreams overlap with daily life. Venice provides Faraone with a perfect vehicle for merging everyday reality with a form of readymade surrealism that auspiciously suits her style, which recalls that of the American painter Florine Stettheimer. Like that of the earlier artist, whose New York salon attracted the cream of the international avant-garde in the 1930s, Faraone possesses a Rococo manner, at once innocent and sophisticated, in which a great deal of detail is lovingly delineated.

Faraone is especially adept at depicting the extravagant costumes worn by the revelers. She obviously relishes painting men in powdered wigs and pantaloons and women in elaborate beaded, sequined, and brocaded ball gowns festooned with glittering jewels and colorful feathers. And when they don their ornate masks, her canvases take on even more fantastic qualities akin to the macabre compositions of James Ensor.

In "El Cafe Florian," for example, several costumed figures, most wearing masks, mingle around cafe tables set up near a stag, overhung with a white tent, on which a tuxedo-clad orchestra serenades them. In this painting, given the elegant setting, everyday reality and fantasy mingle in equal measure. By contrast, a more eerie atmosphere attends the composition called "Coloquio," where four figures wearing white masks that resemble skulls and finery liberally decorated with gold congregate in front of a massive steel door like spooky sentries guarding the portal to another world.

A more down-to-earth mood comes across in "Figura con pollera a rayas," a portrait of a pretty young woman with a feathered headdress and a pearl-lined black mask that covers only one eye, seated on marble steps leading down to a canal. The sunlight gleaming on the water behind her hints that it may be early evening, an impression enhanced by her wilting posture, which suggests the weariness that descends toward the end of a daylong celebration. However, her

"Figura con pollera a rayas"

youth and the care she has taken with her costume suggest that this young woman will soon get a "second wind" and be ready to join into the night's revels.

In choosing to make Venice the setting for this series, Faraone places her art in the company of masters such as Tiepolo and Canaletto, who immortalized it in centuries past. However, she does not suffer by comparison, since she possesses a distinctive style and brings something uniquely contemporary to her interpretation of the fabled city.

—Maurice Taplinger

Chelsea Group Show Celebrates the Poetry of Subjective Vision

The paintings of Mounia Dadi, an artist born in Casablanca, Morocco, exemplify the eclectic pleasures to be found in "The Rapture of Form," at Agora Gallery, 530 West 25th Street, in Chelsea, from June 26 through July 17. (Reception: Thursday, June 28, 6 to 8 PM.

Dadi's paintings recall Walt Whitman's famous line, "I contain multitudes," for she fills gracefully delineated outlines of the human form with myriad neo-pointillist strokes of color that suggest the intricate content of our inner lives. Set against vibrant backgrounds of a single hue, Dadi "sings the body electric," to paraphrase another line from that great American poet.

Working with steel, bronze, glass, and other materials, the California funk sculptor William C. Mang celebrates lowbrow culture, creating iconic tributes to heavy metal music (a carnivorous-looking anthropomorphic electric guitar with frets culminating in a clawlike hand!), goth, sci-fi, dungeons and dragons, aliens—you name it! Wang's Pop wit succeeds by virtue of an elegance of execution that elevates even the most debased subjects to the level of high art.

A mysterious epiphany in Italy prompted Gregory Allen Page to abandon a lucrative career in reconstructive surgery and become a painter. Now, living and working in Chicago, Page paints thickly impastoed canvases notable for their raw power and expressive brushwork, whether he is depicting a stylized vision of an exotic deity held aloft by beams of light or what appears to be a field of hemp waving in the breeze.

For her choice of sunny hues, the Israeli painter Nava Revital resembles a latter-day Bonnard, particularly in her domestic subjects such as "The Living Room 2." Living in the melting pot of Jerusalem, however, she has an even wider range of subjects at her disposal, and she captures them in a dynamic style that moves gracefully from the figurative into the semi-abstract and back again, offering us what de Kooning once termed "slippery glimpses" of daily life.

By contrast, Washington resident Bergen Rose imbues the everyday with a hint of the surreal in her atmospheric landscapes, where fields and twisted trees have an otherworldly quality akin to the desolate dreamscapes of Yves Tanguy. A sense of poetic melancholy pervades Rose's paintings, lending them an unusual emotive quality.

The Egyptian artist Nadia El Tatawy has a talent for cramming a complex narrative suggestiveness into her boldly brushed, darkly evocative figurative paintings. The history of her country, its rich cultural heritage and its ongoing human conflicts, has formed Tatawy's sensibility and influenced her art indelibly, lending her earthly evocations of the human figure a rare resonance.

Anyone who has ever driven through the postindustrial landscape of upstate New York factory towns like the one in which Michael Hibbard grew up will recognize their spirit if not their actuality in his minimalist sculptures, which combine steel and ceramics in innovative ways. For while they are geometric and completely nonobjective, Hibbard's stark looming forms convey an elegiac quality, standing as affecting monuments to a vanishing way of life, even while impressing us with their purely formal attributes.

As mellow in their subtle intonations as sun-bleached driftwood, the watercolors of Marc van der Leeden evoke the phantom poetry of old New England beach houses and lighthouses set against pale, uninflected skies. However, there is more to these pictures than nostalgic Americana. A practicing physician like the late poet William Carlos Williams, van der Leeden is a homespun modernist, employing light and shadow to create subtle patterns on the picture plane that combine elements of Impressionism and Cubism in a highly original synthesis.

