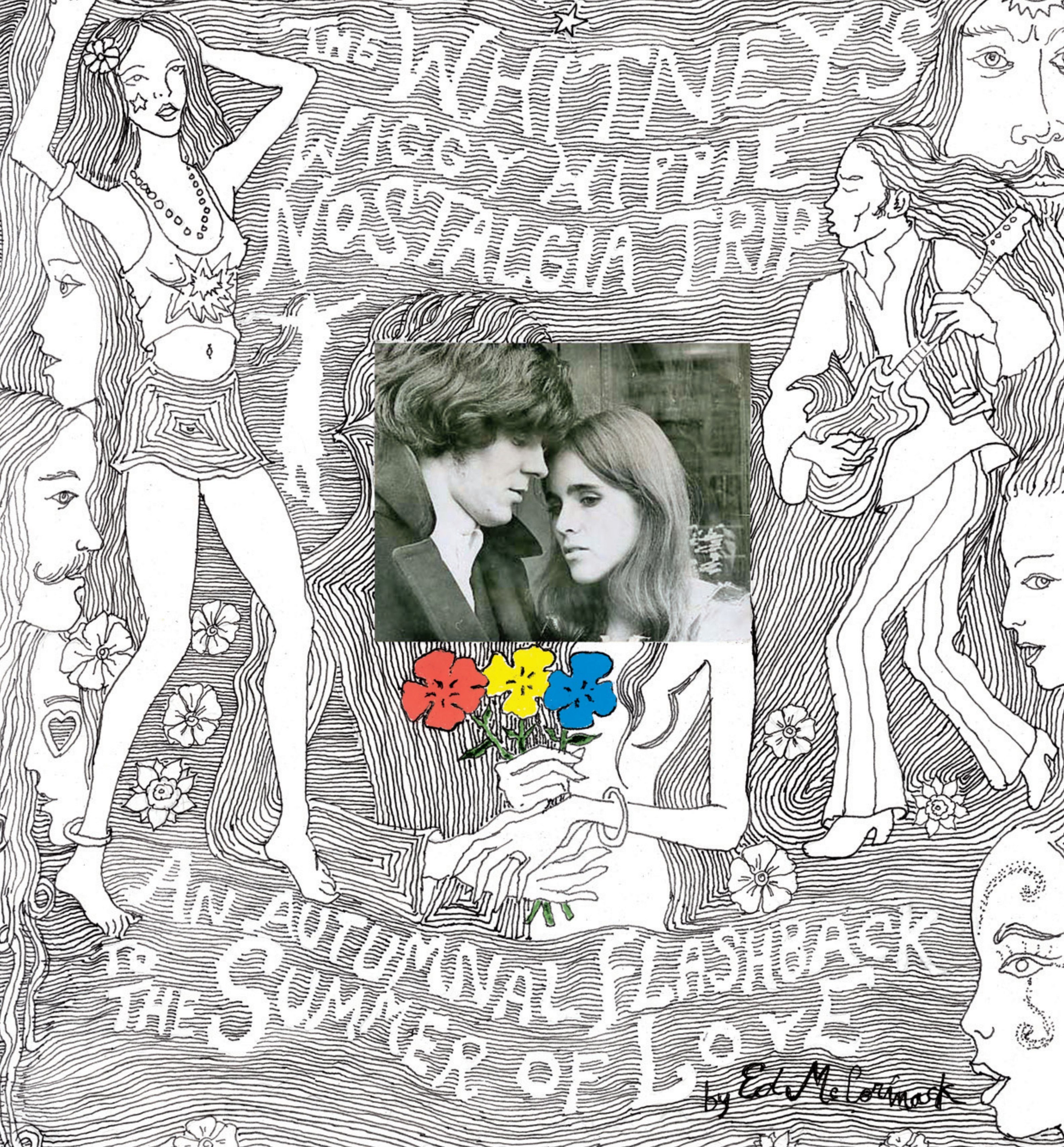
10th Anniversary Issue

SEPTEMBER/OCTOBER 2007 www.galleryandstudiomagazine.com VOL. 10 NO. 1 New York

GALLERY&STUDIO



Danièle M. Marin

"Rescue (Object Lessons)"

Paintings and Installation

"Outside History"

October 16 / November 3, 2007
Reception: Saturday, October 20, 5-8 pm

noho gallery

530 West 25th St., Fourth Floor
New York, NY 10001
(212) 367-7063
Tuesday-Saturday 11-6pm

10th Anniversary Issue

On the Cover:
In 1967, Hoboken's resident genius ***Jim Hans*** *photographed flower children* ***Ed*** *and* ***Jeannie McCormack*** *in the East Village. Forty years later, the retro design team* ***SagittariusAquarius*** *framed the picture in psychedelia for our* ***Summer of Love*** *feature (pg. 16).*

A Message to Our Readers, Mercifully Brief

It hardly seems possible that ***G&S*** has been publishing for a full decade.

In lieu of a windy anniversary harangue, I'd simply like to thank the advertisers who have kept us afloat in our first ten years and the readers who have not only encouraged us with their kind comments but given us a vote of confidence with their subscriptions.

We hope to continue to justify the support we have received from all of you.

Jeannie McCormack
Editor and Publisher

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

Angels of the Kabbalah

TerryKalayjian

September 8 thru
November 8, 2007

Chi Artcentre
44 Main Street
Third floor
Westport, CT 06880
203-226-4300 or
203-451-5779

Also showing at:

RVS Fine Art
20 Job's Lane
Southampton, NY 11968
631-283-8546

BINAH (Understanding/Contemplation of God) 18" X 24" Mixed Media

Anne Bachelier and the Triumph of Painterly Literature

"It is given to few authors to create a world apart, and to populate it as well as illustrate it in the mind," Christopher Hitchens wrote recently, in a New York Times Book Review cover feature on J.K. Rowling, the author of the Harry Potter saga.

For years, I have been saying essentially the same thing, if not in exactly those words, about Anne Bachelier, who is every bit as much of a literary artist as Rowling, although Bachelier's world apart is created with oil on canvas rather than with words.

Indeed, over the years, Anne Bachelier has inspired some of my purplest prose! One simply can't help but become florid in the futile attempt to summon an ekphrasis equal to Bachelier's imaginative invention, which appears to surpass itself with each successive exhibition. And of course we all know that floridness, with its connotations of excess and high color, succeeds far better in painting than in writing.

"Des Fleurs pour l'éphémère"

That said, I still don't trust myself not to succumb, even as I prepare to add more words to the many thousands I have already written, in the attempt to explain clearly and concisely what makes Bachelier's newest solo show, at CFM Gallery, 112 Greene Street, from October 5 through November 3, so altogether magnificent.

For in the end, one simply surrenders to Bachelier's vision, rather than trying to analyze it as if she were just another contemporary painter with a formal agenda to advance. She is, to put it as plainly as possible, a phenomenon of a sort that defies the usual critical terminology. First off, to explicate what has already been stated, she is "literary" in a way that was supposedly verboten in the visual arts up until very recently. Yet she did not only become so after the critical climate of the postmodern era deemed it once again permissible for serious artists to tell stories. Rather, to borrow Hitchens' locution, it was "given" to her long before that.

Working intuitively—and reportedly without the slightest idea of what she will conjure up until she touches brush to the canvas—Bachelier has been faithfully delineating an inner narrative since the very beginning of her career. Apparently, this realm of fantasy, populated by humans, hybrids of human and beast, and other creatures that test the limits of description, has existed for her in its entirety since childhood.

Since many of us had such refuges from humdrum reality early in our lives, this might not seem remarkable in itself, if not for the fact that Bachelier has retained an almost supernatural connection to this inner world and possesses the talent to transcribe its every minute detail in a manner that imbues even its most outlandish peculiarities with a haunting degree of verisimilitude.

Inseparable from Bachelier's ability to

transport us imaginatively is a technique that would be just as sublime if she were painting landscapes, still lifes—or, for that matter, abstractions. However, she chooses instead to put her mastery of luminous oil glazes, impasto, sfumato, and other classical techniques to the service of complexly evocative subjects such as "Des Fleurs pour l'éphémère"a large canvas in her present exhibition that seems the quintessence of her mature mode of expression.

This composition, whose title translates loosely as "flowers of the ephemeral," centers on a female nude of an exquisiteness akin to Botticelli. Being a Bachelier Venus, however, along with her other feminine attributes, she is endowed with a prominent set of horns! Submerged to her thighs in a body of shallow water that tiny fish swim above as well as within (gravity obviously being of little import in this lofty locale), her gracefully upcurving torso emits a white phosphorescence that seems to light the entire picture, while a towering male figure leans over an ornate screen, as subtly translucent as a theatrical scrim, to place a laurel of black roses upon her opulently raven-haired head.

Although these black flowers are a recurring new motif in Bachelier's latest paintings, along with the silky blue ribbons that snake through other canvases, the male attendant crowning the wading beauty is a familiar enough figure in her painted repertory company. Often, if not here, such figures have the heads of anthropomorphic unicorns, as in another recent canvas called "Au Coeur de la nuit," which depicts an intriguing nocturnal encounter between one of those horned creatures of particularly impressive stature and a seemingly awed trio of youthful innocents. In such cases, the synthesis of equine characteristics and human bodies suggests the erotic symbolism attached to male horses in myth and popular psychology as a potent component of a young girl's romantic dreams.

In "Des Fleurs pour l'éphémère" however, the towering male figure leaning over the partition like a puppeteer is of a decidedly more sinister aspect, given his stark, skull-like visage. And the dark wreath that he bestows appears ominously funereal. One can only be thankful in this case that painted—as opposed to mortal—beauty is eternal.

In another recent oil called "Dans un Cercle magique," the central figure is one of the unworldly innocents that Bachelier often casts among other worldly adults of more questionable character and motives—here, a baroquely costumed couple brandishing hand-held masks behind the child's back. What can be glimpsed of the woman's face behind her mask is a ghastly red mass that one can only hope is a second mask, even though the little girl, like all of Bachelier's children, appears shielded from all possible evil by her shining innocence, as she stands dreamily holding an old fashioned hoop in a charmed circle of chartreuse ribbons and delicate fallen feathers.