—Maureen Flynn

At New Century: Putting the Emotion Back into Contemporary Art

"Emotionalists" is a loaded term for a budding art movement, and its members obviously mean for it to be. Formed twelve years ago by the Polish émigré sculptor Lubomir Tomaszewski, the group flies in the face of art world orthodoxy by eschewing fashionable irony in favor of an art driven by subjective self expression. This is a radical stance at a time when, in an almost anything goes cultural climate, unmediated passion often seems the last taboo—especially since all of the members of the group are far too sophisticated, both technically and aesthetically, to be considered "outsiders."

Thus their conscious decision to restore the emotional component to contemporary art amounts to a critique of those contemporaries who distance their art from direct confrontation with the human experience through the formal and conceptual strategies. And whether one agrees or does not agree that such a critique is necessary, the group makes a strong case for its position, at very least as an alternative to some of the more callow tendencies prevalent today, in the exhibition "Art & Emotions," on view from June 11th through 23rd at New Century Artists Gallery, 530 West 25th Street, in Chelsea. (Reception June 16th, from 3 to 6 PM.)

The sculptures of Lubomir Tomaszewski, the group's founder and still acknowledged leader, appear more influenced by the expressive elongations of El Greco than by any sculptor who springs immediately to mind. Indeed, Tomaszewski is a painter as well as a sculptor, but it is in his human and animal subjects in wood and metal, such as the dynamic mounted figure "Hunting Indian," that he achieves a sense of mythic universality, akin to the best work of Leonard Baskin.

Julia Ambrose also draws upon myth in her hydrocal figures of hybrid creatures with animal heads and voluptuous nude human bodies. In one of Ambrose's most appealing relief sculptures two such creatures with the heads of beasts and anatomies as well formed as carvings on a Greek or Roman tomb dance a solemn waltz. Ivan Bratko, on the other hand, subjects the human body to a formal metamorphosis in his powerful marble sculptures, wherein the figure often appears eroded, like a fragment from antiquity. Bratko's mastery of anatomy as well as his gift for investing subjects with individuality, even when their faces are hidden, is especially impressive in his gaunt male figure "Truly Yours," which has a raw humanistic power reminiscent of Kathe Kollwitz by way of Rodin.

In the gesturally vital paintings of Maria Fuks, the sensual couplings of male and female figures are lent sensual urgency by the the artist's graceful calligraphic line and sense of classical proportions. At the same time, Fuks invests her compositions with a slightly melancholy humanism that serves as a counterweight, giving her pictures a depth of feeling that goes beyond mere romantic fantasy.

Figurative metamorphosis is central to the work of three other Emotionalists: Edmund Korzeniewski merges two neocubistically stylized figures into a single towering entity in his painting "Romeo and Juliet." Korzeniewski's earthy ocher forms suggest some surreal architectonic/anthropomorphic monument to young love.

Nita Sacks-Steketeer's "Sailor" is a primal male silhouette set against a tactile field of brilliant blue, suggesting the sea. Sacks-Steketeer's stark style has qualities in common with the Art Brut of Jean Dubuffet for its brash immediacy; yet her use of color is considerably more striking.

Then there is Ewa Maslowska, whose style is all energy and movement, with vestiges of the figure playing hide and seek amid thick ribbons of pigment that surge and flow with palpable physicality. Maslowska combines the painterly pyrotechnics of Abstract Expressionism with a submerged humanism to achieve a highly personal aesthetic synthesis.

Anita Flejter employs the figure symbolically in stark black and white linocuts examining the relations between the sexes and also creates large landscape compositions in which shifting shapes and dark brooding colors convey the sense of a mysterious terrain where barely discernible vestiges of phantom figures seem to glide through the shadows.

Lyricism radiates from the oils of Basha Maryanska, who evokes mistily poetic landscapes, such as her "Changing Season," with subtly simplified forms and soft pastel hues layered in a unique neopointillistic technique. Relatively new to the group, Maryanska brings to her work a quiet power, evoking a sense of dreamy nostalgia coupled with uncompromising formal rigor. Another landscape painter, Helen Nana-Sacco combines the rough immediacy of Albert Pinkham Ryder with the strident romanticism of Casper David Friedrich in "Three Moons," where the three orbs of the title glow from a fiery orange sky above a crystalline lake mirroring an exotic tropical shoreline suggesting a near-mystical realm. Then there is Kinga Kolouszek, who employs a subtle range of predominantly blue hues to evoke atmospheric views of Luxembourg that are reminiscent of Lyonel Feininger for the expressive plasticity that they impart to picturesque European architecture.

Perhaps the most ostensibly abstract member of the group is Zbigniew Nowosadski, whose oil initially appears to be a minimalist color field composition consisting of a single vertical slash on a vibrant red and blue background, until one looks closer and sees that it is actually a slender female figure, possessed of a lethal, blade-like elegance akin to a Giacometti sculpture.

The paintings and drawings of father and son artists Janusz and Arthur Skowron suggest that Emotionalism may have intergenerational shelf-life through their distinctly different styles. The father, Janusz Skowron employs a bold Expressionist manner in his powerful oils, wherein vigorously painted forms morph into ghostly faces and torsos as harrowing as Munch's haunted figures. Janusz Skowron's harrowingly wide-eyed gape-mouthed face "Fright" is one of his most memorable images to date.

The son, Arthur Skowron, on the other hand, generally avails himself of a more realistic technique to convey a darkly romantic sensibility in skillful figurative compositions. Here, however, one of Arthur Skowron's most impressive works is a monochromatic work in which he invests an unpopulated landscape with an unusual emotional resonance.

In an accomplished painting by Witold "Vito" Wojcik, the expressively exaggerated buttocks and legs of a female nude, delineated in warm hues, radiate a monumental sensuality. By contrast, Malina Boreyko imbues a hoary subject with unexpected beauty in her composition "Old Man," where the craggy face appears to emanate, like that of some Blakean prophet, from a white cloud suspended in a dark cosmic expanse.

"Art & Emotions" showcases a group of artists who, in numerous exhibitions here and abroad, have steadily been gaining ground for over a decade. Their work suggests that a new humanism can at least provide an alternative to much that is vacuous and superfluous in contemporary art.

—Byron Coleman

Exploration and Rapture in the Paintings of Anowar Hossain

Painters who grow up in the United States, particularly in New York City, often experience the legacy of Abstract Expressionism as something that they must react against, rather than an inspiration. Growing up in a family of artist scholars and supporters of the arts in Bangladesh, the painter Anowar Hossain was spared this burden. Although steeped in the writings of Rabindranath Tagore and the music of Ravi Shankar, Hossain, who says, "I believe that a true artist does not belong to a race, religion or ethnicity" also read Western poetry. He was particularly impressed by a poem by Milton called "On His Blindness," in which the poet, who went blind in his later years but continued writing, passionately exhorts artists to adhere to their vocation at risk of being punished by God for abandoning their responsibility to humanity.

Anowar Hossain in his studio

Obviously, another significant encounter with Western culture was Hossain's discovery of The New York School. Whether or not he was already aware of Pollock, de Kooning before arriving in the United States in the 1980s to study painting at the School of Visual Arts and the Art Students League, he came to their work from a fresh perspective, bearing his own cultural baggage, and rather than imitating or being intimidated by its magnitude, has been able to embrace and add to the vital spirit of a mode of painting that is by now an international language. And, indeed, Hossain has made an international reputation by virtue of his fluency in this language, entering important collections in Europe and Scandinavia, as well as the United States.

In a review of his exhibition in Chelsea last year, Maurice Taplinger wrote in these pages about Hossain's unique ability to enrich his abstract paintings by virtue of his firm grounding in figurative art. One must concur; on the strength of a recent preview, it is safe to say that Hossain's draftsmanly abilities are still very much in evidence in the paintings that he will be showing in his new exhibition in the same venue, World Fine Art Gallery, 511 West 25th Street, from July 3 through 28.

In terms of his integration of drawing into his paintings, Hossain is more akin to the classically trained de Kooning than to the cowboy, Pollock. For fine draftsmanship is the very armature on which his compositions are built. This draftsmanly facility also enables Hossain to escape the trap of sameness that many abstract artists fall into when they repeat the same motifs again and again, allowing him to impose the stamp of his individual sensibility on every line, form, and gesture that he commits to canvas, no matter how various.

He is free for example, to move from angular, almost geometric forms such as the ones in "Open Center," to looser, more lyrical configurations such as the ones in "Horizons." In fact, these two paintings offer an especially enlightening example of how Hossain is able to maintain stylistic coherency without having to cultivate a so-called "signature style," which for too many artists serves as sort of a corporate logo. "Style is character," as someone once said—or at least real style is: something innate to the individual rather than contrived, and Hossain seems to know this instinctively.

Thus it is equally possible for him to employ sharply angled, shard-like, compacted shapes and an icy palette of blue, gray, and frosty whites in "Open Center" (its title presumably alluding to the vigorously brushed patch of white at the center of the composition), and to create a painting like "Horizons," in which sinuous forms and fluid drips predominate in a palette that consists of brilliant cadmium reds, yellows, greens, and other vibrant hues. While the former painting combines the geometric and painterly elements with considerable restraint, the latter is a rapturous chromatic explosion. Yet both are united by the overriding force of the painter's character, which allows him to depart from what might be considered merely "characteristic"—which is to say that "foolish consistency," according to Emerson, is "the hobgoblin of little minds."

Indeed, the indelible quality of Hossain's painterly personality is such that it is possible to recognize his "touch" in even so radical a departure from his more familiar abstract mode as "My Relationship." In this rare figurative work, three images of what appears to be the same voluptuous female nude are depicted on the same canvas in a kind of contemporary update on the timeless theme of The Three Graces, here seen as bathers in a deep blue stream amid fiery red foliage. For even while convincingly evoking the play of light on the curvaceous bathers in a manner that makes them palpable, sensual entities, Hossain's heightened palette and vigorous brushstrokes are instantly recognizable.