"Le Bruit de la soie"

Another stylistic signature of Bachelier's is her integration of design motifs that hark back to chinoiserie to enhance the enchanted atmosphere of her compositions, as seen in the ornate frame-within-the painting in "Dans un Cercle magique," as well as in the lacquer-like reds of the elegant furnishings in "Un Peu avant minuit," a major canvas that exemplifies a new emphasis on faces in some of Bachelier's recent paintings.

This is an imaginary portrait of a regal woman wearing a feline half-mask, simultaneously suggesting a fanciful mutation of Sargent's society portraits and Beardsley's deliciously decadent drawings of formidable matrons in their boudoirs or at their dressing tables. Only here, the oval vanity mirror behind the figure is a detailed painting-within-the-painting that functions as a magic window with a view of tiny opulently dressed human figures and their fancifully non-human counterparts going about their mysterious business in a vertiginous setting reminiscent of the craggy cliffs and heavenly altitudes in ancient Chinese scroll paintings.

Although Beardsley was one of the few predecessors who evoked in line a world as singular and insular as the one that Bachelier fleshes out in oils, he usually imposed its particular atmospheres on the writing of others while fulfilling his role as an illustrator. However, while Bachelier can also be a brilliant illustrator when she endeavors to take on a book project (as those of us who eagerly await a lavish new edition of "Beauty and the Beast," forthcominsg from CFM Publications, well know), she almost always draws her imagery from the inner narrative she is forever refining in her drawings and canvases.

Possessing all the virtues one normally associates with fantastic literature, albeit illuminated in oils in a manner that invites comparison with the masters of the past, the ongoing saga of Anne Bachelier is indeed a world apart, given to her to pass along as a precious gift to us all.

—Ed McCormack

Shalom: A One-Man "FusionArts" Movement

Last year the Grey Art Gallery at New York University mounted an exhibition called "The Downtown Show: The New York Scene 1974-1984," which would have been the definitive survey of the vital alternative art world that flourished in the East Village during those years, if not for one grievous omission: the enormously gifted and dauntingly eclectic artist who prefers to be known simply as Shalom.

For while several of the artists included in the show–among them, Sue Coe, Cindy Sherman, and Robert Longo—have gone on to become better known in the art world at large, Shalom's interdisciplinary approach to painting, sculpture, and assemblage far better exemplifies the experimental spirit of downtown art in the seventies and eighties. But, in an era where simplistic "branding" reigns supreme and reputations are made on the repetition of instantly recognizable, easily marketable stylistic schtick, perhaps it is the very complexity of Shalom's vision that has relegated him to cult status while lesser talents have thrived in critical circles, as well as in the marketplace.

Born with the surname Neuman in Prague, Shalom grew up in Israel, after his parents fled Czechoslovakia's incoming communist regime. Most of their relatives had been murdered by the Nazis and they had survived a five year internment in Siberia before escaping by train and boat to the small seaside town of Kiriyat Chaim.

"Growing up in a tiny rural village on the Mediterranean Sea had a strong impact on me and left its indelible stamp on my evolution as an artist and on my art," Shalom asserts. "Had I been raised on this continent, I am certain that my development and artistic vision would have been quite different. I wasn't exposed to hype, to aggressive advertising and to the overwhelming barrage of commodities. I was exposed to camel and donkey caravans and to my mother's aggressive bargaining for food with Arab vendors. It was a very humble and remote environment. There were no televisions to watch, no video games to play, no corner stores to hang about in front of, idly passing the time. I passed the time creating art."

Ironically, Shalom would later embrace all the state of the art technology that he grew up without, as though making up for lost time, integrating it into his art in unexpected ways. As a student at Temple University's Tyler School of Art, even while working diligently to become proficient in traditional studio skills, he told the sculptor Italo Scanga that he wanted to build a bridge between painting, sculpture, and other disciplines. Scanga said he thought that goal "ambitious"—a term which sounds, in the context of their teacher-student relationship, like a patronizing euphemism for "audacious."

But Shalom was already drawing up plans and building models for "a room where structural elements and illusional images melded and a distinction between these images and elements isn't perceivable." And after he transferred from Tyler to Carnegie Mellon University, his dreams became a reality when he teamed up with a fellow student named Paul Szymanski, who was majoring in both physics and mathematics. Szymanski helped him to create the first computerized dimming system with infinite lighting combinations, at a time when commercial systems were severely limited and economically prohibitive. This enabled Shalom to create an environment where, as he puts it, "the perception of space was undefined and painting, sculpture, light, sound and movement all melded into one seamless, intricately woven, self-contained and cohesive whole, which constantly changes and is never repetitious."

"Classical Myth"

After Shalom graduated with dual BFA's in painting and sculpture, no less distinguished a mentor than Elaine de Kooning, convinced him to come to New York. DeKooning admired his work and was supportive, but it was Deborah Fries, his former student at the Parsons School of Design, who was to become his biggest supporter. In the early 80s, when Shalom transformed his former studio in a ramshackle tenement on Stanton Street, on the Lower East Side, into The FusionArts Museum, the only venue in the city dedicated exclusively to "the art genre that best mirrors our twenty-first century, with its constant chaos, multi-sensory bombardment, and ever-advancing technology," Fries became its director. She has since dedicated a good part of her life to supporting and promoting what Shalom defines as "the seamless interdisciplinary integration of all artistic mediums, a merging of painting, sculpture, light, sound, video projection, photography, performance and the written word. It is an art that melds or fuses the various genres into a genre of its very own. Any artistic 'structure' (such as a painting, a sculpture or a performance) can be transformed into a piece of fusion art. Fusion art, by its own definition, is limited only by its creator."

Had Shalom chosen to put limits on his own runaway creativity at the beginning of his career and made his art less difficult to classify, he might easily have become an "art star" on the magnitude of Eric Fischl. Surely his 1969 oil "Classical Myth" reveals a mastery of realist technique that is far superior to Fischl's, and his figures (four images of the same interracial couple in various states of undress in a surreal interior with dissolving walls that give way to a starry sky) are every bit as erotically charged. Shalom's introduction of found objects, such as an actual table and a flower pot, into the seven by four foot triptych also predates Julian Schnabel's paintings incorporating broken plates and deer antlers. But in Shalom's case, these elements were mere hints of the more radically inclusive direction his art was to take, as he continued to ask himself questions such the ones he poses rhetorically in the catalog of the exhibition "Up from the Urban Trenches: Artists and Art Spaces on the Lower East Side, NYC, 1986-2005":

"Why can't artists paint with plastic toys? Why can't artists re-appropriate materials or cultural artifacts and 'paint' with them? Color should not only be about the accepted artist media of paints, pastels, or crayons. Color can be found in the refuse and detri-

tus of our culture and society—plastic toys and detergent bottles, household appliances, telephone wire and computer motherboards. All these materials are archival, colorful, and speak to our culture and the ideas they promulgate."

What Shalom may not have realized back then was that the art world does not always reward those artists who recycle the raw sewage of society rather presenting sanitized parodies of commercial banality in the manner of Pop. But given Shalom's temperament—polite almost to the point of diffidence in his social interactions, but fiercely confrontational in his art—to know that he was going to meet with misunderstanding and even opposition would probably have been more of a goad than a deterrence. For sans the self-aggrandizing flamboyance, there is something of Gully Jimson, the mad artist antihero of Joyce Cary's novel "The Horses' Mouth," about Shalom, as any visitor to his studio, deep within the industrial bowels of Brooklyn, will quickly learn.

When I visited Shalom, he was preparing for two upcoming exhibitions, both of which will run for a month. One is a series of "talking portraits" called "After Kafka's 'Amerika,'" at Gallery Bar, 120 Orchard Street, on the Lower East Side. It will open on September 6, with a reception from 6 to 8 and close with a closing night party on September 19.

"Amerika # 11"

The other show is a collaborative installation of video projections between Shalom and the poet and avante garde historian Richard Kostelanetz, based around Kostelanetz's 1988 film of single sentence stories, "Epiphanies." It opens on September 9 at the FusionArts Museum, 57 Stanton Street, and runs through October 31.

Shalom's cavernous, garage-like loft has the feeling of a funhouse sensorium crammed with an overwhelming profusion of mixed media works. The most sensational is a huge nine-panel piece called "Wall of Cultural Confusion," which because of its huge scale has only been exhibited twice, at the Ukrainian Museum and The Bowery Poetry Club.

Incorporating larger-than-life archetypical East Village punk characters painted in a manner reminiscent of Richard Lindner's monumental S&M fetish figures of the 1960s, along with toys, baby dolls, skulls, masks, telephones, fluorescent lights that flash and change colors, and motion-activated sounds ranging from musical passages to robotic squeals and squeaks to the harrowing wail of howling winds, "Wall of Cultural Confusion" is Shalom's magnum opus. It is the Maximalist answer to Don Flavin's Minimalist neon sculptures and the postmodern extension of Jean Tinguely's auto-destructive kinetic sculptures, created by perhaps the only artist to come out of the East Village art scene who has lectured extensively on art history at The Cooper Union and Yale, among other universities, and is totally aware of his own place in its continuum.

Wall of Cultural Confusion"

Like Tinguely, Shalom has put his interdisciplinary approach into action through public performance—most notably at The Bowery Poetry Club, where accompanied by the cellist Adam Fisher, Shalom manipulated the audio components of "Wall of Cultural Confusion" as though it were an especially cumbersome musical instrument.

A more recent art exhibition "State of Mind: Death Row," at Pratt Manhattan Gallery, on West 14th Street, earlier this year, featured a group of his assemblage paintings that incorporated disemboweled computers and other machine parts to visceral effect but emitted no sounds or flashing lights. Originally inspired by the heroic and finally fatal struggle of his fellow artist and close friend Ed Zeines against a devastating neurological disease, and published in a book that they collaborated on together toward the end of Zeines' life, these pieces combine a neo-Dadaist approach with a wrenching figuration akin to Francis Bacon.

However, his "Kafka" series is comprised of fifteen portraits that talk though the mouths of neighborhood "homeboys," as Shalom refers to them without condescension. Shalom literally watched these kids grow up, going from childhood to young manhood during his decades on Stanton Street, and apparently they were comfortable enough to let him tape record their casual conversations. As in previous figurative series, such as "Talking Heads," "Fusion Golem," and "Womanizer," the faces, with their strident colors and sometimes monstrous distortions ala Bacon-by-way-of-Picasso, are more symbolic than specific. The "portrait" part is in the sound-bites, giving a fractured yet vivid picture of the particularly gritty "Amerika" of these street kids, who invariably greet each other with the "N-word" and face an uncertain future with the false bravado of gangsta rappers.