That Anowar Hossain appears to have an infinite variety of expressive means at his disposal becomes even more obvious when one compares different examples of his abstract output, the more copious aspect of his prodigious output at present. For these range effortlessly from the almost somber drama of "My Way Out," with its deep dark thickets of interwoven gestures and shapes relieved here and there by sinuous calligraphic strokes of brilliant red; to the sweeping lyricism of "Neither Sea Nor Sand," with its complex yet buoyant configurations of sunny yellows and bucolic greens, evoking the lush salad of landscape without submitting to specific imagery; to the boldly delineated forms in "Layers," where paler blue and purple-violet hues suggest the movement of windblown clouds.

The latter composition harks back to the formal innovations of abstract pioneers such as Kupka and Kandinsky, who endeavored to apprehend in form and color the unseen forces beyond the visible world in modern painting's initial forays into the spiritual realm. This seems worth mentioning because, quite from his obvious painterly prowess, Anowar Hossain's greatest strength as an artist is that he has not abandoned the search that began with those early masters. Indeed, he still appears passionately committed to making those vital connections with the unknown out of which abstract painting was born.

—Byron Coleman

Stephanie Rauschenbusch Finds Fertile Aesthetic Fellowship in Old Haarlem

"Reiteration is a privilege of still life denied many other modes," Guy Davenport writes in his beautiful essay on still life painting, "A Basket of Summer Fruit," pointing out that "a Roman mosaic of a basket of apples and pears, as in the Vatican's tessellated floor, is wonderfully like baskets of apples and pears of all ages. There is the same nakedness of presentation, the same mute hope of and confidence in the clarity of the subject, a taciturness so deep that we may never get to the bottom of it."

Stephanie Rauschenbusch demonstrates the veracity of this statement and then some, in her new solo exhibition "After Pieter Claesz's Still Life with Turtle," at Noho Gallery, 530 West 25th Street, from June 5 through 30. (Reception: Thursday, June 7, from 5 to 8 PM.)

Rauschenbusch began her career as a still life painter in the 1970s, frequently employing a grid to anchor objects to the picture plane. The device carried over into some of the landscapes for which she has become better known in recent years, introducing a sense of neo-cubistic fracture and spatial ambiguity that played off intriguingly against her accomplished realist technique, animating her compositions in fascinating ways. However, for this return to still life, inspired by Claesz's 1623 painting in the Louvre (actually called "Still Life with Musical Instruments" and incorporating a real turtle, among other objects), Rauschenbusch eschews the grid as a visible element. Yet the taut organization of a complex array of objects in each of the sizable oils on canvas in the new series suggests that it may still play a role, albeit submerged within the smoothly unified surface of her oils.

With characteristic visual wit, Rauschenbusch substitutes a wooden Nigerian carving of a turtle for the real tortoise in Claesz's picture. But even more germane, in terms of both her more complex layering and symbolic expansion of the subject, is her substitution of the bay windows in her Brooklyn studio for the plain dark background against which the German-born Dutch still life painter usually set his arrangements of objects on a table-top. The views through the glass alternately show the street blessed with flowering pear and plum trees, blazing with autumn leaves, or blanketed in falling snow.

Being a true child of the postmodern century, fully cognizant of video and all the other "new media" with which painting must now compete, Rauschenbusch not only introduces an element of time via the changing seasons, but also toys with the ambiguous interrelationship between reality and representation so prevalent in our age by including not only a catalog of Claesz's paintings but her own open sketchbooks and smaller paintings within some of the paintings. Along with the carved turtle, an equally ubiquitous patterned ochre and brown cloth serves as a unifying motif for the series, further intensifying its complexity, and is variously juxtaposed with a blue patterned William Morris cloth, an embroidered Greek tablecloth, or a Venetian cloth with gold threads.

"After Pieter Claesz's Still Life with Turtle" #3 **Photo: D. James Dee**

On and against these fabric backdrops, a violin, a lemon, a bowl of persimmons, a plate of mussels, a goblet of wine, a cherry pie, vessels of various sizes and shapes, among other objects, are juxtaposed. In one painting a sheep's skull adds a stark suggestion of vanitas amid an almost antic abundance. In another, sardines in a bowl of olive oil suggests a ritual offering on an altar; yet a pair of dice on another part of the table seems to mock it with the capricious wink of chance. Meanwhile, as the "eyes" of the brownstones across the street, framed in the bay window, return our gaze through the snow-dusted tree-limbs, the crisscross incisions in the brown crust of a round loaf of bread rhyme visually with the patterns carved in the wooden turtle's shell, hinting at the harmony hidden in that taciturness whose depths, Davenport warns us, we may never be able to plumb.

Stephanie Rauschenbusch has discovered and delineated this hidden harmony in the most disparate places, from the craggy rock formations and roiling clouds of Cape Cornwell, off the rugged coast of Southwest England, to the more manicured environs of the Brooklyn Botanic Gardens, nearer her home, to a terrain of curiously related objects created on a table in her studio in tribute to a kindred artistic spirit in 17th century Haarlem. But even while taking Claesz's picture as inspiration, she goes far beyond reiteration; for unlike the earlier painter, whose virtually monochromatic "breakfast pictures" in a subdued palette of brownish-yellow tones were described by a critic of his time as "unicolored banquets," Rauschenbusch's bold chromatic contrasts are akin to those of other distinguished contemporary painters of still life such as Audrey Flack and Jack Beal. And most important: she fills her compositions with a sense of light, space, and minute incident, suggesting a world infinitely more far-reaching and layered with complexity than anything Claesz could have imagined, even in 1623, as Dutch Settlers landed on Manhattan Island and made "New Netherlands" a formally organized province.

Yet, in an even larger sense, what Stephanie Rauschenbusch's enterprise reminds us is that all serious artists are colleagues in the breadth of their concerns, intrepid explorers traversing the centuries for new aesthetic territory to colonize in the context of their own age. So it stands perfectly to reason that a contemporary artist, educated in her craft at Harvard and Columbia, much exhibited, collected, and accomplished as a poet as well as a painter, should find such fertile aesthetic fellowship with a minor master of old Holland and parlay it into the splendid series of still lifes on view in Stephanie Rauschenbusch's new solo exhibition at Noho Gallery.

—Ed McCormack

Sidney Harris

Cartoons
July 10-30

Paintings "Midtown"
Aug. 1-31

Reception: **August 7, 2007 5:30-7:30 pm**

The Berkeley Gallery
3 East 43rd Street, New York City
for information Contact Bob Keiber 212-252-2065

WSAC
West Side Arts Coalition
1979

Summer Fling

A fine arts exhibit

June 20 - July 8, 2007

Artists:
Jeanette Arnone • Meg Boe Birns
Joseph Boss • Jutta Filippelli
Pamela Flores • K.A. Gibbons
Linda Lessner • Shirley Z. Piniat
Anne Rudder • Meyer Tannenbaum • Julie Tersigni

Broadway Mall Community Center
96th Street and Broadway, center island, NYC
Gallery Hours: Wed. 6-8pm, Sat./Sun.12-6pm
wsacny@wsacny.org 212-316-6024 www.wsacny.org

Western Connecticut State University Master of Fine Arts in Painting & Illustration

Gallery show to highlight

six emerging artists

Gulgun T. Aliriza	Derek Leka
Dave Cerne	Susan Lozoraitis
Ginger Hanrahan	Betty Ann Medeiros

MFA

Show dates: June 19–July 7, 2007
Opening Reception: Thursday, June 21, 5–8 p.m.

Blue Mountain Gallery
530 W. 25th St., 4th floor
New York City

Hours: Tuesday–Saturday 11 a.m.–6 p.m.
www.bluemountaingallery.org
(646) 486-4730

WESTERN CONNECTICUT STATE UNIVERSITY

181 White Street, Danbury, Connecticut www.wcsu.edu/graduate

17th Art from Detritus

Recycling with Imagination

Curated by
Vernita Nemec

Through June 24, 2007

Synagogue for the Arts Gallery Space
49 White St. Tribeca, NYC
(3 blocks below Canal betw. Broadway & Church St.)
Hrs: Mon, Wed & Thurs 1-5 pm
Tues 1-7 pm & by Appointment
212 966 7141

Miguel Sansón

"Angels and Masters"

June 5-23, 2007

2.00 PM 7.00 PM

OPENING 5TH JUNE 5.00 PM

Gelabert Studios Gallery
255 West 86th Street (at Broadway)
New York, N.Y.
212-874-7188
www.gelabertstudiosgallery.com

Bugatti

cars and paraphernalia

through June 28, 2007

Allan Stone Gallery
113 East 90th Street, NYC 10128
Tel. 212.987.4997 Fax. 212.987.1655
www.allanstonegallery.com

Art à porter: Art and Fashion at CVB Space

Up until the Pop era, most fine artists scorned fashion as trivial and superficial. Now the two endeavors are such familiar bedfellows that even the lofty Metropolitan Museum of Art regularly mounts couture exhibitions. Such as the present retrospective of french designer Paul Poinet who died penniless in Paris and is now being given the genius treatment.

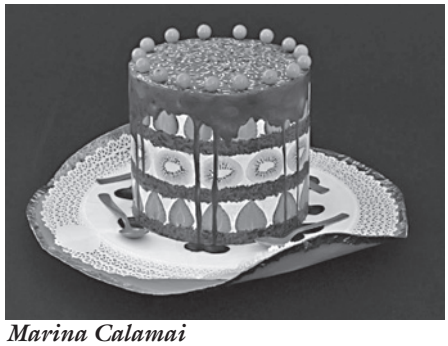
So it seemed inevitable that the intrepid Italian artist/curator Stefania Carrozzini, who interrogates all aspects of contemporary life in her exhibitions for D'Ars IEP International Exhibition Project (Milan, New York, Beijing), would eventually get around to examining the relationship between who we are and what we wear.

Carrozzini's exhibition "Art à porter, seen recently at The Carrozzini von Buhler Gallery/CVB Space, 407 West 13th Street, opened with a reception that simulated in the former Meatpacking District (now morphed, miraculously, into "South Chelsea") some of the chic hubbub that Fashion Week brings to once-dowdy Bryant Park.