Although the ambitiousness and complexity of his oeuvre has doubtless delayed Shalom's receiving the widespread recognition he so obviously deserves, things seem to be looking up nonetheless. An overseas annex to the FusionArts Museum (to be known as "If," for International FusionArts) is currently under construction in Shalom's country of origin, Czechoslovakia, and plans are in the works to replace the present venue on Stanton Street with a brand new nine-story FusionArts Museum, scheduled to open in 2011.

According to Shalom, its walls will be "responsive to touch," the exterior will change colors, and any number of other technological features much too state-of-the-art for a Luddite like myself to conceive of, much less describe, will make it "the most unusual building in the city."

—Ed McCormack

Marie-Hélène Beaudry at Caelum Gallery: Scenes from the Life of a Living Doll

The little girl with the thick brown pigtails in the black and white polka-dot blouse and bright red skirt has an eerie, fixed smile on her face, as she romps on the seashore, sometimes in the company of a double, who could either be her twin or one of those imaginary friends lonely children sometimes conjure up as playmates.

The latter possibility would seem especially likely, since the little girl is actually a doll and is therefore somewhat imaginary herself, being a repository for the imaginations of others. However, she is "a living doll"—not in the way that term is usually meant, as a signifier for "cute" (she seems too complex a character to be summed up with such a saccharine word), but in the most literal sense: a doll that has actually come to life, like Pinocchio, the little puppet in Carlo Lorenzini's nineteenth century morality tale for children, whose nose grew whenever he told a lie.

Like Pinocchio, too, the little doll-girl who serves as the protagonist of Marie-Hélène Beaudry's new series of paintings at Caelum Gallery, 508-526 West 26th Street, from October 16 through November 3 (with a reception on October 18, from 6 to 8 PM), is engaged in a sequence of picaresque adventures. However, one does not get the sense that its denouement will teach her (and us) some moral lesson. For Beaudry is a quintessentially postmodern painter, and postmodernists in both visual art and literature do not go in for denouements. Nor do they generally like to offer pat prescriptions regarding right and wrong.

Three paintngs from the "Life is Doll" series

So rather than a morality tale, what this widely exhibited and celebrated Quebec artist's fifth solo show at Caelum gallery suggests is a nonlinear existential fable as devoid of closure as the DVD by Beaudry that runs continuously on a video monitor in the gallery in tandem with her paintings. It is called "Life is Doll," and features a succession of people in the Beaudry's studio (where some of the same paintings as in the gallery can be seen on the walls), seated on a little vehicle with wheels—a "dolly"?—attempting to answer a question posed by the artist: "Why is Life Doll?"

Perhaps because of the artist's French Canadian accent, and because some of the people being interviewed might also be more fluent in French than English—not to mention that the question would also make more sense that way anyway—most of them seem to take the word "doll" as "dull." (That English is obviously a second language for the artist and for at least some of the interviewees causes a slight cognizant dissonance that makes the pun go down easily!)

The one exception is a bodacious younger woman who bursts into a raucous version of the song, "Black Satin Dolls," then grows more subdued and says, "Life is a doll, and like a doll, you should take care of it..."

The others, however, almost all offer earnest explanations of why life is or isn't dull, making the entire tape an intriguing series of non sequiturs that reminded this reviewer of the tongue-in-cheek "screen tests" that Andy Warhol used to conduct for prospective "superstars" at the Factory. Only, unlike Andy's preening exhibitionists, the people in Beaudry's video seem infinitely more thoughtful, as they respond to the question, as though to defend life itself ("Why is life dull? I don't think so...I find it painful sometimes, but not dull," says one man).

Very often video and painting don't work together very well, each distracting from the other; but in this exhibition the two disparate mediums meld perfectly, the indeterminacy of the interviewees, as they ponder the issue of ennui, complementing the interestingly "unfinished" quality of the paintings, wherein even the waves often appear tentative, as they roll up to the shore like murky gray shadows. Like the shadows on a sleepless child's bedroom wall morphing into monsters, at times the shadowy surf in Beaudry's painting can appear almost sinister, as though its undertow could seize the doll-child by her ankles and drag her out to sea; or as if one of its waves could rear up to engulf her forever in the general overcast gray of the painterly day.

The child, however, appears fearless, even Napoleonic, as she sits in one picture astride a toy lamb, sporting a floppy, feathered hat like that of a Cavalier, with a much smaller Barbie-type figure dangling from one hand like some vanquished foe or trophy in a War of the Dolls. Or, in another, appears to dunk a somewhat larger bald baby-doll in the water as though to baptize or drown it, all the while regarding the viewer with those big, not-quite-innocent eyes and that familiar fixed grin. Or, in yet another, appears impish, smiling her weird little Howdy Doody grin as a gust of wind lifts her red skirt to reveal her blank little doll buttocks, while her double gawks mischievously on the beige beach, with the vast gray sea filling the entire horizon like a silvery sky.

Indeed, like Luc Tuymans and Marlene Dumas, Marie-Hélène Beaudry has a way of using close-valued colors to blur the boundaries and distinctions between forms, making one thing look like another, creating a sense of ambiguity that can charge the most ordinary moments with an atmosphere of anxiety or even sublimity.

Such moments exemplify magic that is possible in painting, the only medium besides poetry in which a perception of something ostensibly real can metamorphose from concrete to fanciful in the time it takes to traverse the short distance from the brain to the hand.

In fact, these pictures are invariably as much about the subtle little felicities of painting as whatever they purport to depict. Just as her brushstrokes are simultaneously surrogates for the flow of water and objects of delectation in their own right, the size of her paintings in relation to the body of the viewer says something as actual and abstract as the spaces she evokes within the confines of the canvas, demonstrating the conceptual complexity that makes Marie-Hélène Beaudry a consistently fascinating artist.

—Ed McCormack

Alex Kirkbride at Hammer Galleries

Certain British artists have always had a way of making us see our country and our culture with fresh eyes. Some of Charles Dickens' most vivid nonfiction writing was inspired by a five-month tour of America that he undertook in 1841. After visiting the notorious New York slum known as Five Points, Dickens wrote: "Debauchery has made the very houses prematurely old. See how the rotten beams are tumbling down, and how the patched and broken windows seem to scowl dimly, like eyes that have been hurt in drunken frays."

Some credit the English author's dispatches from our lower depths with starting the American pastime known as "slumming." Soon after his American Notes appeared in print, well-to-do New Yorkers with police escorts in tow took to touring Five Points, eager to see with their own eyes the tenements, dives, and dance halls where "poverty, wretchedness, and vice" were rife.

"Bubba, Greg and Julie's Pool, Crystal River, Florida" 4th May 2002

More than a century later, the fascination of young London mods with American music, particularly that of African-Americans, inspired the phenomenon known as British Blues. Through imitation, "the sincerest form of flattery," Pop bands like The Yardbirds and The Rolling Stones rescued the legacies of old bluesmen like Howlin' Wolf and Muddy Waters, making them living folk heroes—and finally concert draws—in the land where their native gifts had been long ignored.

The Pop connection continues in "Elvis Presley's swimming pool steps, Graceland, Memphis,Tennessee" a fascinating image by the award-winning British underwater photographer Alex Kirkbride, known for his work in National Geographic, Vogue, and The New York Times Travel and Leisure section, among numerous other consumer magazines and photographic journals. However, the 32 limited-edition photographs of Kirkbride's series "American Waters," on view at Hammer Galleries, 33 West 57th Street, from October 8 through November 1, go far beyond popular culture.

Deciding that he wanted "an immense creative challenge," Kirkbride set out in an Airstream trailer with his producer and partner, Hazel Todd, on a three-year photographic journey across America. They traveled over 100,000 miles, covering all 50 states, where Kirkbride photographed everything from coastal waters to rivers, lakes, creeks, and man-made bodies of water.

Among the latter, "Bubba, Greg and Julie's pool, Crystal River Florida" outdoes even Elvis' palatial swimming-hole for Vegas-style surrealism, with what appear to be four furry white llama legs rising from its tiled floor to meet its own reflection above, like some metaphysical visual conundrum by M.C. Escher.

The aqueous atmosphere that pervades the entire body of work is every bit as mysterious as that in the 1992 film, "Waterland," starring that other accomplished Englishman, Jeremy Irons. In "The Dentist's Chair, Blue Springs, Waldron, Indiana," the object of the title and its adjoining instrument unit, rusted and dripping with moss, loom like underwater creatures in the spooky blue-green haze. Equally unsettling is "1930's Workman's Tools, Lake McDonald Glacier National Park, Montana," where several shadowy shovels jut out of the subterranean soil like giant mushrooms. Both pictures provoke harrowing visions of entire populations fleeing a flood of biblical–or perhaps New Orleans—proportions.

Other photographs focus dramatically on a stolen and abandoned car floating nose-up in a flooded quarry; a view past choppy waves of thick gray smoke issuing from the stacks of a distant power station to merge with an overcast El Greco sky; and even a whale placenta—an image that one might not expect to see in several lifetimes!

All of the images in "American Waters," the first photographic exhibition at the prestigious Hammer Galleries in almost two decades, reveal Alex Kirkbride's special gift for investing both the unusual and the familiar with a haunting beauty. What his pictures tell us, above all, is that nothing is ordinary, under the sun or under the sea.

—Ed McCormack

"Salon 2007": An Interdisciplinary Survey of Postmodern Styles and Tendencies

Large, jostling group shows such as the West Side Art Coalition's recent survey of "fine art, photography, and craft arts," "Salon 2007, frequently offer something for everybody; but few offer as many works of exceptional quality. Seen at Broadway Mall Community Center, on the center island at Broadway and 96th Street, this exhibition was jam packed with local talent. While some artists were familiar, others were new (to this reviewer anyway) and all had something to say about the diversity of contemporary expression in all its guises, styles and mediums.

Ash Almonte, for example, combines floral imagery with gestural drips to create an effective synthesis in an acrylic on canvas called "Development." Marta Vaneva, on the other hand, made an austere geometric statement in a mixed media work called "Passage" that put a new spin on minimalism. Leila Elias alluded to nature, albeit in the most subtle manner in another mixed media piece called "Hand of Winter," with twigs and other textural matter afloat in a pale color field.