Artists became part of the show, performing as "living sculptures," or, in the case of Annamaria Cimbal, being photographed standing —like a semi-transparent pedestrian!— in front of one of her realist street scenes, wearing a coat on which the very same painting was reproduced. Other artists, such as Laura Di Mauro, a model turned photographer and painter who produces a product line, and Christine Walli, a former model and TV host turned photographer, straddle both worlds. Here, Di Mauro showed a nude self-portrait in a mirror, twisting her fashionably thin body around to aim her Nikon at the viewer, and Walli was represented by a witty photograph focusing contrasting priorities of an infant wearing a t-shirt saying "Got Milk?" and a woman sporting one saying "Got Shoes?"

Some artists view fashion from a strictly fetishistic angle, as seen in the painter Roberto Corso's submissive's eye-view of a pair of shapely calves terminating in red spike-heels with flimsy thong undies scattered on the floor nearby. Then there are those, like Fabio Savoldi and Marina Calamai, who transform familiar accessories in weird ways: Savoldi with a pink soft sculpture of a pink handbag covered with eyes that might give Claes Oldenburg nightmares; Calamai with a surreal hat that morphs into an elaborately decorated cake dripping puddles of chocolate all over its broad brim.

The widely exhibited veteran book artist and conceptualist Ruggero Maggi, on the other hand, sends up art, fashion, and politics with a collage-doctored election poster in which the middle aged male candidate's winning grin is transformed into a licentious



Marina Calamai

leer by the close proximity of a comely model wearing only a necklace and coyly hiding her pubis with her hands. By contrast, the painter Milvia Botticelli displays a more demure attitude toward fashion in a semi-abstract composition wherein three faceless, austerely stylized figures, one wearing a floral fabric collage costume, stroll amid cubistically fractured city buildings.

Also included among the unique fashion statements in this gem of a show were: Giacomo Cavina's photo-assemblage juxtaposing a child with a painted face and a miniature chair; Sofia Rochetti's exquisitely refined paintings of volumetric abstract forms (suggesting, in this context, bolts of fabric sprouting thorns); Anna Galli's oversize necklace incorporating Matisse-like nudes cut-out copper; and heart-shaped stone jewelry by the sculptor Franco di Pede. —Ed McCormack

Encountering Beauty in Sometimes Surprising Guises

West Side Arts Coalition artists and co-curators Lucinda Prince and Robert Schultheis defied the current cult of ugliness with "Observations on Beauty," seen recently at Broadway Mall Community, on the center island at Broadway and 96th Street.

The translucent hues and sensual shapes in Gloria R. Pearl's abstract oils recall Gorky. However, Pearl's melt-in-your-mouth color combinations and gracefully linear contours suggest human anatomical and botanical forms, two major sources of beauty. Sacchi Shimoda, on the other hand, approaches the theme from a more ironic angle in "Power of Beauty," an emblematic geometric composition in which a pair of exaggeratedly full, feminine lips is juxtaposed with a dollar sign, a swastika, and other symbols. (Perhaps Shimoda is pointing out that beauty is still a slippery commodity!)

Lucinda Prince finds beauty in obscure desert spaces, punctuated by the cubist architecture of pueblos, where strong contrasts between light and shadow lend her realism an austere abstract quality. By contrast, Prince's oil of clustered red peppers casting their shadow on a wall reveals a more piquant side of her highly refined aesthetic sensibility.

Pattern piled on pattern animates the ornate still life compositions of Olga Radjapova, in which lemons, plums, cherries, and other fruits actually appear enmeshed in elaborately detailed wallpaper and other "backgrounds," swarming the picture plane. Radjapova's intense patterning makes her compositions take on a life resembling molecular activity. An opposite simplicity is seen in YooKan Nishida's grid of six same size canvases, each featuring a single image of a stylized animal or object. Evocative yet essentially abstract, Nishida's diminutive compositions employ a palette of muted yet vibrant secondary hues such as ochers and olive greens to create subtle chromatic effects.

In George Ebbinghousen's series of "Streetscapes," street signs, highway markings, traffic signals, arrows, dividing lines, and other elements of urban life are combined to create geometric abstractions inspired by urban life. One is put in mind of the jazzy early city paintings of Stuart Davis; however, Ebbinghousen has a more somber color sense, juxtaposing deep reds and blues to create a grittier sense of today's metropolitan miasma, even while remaining somewhat aloof by virtue of his strong formal bent.

Like Edward Hopper, Robert Schultheis is a visual poet of urban isolation, albeit with a more lyrical sensibility. Whether evoking a woman and a male runner passing "like ships in the night" on an overcast morning in Central Park against a backdrop of mist-shrouded foliage and apartment towers or an elderly couple adrift and forgotten on a park bench, Shultheis evokes a poignant mood through his subtle compositional and coloristic gifts.

All of Robert Norman Scott's paintings are dominated by abstract lines that call to mind mysterious tendrils, undersea flora, or long, breeze-blown strands of human hair. Flowing in tangled masses, these simple linear elements possess an almost musical grace in Scott's oils on canvas. Another strong painter, Elinore Bucholtz proves that the pure physical and optical properties of lush paint application and sumptuous color can still provide sensuous satisfaction and create autonomous beauty. Even while ostensibly evoking an undersea scene, a kitchen still life, or a landscape, the subject in Bucholtz's acrylics on canvas is invariably the immediate pleasures of paint itself.