Emily Rich demonstrated the ongoing vitality of Abstract Expressionist paint handling, even when it alludes in a more postmodern manner to other art, in her intimate acrylics on canvas inspired by Christo's "The Gates" project in Central Park. Olga Radjapova's still "Fantasy" took still life into the realm of the Neo-Baroque with an extraordinary detailed delineation of flowers, leaves, and fruit in an ornate vase. Frequent exhibitor and sometime abstractionist Meg Boe Birns pushed her figurative mode to the tactile hilt in a charming small narrative painting called "Sharing a Toboggan at the Tivoli Gardens." Marsha Peruo proved that monochromes can be as compelling in a Western gestural mode as in Zen ink painting, in her series of black and white abstract monoprints on paper and on panel. Joseph Boss employs rhythmic strokes and a subtle range of browns and yellows in his intricate composition "Intensity," with its central concentration of rectangular shapes. K.A. Gibbons' oil on canvas "Fireman's Memorial (in setting sun)" was notable for capturing the golden glow of dusk light on a monument and background buildings, as well as for strong forms that were pleasing for their sheer abstract qualities.

Can a handmade placemat and coasters constitute a work of art—especially when their creator prefers to be billed as "Georgianna's Gifts"? After considering that this would not present a problem in Japan, where everyday objects are afforded the same aesthetic consideration as painting and sculpture, one had to conclude that the simple domestic items on view were exquisitely designed and therefore worth judging on face-value.

Shirley Z. Piniat's oil "An Incident" presented a group of men moving in unison, painted in lively expressionist strokes, all wearing identical fedoras, their lockstep merging constituting a witty comment—at least for this viewer–-on conformity. Another figurative statement comes across strongly in "Mexican Standoff," a mixed media collage by Sima Schloss, in which one can't help reading significance into the fact that the figures are composed out of newspaper. The content of Janice Wood Wetzel's "At the Venezia Opera House," a digital card print of a masked figure set against picturesque architecture, recalls Fellini.

Floral forms take on an emblematic Pop quality in the oils of Carolyn Kaplan; yet rather than reaching for irony, the artist exploits the subject's sensual expressive possibilities. Melting figures in a bizarre fragment of landscape set adrift like an iceberg from the mainland were among the intriguing anomalies enlivening two Neo-Surreal oils by Eduard Chernukhin entitled "Rebirth" and "Flight." Equally dreamlike, albeit in a more naturalistic manner, Elinore Bucholtz's verdant landscape,"Daylight in the Garden," projected an overall sense of pastoral serenity. Landscape took on a more formal quality, akin to John Marin, in two watercolors by Madi Lanier composed with a harmonious synthesis of line and color wash.

Although he has recently moved on to a new series, reviewed elsewhere in this issue, Meyer Tannenbaum showed abstract paintings from his previous series, "Soft Impact," that reflected tellingly on his ongoing concern with pure form and color. In her poetically titled watercolor "Parrot Tulips Calling," Margo Mead seemed to capture the moment when flowers in a vase begin to wilt, inducing poignant intimations of mortality. Elke Albrecht suggested another kind of flux in the breezy works she titles "Oilsketch 1" and "Oilsketch 2," where spare abstract gestures play host to a brash beauty. Leanne Martinson's two abstract yet figuratively suggestive oils on paper from her "Women's Group" series are distinguished by a muscular spontaneity akin to that of Charles Cajori's, albeit informed by Martinson's own, inimitable painterly ecriture.

Dramatic tonal contrasts provide considerable pleasure in Astrith Deyrup's "Evening on the Hudson-Nyack," where silhouetted trees stand out starkly against a luminous pink, yellow, and blue sky hovering over mountains and a calm body of water. Anne Rudder's totemic forms, stars, eyes, and other personal symbols combine with her gemlike colors to evoke a magical private world in her oil "Ziggurat."

The monotypes of Susan Daniels, such as "Gingko on Hudson Street," are richly imagistic affairs, embellished floral imagery and Asian allusions that add a poetic component to enhance their considerable formal attributes. While one could appreciate Berik Kulmamirov's oil "Unequal Partners" solely for the artist's way with natural textures and details, the incongruous juxtapositioning of a sheep and a wolf, combined with the hint of menace in the title, creates dramatic tension, suggesting that "The Call of the Wild" could abruptly disrupt this contemporary "Peaceable Kingdom." By contrast, Irina Gorodetskaya's two color photos on silver gelatin paper, "Inspiration" and "Rainbow Reflections" celebrate natural grandeur of subjects such as mountains and waterfalls without reservation.

Carole Barlowe's skillfully uninflected style could suggest a kinship with Milton Avery in paintings such as "Green Kite" and "Red Hydrant." However, Barlowe is a much more restrained colorist, employing the bright hues in the titles sparingly as piquant accents in mostly monochromatic compositions notable for their striking simplicity. Lori Lata's oil on canvas "Still Life with Parrot Lamp" is a semi-abstract tour de force, limned in subdued, harmonious hues. Then there is Carolyn Reus, whose digital photographs impart a magical quality to mundane subjects— a cat scratching at a basket, skyscrapers soaring heavenward, the leaping waters of a fountain—enabling us to view them from a new perspective.

–-Maureen Flynn

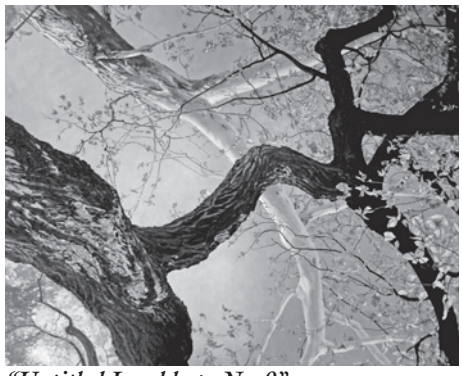
James Kandt's "Abstract Realism": Best of Two Worlds

In contrast to many artists today, who begin showing their work right out of art school, James Kandt has been painting for many years, but has only recently begun exhibiting. While working as an art director for a company in Hollywood that was a pioneer in the development of computer animation, and later running his own design firm, Kandt patiently perfected his technique until he felt ready to share his work with the world.

The results of his long creative hibernation can be seen in "Elemental Realms," at Agora Gallery, 530 West 25th Street, from October 26 through November 15, with a reception on Thursday, November 1, from 6 to 8 PM.

Kandt's "Landshape Series" evolved from his longterm interest in abstract painting. As with many artists of his generation, one can only assume that his primary influence was Abstract Expressionism, the movement that put American painting on the map. However, the personal synthesis that he has come to refer to as "abstract realism" also harks back, in spirit if not in style, to earlier artists like Arthur Dove, Marsden Hartley, and Georgia O'Keeffe, pioneering modernists who never abandoned their roots in nature.

The oil on panel that Kandt calls "Untitled Landshape No. 5," in particular, is reminiscent of O'Keeffe's famous painting of a pine tree viewed from the forest floor for its vertiginous perspective. Kandt, however, combines a finer focused photorealism with a nearly monochromatic palette of earth tonalities to make his painting simultaneously more specific and abstract than that of his predecessor. And by violating the old academic rule that an artist should avoid "monotony" by never painting in a perfectly square panel, Kandt lends his 48" by 48" composition a sense of limitless space that actually enhances its abstract qualities.



"Untitled Landshape No. 9"

The paradox of the particular merged with the stringently formal is very much at the heart of Kandt's abstract realist style, which makes intimate capital of the surfaces of the trees that are his sole subjects, even while distancing them somewhat from the conventions of realism by virtue of his coloristic restraint and dramatic compositional cropping. Photography and computer manipulation also play a part in the early stages of his oils, enabling him to work out formal solutions regarding color and compositions before putting brush to panel.

Yet, for all the deliberation that precedes the painting process, Kandt's compositions finally achieve a dynamic sense of "push and pull" that is very much akin to Abstract Expressionism. However, the painter of that school with whom he appears to have the most in common is Franz Kline, best known for his black and white calligraphic abstractions, which appeared spontaneous but were actually carefully planned and executed from sketches that the artist projected onto the canvas with an opaque projector. It seems a logical evolution from that kind of process to Kandt's abstract realism, in which the tree-trunks and branches, although meticulously delineated down to the most detailed textures of the bark, display a thrusting velocity every bit as dynamic as Kline's girder-like black forms.

Like Andrew Wyeth, who once stated that his ostensibly realist paintings were full of "little abstractions," James Kandt succeeds splendidly in having it both ways.

—Maurice Taplinger

Dark Edibles: The Still Lifes of Derrick Guild

That the Scottish painter Derrick Guild exhibits at Allan Stone Gallery, 113 East 90th Street, the venue that, in a previous location, discovered Wayne Thiebaud and continues to show his work, is worth noting in passing, since, like Thiebaud, Guild makes paintings of food a large part of his oeuvre. There, however, the resemblance ends, as anyone who saw Guild's recent solo show knows; for Guild's paintings are of another order entirely.

Unlike Thiebaud's famous pictures of pies and cakes, with their succulent impastoed surfaces and kandy-kolored auras as delicious as the confections they depict, Guild's old masterly oils, "Fudge Doughnut" and "Iced Pastry," look like lethal caloric bombs, afloat on shiny black backgrounds that lend them a sinister psychological gravity, even as they appear to defy physical gravity. While Thiebaud's presentation of his subjects in rows, as mass manufactured consumer goods, got him erroneously lumped with the Pop movement early in his career, Guild's work unmistakably harks back to seventeenth Dutch still life, as the critic Jon Blackwood points out in the hardcover book that served as the show's catalog, also citing Guild's "lifelong interest in Spanish painting."

Each of Guild's edibles is isolated starkly against the same black ground and is sharply focused in the manner of a warts-and-all portrait. Some, such as "Potato-Sweet Potato" and "Parsnip Turnip" appear to be mutant hybrids; yet they are melded by the painter with such seamless panache that we almost take their anomalous features for granted.

Guild also has a way of making you think of a human brain when he paints a cauliflower, even though he paints it verbatim, with no apparent attempt to put a surreal spin on things. His objects simply resonate with all kinds of weird associations. His "Ham," for example, has a grisly amputated presence that could turn a carnivore into a vegetarian; his carrots and potatoes summon up turds or medieval clubs without Guild having to hit you over the head with picturesque symbology in the manner of, say, Odd Nerdrum.

Perhaps Guild's most grotesquely evocative painting is "Large Chicken, 2001," about which Jon Blackwood makes some good points in his catalog essay, when he writes, "On one level we are confronted with a chicken carcass, rendered typically in a hyper-realistic fashion yet, on another, we are confronted with evidence of an intense creative struggle to capture a difficult and decaying subject."

"Potato-Sweet Potato," 2006

No doubt, there's a lot of decay and more than a hint of morgue-slab mortality to be plumbed here. But having met Guild and his raunchy crew of Scottish drinking droogies, who reminded me of something out of an Irvine Welsh novel when they were in town for a previous exhibition at Allan Stone Gallery, I can't help believing that there's also an undercurrent of perverse bad boy humor to this plucked, splayed chicken corpse, which thrusts its gaping cavity in our faces like one of those clinically gynecological fold-outs in lower-rung men's magazines like Hustler.

Without departing in any ostensible way from a venerable tradition, Derrick Guild can make the desperate sensation-mongering of trendy contemporaries like Damian Hirst and John Currin look like child's play, by virtue of the visceral impact he imparts to simple still life subjects. As darkly unique in his own way as the late Gregory Gillespie, Guild is one hell of a realist .

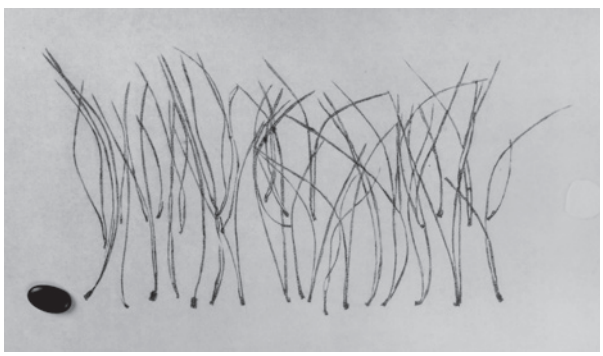
—Ed McCormack

Prado de Fata: A Spanish Artist's Take on Zen Aesthetics

The qualities inherent in Asian art, and particularly Zen Buddhist art, are difficult for a western artist to emulate without succumbing to stereotypes and imitation. Far too often, non-Asian artists who study Sumi-e painting, for example, end up producing second-rate orientalia that does a disservice to both the rigorously disciplined art that inspired it and their own artistic individuality.

In the case of the Spanish-born artist Prado de Fata, however, exactly the opposite is true. De Fata, who learned drawing, oil painting, watercolor and printmaking at academies in Madrid, but also incorporates her studies of Sumi-e, Zen philosophy, Japanese calligraphy, and raku in her work, achieves a highly original synthesis of Zen spirit and Minimalist Aesthetics in her solo exhibition, "When the Print Speaks to the Stone," at Jadite Galleries, 413 West 50th Street, from October 4 through 27.

Rather than imitating Zen art of the past, or appropriating its more exotic mannerisms, de Fata filters its essence through her own sophisticated contemporary sensibility. Although her methods, materials, and style, are distinctly different from his, she is akin to Antoni Tapies, the well known older Spanish artist who was also influenced by Zen yet employed more tactile means than the literati painters of ancient China and Japan in his ruggedly executed "Art Informel" paintings.



"Metamorphosis 1"

De Fata's use of mixed media, however, is smoother and more spare than that of her distinguished predecessor, as seen in "Metamorphosis I," which was awarded the XIII National Engraving Prize 2005, in Marbella, Spain. Here, the central focus of her composition is a concentration of vertical lines that suggest the spontaneous grace of Asian brush painting. However, they have actually been created with the exacting printmaking medium of aquatint, combined with soft varnish and white on white relief, lending the work a subtle, seductive textural quality.

Yet the raison d'etre of the piece is a small, smooth, black, lozenge-shaped stone placed precisely in the lower left portion of the composition, which creates a focal point as piquant as the black abstract accents in the best works of Joan Miro—another Spanish painter who, although he may not have made a deliberate study of Zen, was a master of simplicity.

Another example of Prado de Fata's exquisite spatial sense can be seen in "Metamorphosis II," where a bold black rectangle that juts off the left side of the composition gives way to an entire cosmos of tiny, scattered black dots anchored by yet another small, irregularly shaped stone on the lower right side of the picture space. Other mixed media works such as "The Zen Garden" and "Meditation" (the latter incorporating a transfer image of a monk in the lotus position) are equally impressive for de Fata's innovative use of etching and aquatint techniques, along with collage, to express her own spiritual essence in harmony with nature.

Encountering them, I thought immediately of a very good American artist I once knew, now deceased, who confessed that while he respected the aesthetic of Zen art, he did not understand it. I wished that he could see the work of Prado de Fata, who makes that aesthetic her own and makes it accessible to us all.

—Maurice Taplinger

Terry Kalayjian's Fervent Evocation of Angels and Alchemy

Although the term is bandied about promiscuously today as a convenient catch-all for anything that cannot be explained in concrete terms (or perhaps one should say material terms, given the bottom line mentality that presently permeates the art world), I think we can all agree that true spirituality is a quality largely absent from contemporary art. This was hardly the case in 1912, however, when esoteric belief systems such as Theosophy and Rosicrucianism enjoyed a vogue among artists, and intellectuals, and Wassily Kandinsky published his text "Concerning the Spiritual in Art," decrying "the nightmare of materialism" and pleading for what he called "an art of internal necessity."

Although many of the ideas that Kandinsky advanced in his passionately argued essay would later be devalued as the twentieth century progressed and formalism in art criticism and the scientific model in the culture at large took hold, they were actually crucial to the development of modern art. For while the larger significance of their work would later be reduced to little more than design concepts by formalist interpretations of the "what you see is what it is" variety (thank you, Frank Stella!), what Kandinsky and kindred spirits such as Kupka, Malevich, and Mondrian strove for was an art that, rather than simply skimming the surface of our world, dared to plumb its deeper meanings.

Terry Kalayjian is one of those rare contemporary artists who still aspires to similar goals, judging from her exhibition "Angels of the Kabbalah," which opens with a reception from 4:30 to 7:30 PM on September 8, and continues through November 8, at Chi Artcentre, 44 Main Street, in Westport Connecticut.

Unlike Madonna, Richard Gere, or numerous other highly visible public personalities who have paid ridiculous sums of money to some new guru of the Kabbalah for a fashionable string to tie around their wrists or posed for photo-ops with the Dalai Lama in order to add a more transcendent luster to their celebrity auras, Kalayjian is no mere spiritual tourist. Besides being an environmentalist and animal advocate, she has been a serious seeker after truth for many years, paying her karmic dues by swimming with wild dolphins, going out on solitary "vision quests" into wilderness areas where mountain lions, bears, scorpions and other creatures roam or scuttle freely, and undertaking God only knows what other arduous and potentially dangerous treks and self-tests on behalf of personal enlightenment.

In her frequent travels throughout the world, Kalayjian also collects crystals and other precious gem stones which, augmented with pastels and paints, form the substance of the mixed media assemblages in her "Angels of the Kabbalah" series, as well as in the related group of works (also in the exhibition) that she calls her "Alchemical Series," which focuses on various vessels to explore the Jungian concept of alchemy as "a symbolic system for the transformation of the human spirit from its lead-like state of ignorance into the gold of enlightenment." (The latter series was actually a precursor of the former one, she told me during a phone conversation, and added—if I understood her correctly—that becoming more angelic should follow as a natural consequence of personal transformation.)

"Tiphtheriel" (Beauty/Compassion/Harmony)

Whether or not one is interested in alchemy, angels, the teachings of the Kabbalah (a Hebrew mystical text that purports to map out the codes of creation, divinity, and the destiny of the human soul) or any other system of thought that can be classified as spiritual, all of Kalayjian's new pieces, but particularly her angelic ones, are possessed of great beauty. In contrast to the equally beautiful but more dispersed compositions of the still life paintings that she exhibited in New York City in 2001, their compositions are emblematic. In each, the semi-abstract form is centered, as in a mandala, and its gracefully flared wing-span provides the dominant presence. But it is the mineral materials themselves, with their contrasting textures, subtle chromatic variations, and degrees of translucency, that lend these works their rarefied qualities. For although some of these stones are quite ruggedly tactile, by virtue of her own peculiar alchemy, Kalayjian transmutes them into ethereal elements of pure light, in the presence of which the attentive viewer feels a sense of the sacred akin to that in religious art of the past.

Indeed, as my wife, the writer and painter Jeannie McCormack, never tires of pointing out during our frequent strolls through the Renaissance galleries of The Metropolitan Museum of Art, what lent those works of the past an undeniable power that still persists today, regardless of how "sophisticated" and jaded many of us have become, is that those by whom they were created truly believed the religious myths that they depict. For artists like the Dominican monk Fra Angelica, especially, these myths were not merely symbolic, but served as the moral and spiritual underpinnings of daily life.

One gets the feeling that Terry Kalayjian takes her own spiritual beliefs just as literally. At least, she seems dead serious when she states that "Angels connect us to the energies of the Divine. They serve as amplifiers to transmit our seemingly small and finite communications to the vast and infinite Divine Mystery."

Perhaps this accounts for the undeniable solemnness and seriousness of purpose in these works, which is something rare to encounter in the ironic precincts of contemporary art, where earnest engagement with one's subject matter, as I have written before, can often seem to be The Last Taboo. Thus, even some who consider art itself a sufficient conduit to certain mysteries, divine or otherwise, may find much to admire and be inspired by in these luminous evocations of angelic grace, each named for a specific heavenly emissary. Even those unable to take a leap of faith and accept as gospel the specific qualities that the artist attributes to astral beings, such as "Adriana," "Ariel," "Hathor," or "Archangel Michael" when she asserts that "each angel is a very specific entity encompassing the energetic aspects of the crystal properties used to create them," will almost certainly find Terry Kalayjian's glowing evocations of divine spirit aesthetically uplifting.

And that, after all, is the true bottom line in art.