Breezy brushwork worthy of a Zen painter and a subject of exquisite simplicity combine to lend Rob van Es's colored ink paintings of birds considerable appeal. That van Es titles the series "Vanitas," traditionally a term for allegorical still life paintings expressing life's transience, adds a poignant note, reminding us that beauty can be fleeting, too.

—Peter Wiley

Freedom is Foremost in Su Goddard's Flowing Watercolors

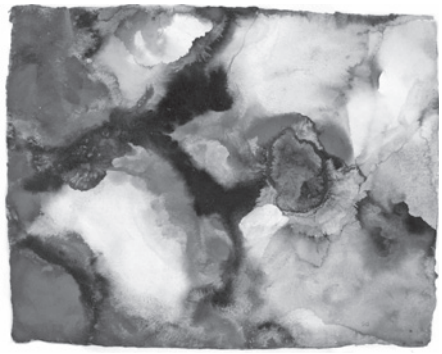
The English painter Su Goddard's family came from Norfolk, a place associated in the early nineteenth century with the "Norwich School," whose most important representative was the watercolorist John Sell Cotman. Goddard is also distantly related by marriage to J.M.W. Turner, another great British artist who, along with his celebrated oils, also produced remarkable watercolors. So she certainly has auspicious origins to complement her medium of choice. And that she grew up in a home with a spacious English garden, where she felt close to nature, could also locate Goddard firmly within the British landscape tradition.

However, Goddard has also been strongly influenced by Japanese and Chinese art, as well as the work of the American abstract expressionist Helen Frankenthaler, and all of these inspirations combine to splendid effect in her aquarelles, on view at Agora Gallery, 530 West 25th Street, from June 1 through 21. (Reception: Thursday, June 7, from 6 to 8 PM.)

Her Asian influences, however, are hardly selfconsciously "multicultural" in the manner of many artists today. Quite the contrary, unlike traditional Chinese scroll painters and Japanese literati artists, who work mainly in monochromes created with diluted black ink, Goddard employs a full spectrum of luminous hues. Nor is her work linear in the manner of Mark Tobey and Morris Graves, who practice a Westernized form of Asian brush painting. Rather, Goddard's compositions consist of areas of color that flow freely over sheets of watercolor in a full-bodied manner that is more firmly grounded in the traditions of European abstraction. What she takes from Asian art is more spiritual than material —which is to say, the privileging of essences over appearances as an abiding aesthetic ethos.

Thus while one might read pastoral references relating to the affinity for nature she developed as a child at play in her parents' English garden into a watercolor such as Goddard's "Citronella," with its vibrant yellow, green, and blue washes (and these might be to some degree accurate, since the title refers to an Asian fruit tree that is often imported and replanted in Europe), Goddard makes no attempt to imitate botanical particulars. She is concerned solely with the overall rhythms of nature rather than its details.

And while another composition, "Nimbi," could allude, as its title suggests, to the cloudy radiance said to surround a saint when on earth, it could just as easily evoke an impression of frothy surf crashing against rocks or any number of other things.



"Nimbi"

One gets the feeling that, like many of our best abstract painters, Goddard intends her titles more as a handy means of distinguishing one composition from another, rather than as a way of imposing predetermined meanings on them that might inhibit imaginative interpretation on the part of the viewer. Thus, when she titles another watercolor in which flowing areas of visceral red hues predominate "Her Passion," one gets the feeling that she could just as plausibly be referring to her passion for painting as to a romantic interlude. Yet that no possible interpretation can be ruled out completely seems auspiciously in keeping with Su Goddard's lively and liberating aesthetic agenda.

—Marie R. Pagano

Clowns Are Universal Symbols in the Paintings of Miles Baker

Clowns and their ancestors, harlequins, have long been a popular theme, interpreted by a diverse array of modern artists, from Georges Rouault to Alexander Calder to Bernard Buffet. None, however, have made them as exclusive a subject as the British artist Miles Baker, whose work can be seen on his website **www.milesbakerclownartist.co.uk.**

With a blithe disregard for the somber rules of artistic self-presentation, Baker likes to classify himself as a "clown artist" and to make such quips as "I've suffered for my art, now it's your turn to suffer it!" Although such self-effacement can be a deceptive facet of British humor, one still might be tempted to dismiss him as a practicing buffoon on a par with the characters he paints. However, the joke would be on you if you failed to see that Baker's visual sophistication far outstrips his verbal wit.

Indeed, for an artist who appears determined not to take himself or his work too seriously, Baker is a surprisingly accomplished painter, working in watercolor in a technique that can remind one of John Marin's breezy cityscapes and the buoyant little aquarelles that Henry Miller dashed off when he wasn't writing his sexy novels.

Subject matter and medium aside, however, Baker might more accurately belong to the tradition of Laurence Stephen Lowry, who lived near Manchester and painted ostensibly simple industrial scenes that some critics dismissed as naive and just as many hailed as important additions to British art. Like Lowry, one suspects, Baker would persevere whether his work was well received or not. Clowns obviously strike a deep chord in him, and he invests them with a human presence that is especially poignant in his painting "In The Dressing Room."