—Ed McCormack

Denudation and Redemption in the Digital Art of Keith Kovach

The distinguished art historian Kenneth Clark once made a fine distinction between the nude and the naked. "The word 'nude.'" Clark pointed out, "carries, in educated usage no uncomfortable undertone." However, "to be naked is to be deprived of our clothes, and the word implies some of the embarrassment most of us feel in that condition."

Keith Kovach goes far beyond naked in his digital prints, on view in "Pixel Perfect—The Digital Fine Art Exhibition," at Agora Gallery, 530 West 25th Street, in Chelsea, from October 26 through November 15. (Reception Thursday, November 1, from 6 to 8 PM.)

Kovach literally strips the figure of its skin, laying bare the network of arteries and tendons within with the merciless X-ray vision seen in his startling print "Surprised." Unlike the visionary painter Alex Gray, Kovach does not put a cosmic spin on his unveilings of the inner body; nor does he romanticize them symbolically in the manner of Pavel Tchelitchew's "Hide and Seek." Rather, the aptly named "Surprised" shows us a naked woman crouched on all fours, stripped even of her hair, her flesh as translucent as plexiglass (to say "crystal" would be to falsely euphemize the starkness of Kovach's vision).

One can compare the squeamish effect this image produces in the viewer to the brave photographic self-portraits that the conceptual artist Hannah Wilke made during her final illness, showing a once beautiful woman transformed beyond recognition, yet still possessed of an indomitable human dignity. Kovach, however, strips his figure even of individual identity, freezing it in motion like a startled deer in a setting as sterile as a hospital operating room. The surreal quality is enhanced by an object seen at some distance behind the woman, which appears to be two ragged garments propped on some skeletal armature—signifying, perhaps, that she has only recently been denuded and cast adrift in this merciless space.

"Surprised" is a painful, yet powerful and necessary image to contemplate, for it faces us with our universal fate, and to confront it unflinchingly is to come to terms with the inevitability of one's own mortality.

Other digital prints by Kovach subject the human visage and body to a variety of metamorphoses: In "Bust," the intricate, swirling ribbon-like shapes, loosely enveloping a face, suggest a mummy with its wrappings unraveling. Yet the pair of eyes revealed in the process are startlingly alive and blaze with the suffering and self-knowledge that separates us from more innocent

"Protection"

creatures.

In another print, these same expressive eyes, peering out from a face covered with what appear to be tiny glass squares that cling to it like scales, evoke the term "windows of the soul." Then there is "Protection," in which a full-length figure crouches under a transparent, tent-like structure. In each of these works, Keith Kovach appears to be telling us that we finally retain our humanity no matter what trials life may subject us to, and the evidence of this redeeming vision is made manifest in his print "Greenyoga," in which a nude body merges in perfect harmony with an exotic plant.

—Marie R. Pagano

Harmonious Disparities Dominate ASCA Group Exhibition

Several members of the American Society of Contemporary Artists and their guest, the distinguished Venezuelan painter Vicente Saavedra, explore subtle abstract / figurative conflicts and harmonies in "Contrasts: Action / Inaction," an invitational exhibition selected by Lenor C. Osorio Granado, the Consulate General of Venezuela, at The General Consulate of the Republic of Venezuela, 7 East 51st Street, from September 6 through 31.

Although ostensibly abstract modes of expression predominate, Georgiana Cray Bart stands apart for a still life "Yellow Mug with Purple Berry Box." However, Bart's, exquisite spatial sense and manner of unifying the surface with staccato strokes lends the composition considerable abstract appeal.

Raymond Shanfeld also manages to have it both ways with his alabaster sculpture "The Whale," for only the creature's tale protrudes from the pedestal, resulting in a form that simultaneously functions in purely abstract terms and suggests the result of a well-aimed harpoon.

Complexity contained within a bold formal framework is the forte of Gerda Roze, whose wall-relief paintings combine swirling painterly pyrotechnics with geometric stability. Roze's "Orbit II" has an almost dizzying effect, showing her formal synthesis at its most dynamic.

Stephen Beveridge, on the other hand, exhibits a lyricism reminiscent of the abstract expressionists in "Twill," where swift strokes of radiant hues create a shimmering effect like sunlight on water.

Jan Wunderman combines the vigor of the New York School with a West Coast sense of light and space. Wunderman's oil on canvas, "Franconia Summer" is characteristically sumptuous, evoking the vitality of nature through painterly immediacy.

Jeremy Comins finds his own formal and symbolic surrogates for natural scenery in his sculpture "Landscape," where painted wood shapes stacked within a steel frame are wholly abstract, yet biomorphic in a manner as unearthly as the surreal terrains of Yves Tanguy.

By contrast, Harriet FeBland employs stringently geometric forms in her acrylic paintings, yet still manages to project allusive qualities, as seen in "Nocturne," which makes a strong formal statement with its bold stripes of light and dark hues, while simultaneously suggesting the atmospheric mystery of night.

Frederick Terna is another painter with an ability to invest abstract forms with transcendent qualities, in "Sea of Reeds," where graceful semi-circular forms appear to emanate like auras from a lunar orb.

Two sculptors share an exquisitely reductive formal economy in common, yet distinguish themselves through their own inimitable individual sensibilities:

A former dancer with a lifelong interest in movement, Isabel Shore creates sculptures in which her mastery of traditional anatomy is evident, even when she employs the degree of distortion that distinguishes her bronze, "Ladies on the Corner."

Raymond Weinstein has a gift for imbuing expressively simplified figures with a monumental presence, even while conveying a sense of everyday humanity. Weinstein's walnut sculpture of a single female figure, "La Belle Epoque," commands space by virtue of its statuesque grace, yet projects an affecting vulnerability.

Enriched by guest artist Vicente Saavedra's strong realist painting of a seated nude seen from behind, this ASCA group exhibition highlights one of our more venerable and distinguished artist's organizations.

—J. Sanders Eaton

A Reckless Generosity Energizes the Art of David Tobey

David Tobey, a professional violinist as well as a painter and sculptor, finds excitement and inspiration in unexpected places. Films, for example, have always felt to him "like three-dimensional paintings, all happening across time." When he describes seeing Stanley Kubrick's "2001, A Space Odyssey" as a child with his father, the distinguished muralist and painter Alton Tobey, he makes it sound like a spiritual epiphany: "I was tremendously affected and have never been the same since. I felt and experienced freedom, excitement, my salvation, and even the scope of infinity from the movie."

Growing up in an artistic household in Westchester, where, when he sat in his father's studio, watching him work, he could often hear his mother, the concert pianist Rosalyn Tobey, rehearsing in another part of the house, fed into what he refers to as an "inner world of abstraction and sound. I let my thoughts go wherever they might. Rhythm, motion, color, light structure, dimension and raw emotion were characters in my private theater."

This sense of the creative act as inner necessity, of something which has literally always been second nature to him, is reflected in the title of Tobey's new exhibition "Driving Force," at Pleiades Gallery, 530 West 25th Street, in Chelsea, from September 25 through October 13, with a reception Saturday, September 29 from 3 to 7 PM. (Thirty percent of the proceeds from sales of the paintings, welded steel sculptures, and giclee prints in the show will benefit the American Cancer Society; and on September 25th, "Reaching for the Cure," a painting that Tobey created especially for the same organization, will be auctioned off in a benefit event called "Evening of Jazz," at Le Chateau restaurant at Route 35, Junction 123, in South Salem, Westchester County.)

While it might be a stretch to claim unequivocally that Tobey's long experience as a member of the Westchester Philharmonic and numerous other symphony and Broadway show orchestras directly informs his visual work, his compositions have a fluidity which could be considered musical. He also seems less constrained by purely visual conventions than a lot of other painters, in that he moves rather uninhibitedly between abstract and figurative modes of expression, often combining them within a single canvas.

"Reaching for a Cure," the painting created especially for the benefit at Le Chateau restaurant illustrates this synthesis especially well, with its vigorously linear figures borne along in an abstract vortex of roiling blue forms overlaid by skeins of liquefied red and orange pigment that appear to have been flung onto the canvas in the manner of Jackson Pollock. Here, Tobey is at his most daring, endeavoring, almost by sheer force of will, to merge the heroic manner of classical history painting with the energetic techniques of modern action painting and achieve an effect quirkily reminiscent of the eccentric British visionary William Blake.

"A River View, 2007"

The object toward which the figures in the composition appear to strive as strenuously as marathon swimmers is an emblematic orb, resembling a stylized sun, emitting tactile yellow rays and with a Phoenix-like bird at its center clutching a caduceus, the ancient symbol for healing, comprised of a sword entwined with serpents, used in the logo of the American Cancer Society. The painting conveys a sense of the spiritual struggle that the artist may be telling us must go hand-in-hand with the scientific aspects of healing. It is a subject that a less intrepid painter might hesitate to attempt, given its over-the-top imagery and the impossibility of leavening it with irony.

However, it is one of David Tobey's saving graces, in an artistic climate increasingly hobbled by self-protective careerist caution, to plunge right into the painterly fray, taking necessary risks. And for those who can't get out to the event in Westchester County, there are numerous other examples of his boldness to be seen in the exhibition at Pleiades Gallery. Among the more striking recent ones are the 2007 acrylics on canvas "A River View," and "The Cat and the Fiddle," both of which embed representational subjects within brilliantly colorful, flatly painted forms enclosed by sinuous black outlines in compositions that appear, at first glance, to be completely abstract. In the former painting the image that finally emerges is an aerial view of a jaggedly flowing, pale blue river running through a mostly red landscape that combines neo-Fauvist chromatics with angular shapes reminiscent of Native American tribal motifs; in the latter, a fancifully delineated feline fiddler plays hide and seek among baroquely billowing areas of blue, yellow, aquamarine, orange, crimson and purple hues.

While a less ambitious painter could base an entire career on such paintings, Tobey is a restless experimenter, as seen in "David and Goliath," and "Dancing Totem," two other 2007 paintings featuring narrow vertical shapes with a cursive bent that could resemble totemic semi-abstract sculptures and also appear related to his late father, Alton Tobey's "Curvilinear" series. Indeed, "David and Goliath" could suggest the Oedipal struggle of the artist to break free from his illustrious father's towering shadow and lingering influence. There need be no worry on that score; for although his father was his first teacher, and, along with Picasso and Pollock, had an important formative influence on his work, David Tobey has achieved an aesthetic autonomy that is everywhere evident in this exhibition.

Included are stark figurative expressionist works such as "Premonitions of War" and "War," from 2004, in which puppet-like military figures and frightened mothers clutching their children wander amid a ruined, nightmare landscape, in compositions reminiscent of Goya and George Grosz. Another—again, more cautious—artist might think twice before juxtaposing such images with buoyant, playful abstractions like "The Chess Match" (2007) and other diverse works such as the meticulous canvas "Cosmecium" (2006), with its intricate and meticulous array of cursive calligraphic forms possessed of an almost Persian complexity. Another artist, for that matter, might think it prudent to segregate the paintings from the sculptures, thereby denying the viewer the pleasure of encountering a work such as the welded metal piece "Orchids," with its winning combination of ruggedness and grace.

David Tobey, however, is far too creatively fecund to play it safe by suppressing any aspect of his talent for the sake of the "foolish consistency" that Longfellow once referred to as "the hobgoblin of little minds."

He is a recklessly large talent, and his refusal to discriminate should be looked upon as an act of generosity. —Ed McCormack

An Autumnal Flashback to the Summer of Love

by Ed McCormack

Every writer lives in parallel worlds: the outer world of daily events and the inner world of whatever he or she happens to be working on at the moment. Consequently, I've had one foot in the 1960s since deciding to write about "Summer of Love: Art of the Psychedelic Era," which the Whitney Museum has been hyping like a revival of "Hair", with the DayGlo-swirled profile of a pretty flower child emblazoning the entire sides of city buses and the slogan "a mind altering, must-see exhibition," making it sound like a drug.

Take that sweltering day awhile back when the electricity suddenly went out all over the Upper East Side. Determined not to grope around in the dark, as I had to during the last blackout a couple of summers ago, I waited on line for fifteen minutes outside a darkened hardware store on Second Avenue.

By a gratuitous act of fortune, the gent guarding the door had suddenly become the proprietor of a very exclusive establishment. He sized up eager customers like the doorman of the old Studio 54, before waving them in one at a time. Inside, it was like some claustrophobic, candle-lit den of thieves, the eyes of the clerks fairly glittering with greed. The guy behind the counter even appeared to crane his neck and peer right into my wallet, as I took out two twenties and a five. I knew I was being robbed with my eyes wide open, as he handed me the bag containing two cheap plastic flashlights and two packs of batteries. But I couldn't have been happier with my purchase—even after the lights came back on while I was still in the store, and the hardware guys suddenly looked more shamefaced than sinister.

Ed McCormack didn't want to be seen as "just another drug doodler" but his "City Drawing, 1966" showed all the earmarks of chemical derangement.

For while I had not ingested anything stronger than English Breakfast tea in quite a few years, I had reverted to thinking like Horse Badorties, the ecstatically paranoid protagonist of "The Fan Man," William Kotzwinkle's hilarious hippie-parody novel. So there was no way I was going to surrender my flashlights and accept a refund. Not with the alarming incompetence of the Powers That Be, the bad karma of Con Ed, and the primordial darkness gathering to descend again at any second.

Money, after all, is just paper; easy come, easy go. But light—light is illumination, man!

* * *

I was still under the sway of the Sixties a few days later, in a combination florist and gift shop on Staten Island. The kitten curled up in a little straw basket on a glass display-table looked too cute to be real. Then my wife noticed that it was breathing, the fur above its ribs rising and falling in regular rhythms.

"Isn't that the most adorable thing?" said the nice lady behind the counter. "The fella we order them from made the first one for his mother, because they were putting her in a nursing home and she was heartbroken that she couldn't bring her darling little cat. Did you see the puppy on the other table over there?" (It, too, was breathing.) "They're so popular we can hardly keep them in stock."

While one person's adorable may be another person's nightmarish, I couldn't help thinking that the guy who came up with these things had to be some kind of diabolical genius, like whoever invented those glowing plastic Jesus heads with eyes that follow you around the room.

"Just imagine how much comfort it must give his mother to watch it lie there and breathe," I said to Jeannie, "even if it doesn't wake up when she says, 'Here, kitty kitty.'"

It occurred to me then that the world may be even more surreal now than it was forty years ago, when we were all hallucinating.

* * *

"Now I want to smoke some dope," a sedately dressed matron of a certain age said wistfully to no one in particular, stepping out of the Joshua Light Show installation at the Whitney, where "Summer of Love" (which originated at Tate Liverpool, in England) continues through September 16.

It was the first thing you saw when you got off the elevator: a darkened room with a screen flashing those wiggy amoeba patterns that looked eerie without jamming musicians and gyrating fans to bounce off of. The ghostly drone of The Doors, the decibels down way too low, only made the effect more spooky, like one of Ed Kienholz's time-capsule tableaux.

Isaac Abrams All Things Are One Things, 1967 Oil on canvas 48 x 48 in. Collection of Reed Erickson © Isaac Abrams

Isaac Abrams was "a paisley painter" to McCormack in the 1960s. Now, having his museum moment, his work can be seen more charitably as a hopped-up offspring of Charles Burchfield.

In order to flesh out the flashback, you had to conjure up vintage memories of the Jefferson Airplane, The Grateful Dead, or The Jimi Hendrix Experience, aided by a nearby wall swarming with psychedelic concert posters, most commissioned for Bill Graham's bicoastal Fillmore Auditoriums, where the Joshua Light Show technicians once worked their trippy magic with slides, pans of colored liquids, and projectors.

Although posters had long been replaced by more modern media by the 1960s, they turned out to be an ideal means for reaching the flaky foot traffic in Haight Ashbury and the East Village, where local freaks and runaways mainly hung out on the streets, eager for news of the next concert, Be-in, or orgy. The result was a graphic flowering reminiscent of the Golden Age of the poster in fin de siecle Paris, when Toulouse-Lautrec and Alphonse Mucha were producing their best work.

Mucha, especially, with his willowy femme fatales swathed in ornate Art Nouveau arabesques, had a big impact on San Francisco graphic artists like Wes Wilson, Stanley Mouse, and Victor Moscosco. They, in turn, influenced their counterparts in the "Swinging London" scene, where Michael McInnerney, Martin Sharp, and Michael English were still reeling from the big Aubrey Beardsley exhibition at the Victoria and Albert Museum in 1966.

Along with the underground comics of Robert Crumb, Gilbert Shelton and others also centered in San Francisco, the poster movement produced the most authentic visual manifestations of a counterculture in which rock music was the driving force. Although they also borrowed a few retinal tricks, such as wiggling lines and pulsing colors, from Op Art (the short-lived movement that degenerated into fabric and wallpaper design fifteen minutes after being featured in "The Responsive Eye" exhibition at MoMA in 1965), psychedelic posters were the very antithesis of art world taste in an era dominated by Minimalism. Rather than galleries and museums, their natural habitat was the "head shops" that also offered bongs, rolling papers, incense, lava lamps, patchouli oil, and other accouterments of the stoned lifestyle.

In most cases, the gulf between psychedelic art and gallery art was as pronounced as the one between so-called outsider art and mainstream painting today. For while many younger artists were experimenting with drugs in the 1960s, only those who made a point of calling themselves psychedelic artists made their drug experiences the ostensible subject of their work. While that work attempted to explore limitless horizons of expanded consciousness, its focus was often as narrow, narcissistic, and repetitiously obsessive as that of the isolates and mental patients now being lionized in the outsider scene, where a curriculum vitae of frequent flipouts and hospitalizations is considered proof of "authenticity." Indeed, the boundary between actual insanity and the effects that drugs induce can sometimes appear as fine as the lines in a particularly intricate psychedelic poster or some outsider idiot savant's horror vacui fantasy.

* * *

For this reason, in the late sixties, when I was still primarily a visual artist, I was initially reluctant when asked to participate in one of the first big New York psychedelic exhibitions, at the East Hampton Gallery in midtown, even though my drawings, as described by Chauncey Howell—a prose stylist after my own heart!— in a 1966 review in Women's Wear Daily, displayed all the earmarks of chemical derangement:

"McCormack's deftly drawn creatures are automaton businessmen; slum goddesses with dead faces, quivering buttocks and erect breasts, flaunting their weary pudenda in see-through vinyl; jaded D.O.M. (dirty old men) surfeited and rendered indifferent by the plenitude of prey; feral, egocentric city dogs whose greatest joy is doing their cynical duty where human feet are most wont to tread; and monster automobiles, crowded with clothing dummy passengers, baring their fantastic chromium fangs at each other."

As much as I hated having the term "psychedelic" (which, back then, invariably brought to mind the pointless paisley swirls that acid casualties scrawled in their "trip books") applied to my drawings, the chance to show in a credible uptown gallery and possibly make some sales finally won out over my misgivings about being perceived as just another drug doodler. But I still balked at sharing the walls with the likes of Isaac Abrams, who struck me then as one of the most blatantly kitschy of the paisley painters.

All these years later, however, in the context of the Whitney show, Abrams' oil on canvas "All Things Are One Thing, 1966," which I once dismissed as hippie dreck, now strikes my more forgiving eye as a hopped up descendant of Charles Burchfield's visionary nature compositions, and might be charitably compared to the attempts of certain nineteenth century abstract pioneers to find a visual vocabulary for their then drug-free spiritual epiphanies. One of the few of his ilk to gear his work to galleries rather than the poster movement (as well as the only fine artist of my acquaintance who was willing to admit that he "was turned on to painting by LSD"), Abrams at least makes an earnest effort to apply the conventions of abstract painting to the type of florid visions that only seem to materialize when one is zonked out of one's skull, so to speak. And like Abdul Mati Klarwein (whose busy mandala-like compositions juxtaposing hordes of big-busted Playmate nudes with exotic symbols in apocalyptic Dali-esque dreamscapes, were previously best known as album covers for Santana and Miles Davis), Abrams is not only enjoying a belated museum moment but being featured more prominently in the promotional materials for "Summer of Love" than most of the better known artists who appear to have been included solely to

add unwarranted weightiness to an exhibition conceived primarily as a popular entertainment.