"In the Dressing Room"

The first thing one notices about this image of an old clown seated at his makeup table is that the large mirror is curiously empty. Perhaps this fact perplexes the clown himself; then again, perhaps it does not, since whatever sense of self he might once have possessed may have long ago been subsumed by the comical persona he presents to the world.

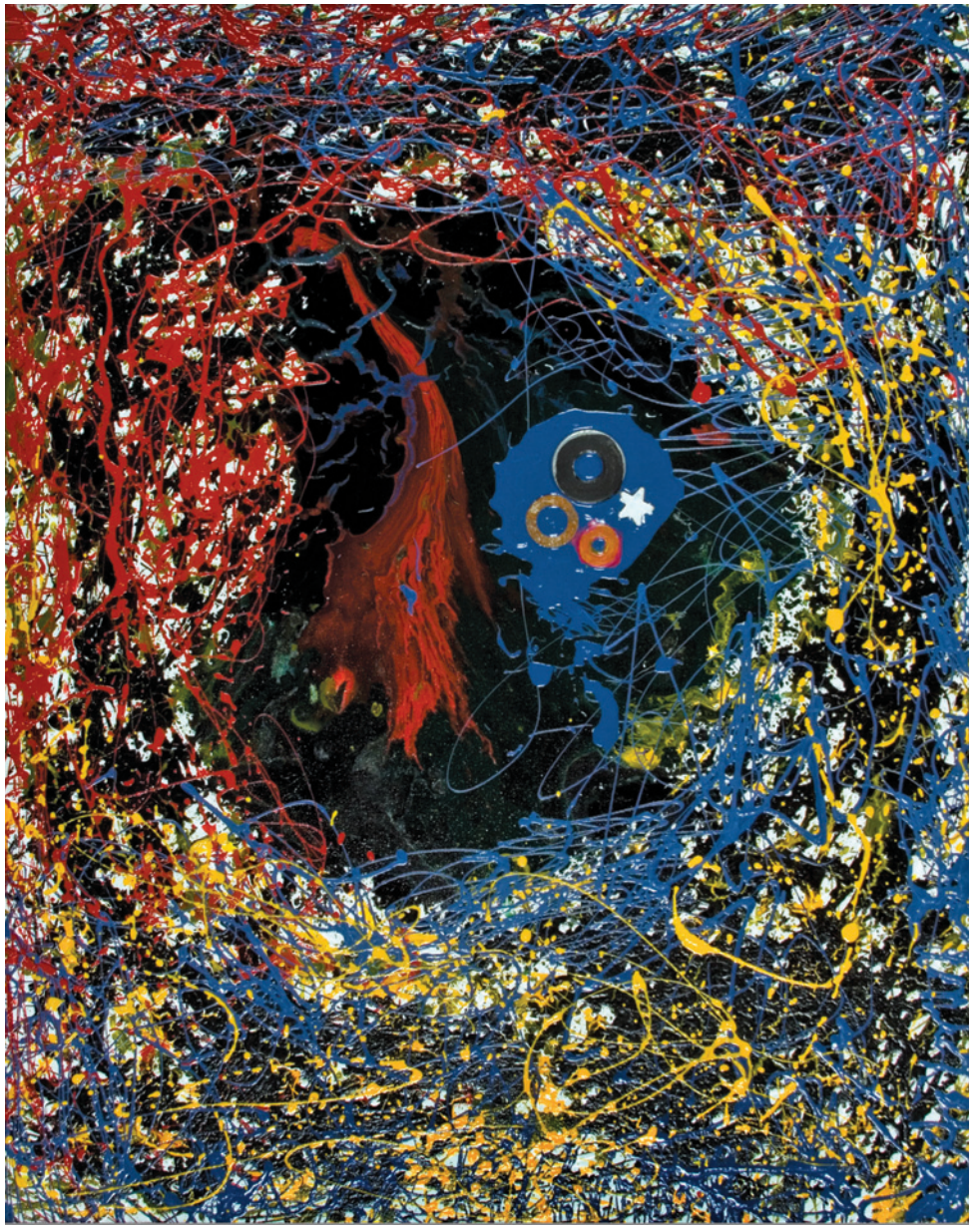
Just as Morandi might have thought it strange for anyone to read too much into his precise arrangements of bottles on a tabletop, one suspects that Baker would have a good laugh to think that anyone might agonize in this manner over the deeper meanings of his pictures. After all, Baker's spare handling of neo-cubistic planes and deft distribution of luminous color areas against expanses of white watercolor paper supplies sufficient visual pleasure to justify his entire enterprise. These purely formal qualities are especially striking in "The Two of Us," where a plethora of bright patches on the costumes of a pair of clown musicians, merging with the equally colorful background, approaches abstraction.

Yet a picture such as "Waiting in the Wings," where the solitary figure of a shabby clown with his face turned away from the viewer evokes an inexplicable emotional impact, proves that there is a lot more to the paintings of Miles Baker than their considerable formal attributes.

—Marie R. Pagano

Dorothy A. Culpepper

Recent Paintings



"Three Planets and a Star"

July 5 - August 4, 2007

MONTSERRAT

GALLERY, 547 WEST 27TH STREET
NEW YORK, NEW YORK 10001
PHONE: 212-268-0088 FAX: 212-247-1717
TUES.-SAT. 12-6PM