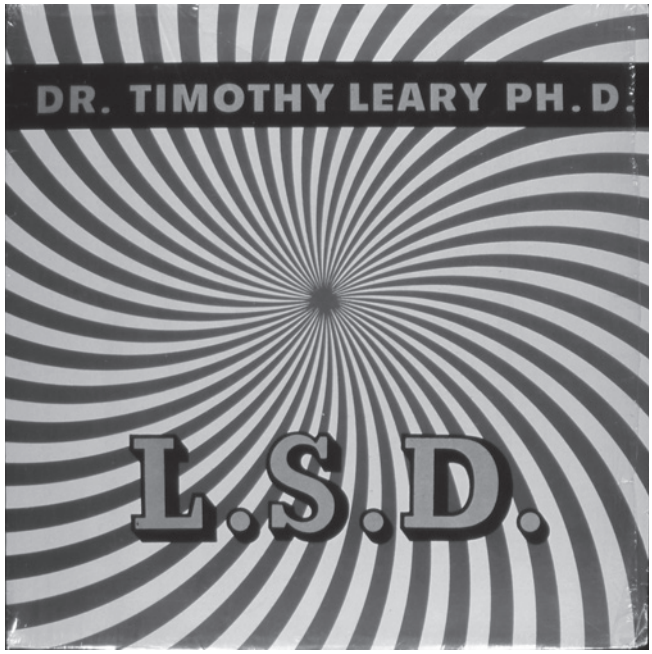
Although she is represented here by a 1996 work called "Infinity Mirrored Room Love Forever," perhaps a case could be made for Yayoi Kusama as a representative wild card of the period, whose events involving public nudity oozed out of the gallery world to become countercultural guerrilla happenings. But the only possible justification for the inclusion of a latex floor sculpture by Lynda Benglis, comprised of flowing rivulets of marbleized primary hues, is that it could suggest the spilled contents of a lava lamp. And while the translucent forms in a poured painting by Paul Jenkins could seem superficially related to the liquid blobs of the Joshua Light Show, they actually address the more sober concerns of second-generation Abstract Expressionism. A print by Robert Rauschenberg seems an equally gratuitous inclusion, despite period sight-bites of Vietnam war protesters and Martin Luther King in his coffin.

Given the overall mood of the show, such artless artifacts as a collaborative effort at abstraction jointly autographed by the Beatles and documented with photos of The Fab Four playing with brushes like kindergarten moptops at the same painting table; or a slapdash watercolor called "Flower Demon, 1966" by Jimi Hendrix; or Janis Joplin's elaborately painted Porsche (parked in the courtyard outside the museum cafeteria) seem much more to the point.

* * *

"Summer of Love" has been criticized for slighting the tumultuous, often violent, struggle for social change that took place in the Sixties, in favor of Flower Power politics and tie-die trivia. Granted, there are no attack dogs or tear gas canisters anywhere to be seen on those groovy bus ads, and the few references to the civil rights marches, the Vietnam War Protests, the Kent State massacres, and other dead-serious events all but get lost amid the trippy feelgood imagery that dominates the exhibition.

That said, it should be stressed that the overwhelming majority of us were shamefully hedonistic and politically passive. Much as we admired our intrepid peers who took to the streets to stop the war or win equal rights for everyone, and got gassed, got attacked by dogs, got thrown in jail, or got their heads busted by riot police, we were too busy smoking dope, getting mellow, and getting laid to join them at the barricades. As someone who once smoked, swallowed, and snorted everything short of his father's ashes and never participated in a demonstration, yet still considered himself to be on the side of the angels, I rationalized my own political passivity with the then-prevalent cliche that the real revolution was in our own heads anyway. (As I was reminded recently, while watching a documentary on the Weather Underground, my own relationship to the so-called Movement was further complicated by a natural workingclass wariness of rich "revolutionaries" without an ounce of streetsmarts who slummed where I grew up.)



Maybe to appreciate the '60s properly you had to be able to see a freaked-out old fraud of a defrocked Harvard professor as some kind of avatar.

Timothy Leary L.S.D. Album cover

I may not have been as oblivious as one clique of freaks I knew, who, when Newark went up in flames in July of '67, took off in a DayGlo van to "go dig the riots, man!" But I was still woefully out of touch with some of the everyday realities that should have made the phrase "Summer of Love" sound ironic.

Of course, it was easy enough to dismiss the activism of media clowns like Abbie Hoffman and Jerry Rubin, who were still trying to revive their dog and pony show two decades later, in the mid-eighties, when I tagged along on their "Yippie vs. Yuppie" debates on various college campuses. (At the podium, Abbie would tear into Jerry for being "sellout" and "about as relevant as Nancy Reagan." Jerry would counter by calling Abbie a "professional protester who needs poor people and wars to stay in business." But in the chauffeured Lincoln town car back to the city, the two friendly enemies would ask after old movement comrades and reminisce amiably about all the hell they used to raise. It reminded me of professional wrestling.)

Nor did anyone I knew take Dr. Timothy Leary seriously when he made his first New York appearance in 1966 and had the chutzpah to bill himself—on the marquee of a former Yiddish theater yet!—as the "Reincarnation of Jesus Christ." But Leary's "turn on, tune in, drop out" mantra was obviously profoundly seductive to others of our generation, who were eager to join what Dave Hickey, in one of the exhibition's catalog essays, refers to as "the republic of freakdom."

Maybe one had to be naive enough to see a freaked-out old fraud of a defrocked Harvard professor as some kind of avatar in order to experience the sixties properly. But unlike those who'd been recruited by the Beatles and the media blitz, those of us who'd been turned on earlier by the alienated stance of the Beat Generation (all, apart from future guru Ginsberg, cranky existentialists), would always find the communal aspects of the hippie scene hard to swallow. They smelled too much of conformity, the dirtiest word in the Beat vocabulary.

Indiscriminately embracing every mind-blown freak as a brother just because he had long hair and did the same drugs as oneself, or wallowing in the mud at Woodstock with hordes of semi-comatose freaks, muttering "Groovy" and "Far Out" as indiscriminately as yuppie kids today say "Omigod" or "Whatever," held little appeal for prototypical urban hipsters weaned on the intellectual exclusivity of the Village in the late fifties and very early sixties. Bob Dylan, who paid his dues on Bleecker Street long before the holy mantle of hip could be purchased for a song at the nearest head shop or unisex boutique, delighted in disappointing the communal expectations of his fans. (When they tried to make him a leader, he told them to follow parking meters.)

"Whatever the counterculture was, I'd seen enough of it," Dylan declares in the first volume of "Chronicles," his characteristically curmudgeonly autobiography. "I was sick of the way my lyrics had been extrapolated, their meanings subverted into polemics, and that I had been anointed as the Big Bubba of Rebellion, High Priest of Protest, the Czar of Dissent, the Duke of Disobedience, Leader of the Freeloaders, Kaiser of Apostasy, Archbishop of Anarchy, the Big Cheese. What the hell are we talking about?"

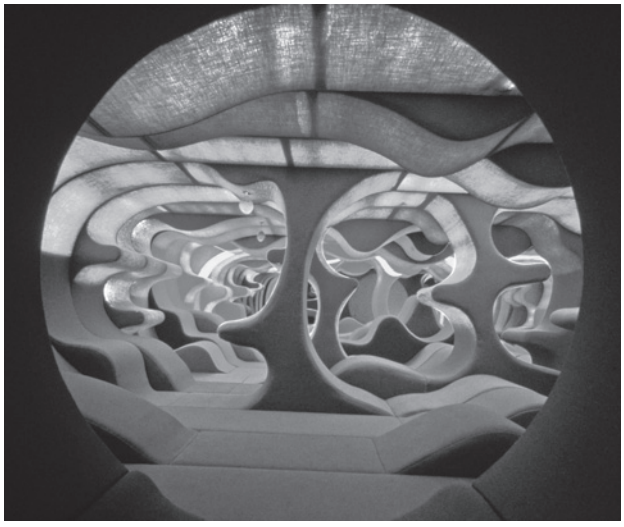
Spoken like a true beatnik!

* * *

For a more indigenous, minute-to-minute account of the Summer of Love than either Dylan or the show at the Whitney can provide, the reader is referred to "Moving

Through Here," a collection of articles by the late Don McNeill that originally appeared in the Village Voice.

While others of his generation (myself included) blissed out, McNeill was doing his job. In a piece called "The Be-in Was the Beginning," he takes us to Central Park, where "As the dawn sun gleamed off a backdrop of molded metal skyscrapers on Easter Sunday, a medieval pageant began in the middle of Manhattan." In "3rd Street Scrub" he describes the surreal day when hundreds of people with mops and pails of soapy water (but no permit) assembled to clean an especially funky street in the East Village, showing how freak humor could often diffuse a confrontational situation: "A cop walked up. A hippie began to scrub his badge. The cop had to smile."



Verner Panton Phantasy Landscape Visiona II, 1970/2000 (View 1) Wool, foam rubber and wooden fabric 314 15/16 x 236 1/4 x 94 1/2in. (800 x 600 x 240cm) Vitra Design Museum © Panton Design, Basel

Verner Panton's womblike tunnel of foam rubber "Phantasy Landscape Visiona II, 1970/2000"... a tab of acid or mescalin would have made all the difference.

But as the summer progresses, McNeill also shows how the smiles fade, as the drugs get heavier and the vibe turns ugly. From "Amphetamine Apple in Eden": "The energy obviously becomes hard to direct. Weeks of stale garbage and moldy dishes combined with human amphetamine decay, a frenzied decay, can bring visions of Marat/Sade." From "Limits of Flower Power": "As the parade ended and the demonstrators began to move back to the park, two hostile youths forced their way through the crowd and began swinging. A dozen police lunged toward the brawl."

McNeill's dispatches from within the subculture ended abruptly in 1968, when he drowned in an upstate lake, making the title of his posthumous magnum opus poignantly apropos.

A photograph on the book's cover shows the youthful reporter with his press pass clearly displayed on his leather jacket and blood streaming down his face. A cop had pushed McNeill's head through a plate glass window at a demonstration in Grand Central Station that turned into a police riot. He looks dazed, but his notebook is still in his hand.

* * *

"Can I go in?" a young woman asked a guard at the Whitney, peering into Verner Panton's womblike tunnel of foam rubber, "Phantasy Landscape Visiona II."

"You can, " he said, "if you take off your shoes."

But once inside, nestled barefoot in its soft, sensual curves, she looked as bored as a child on a stalled merry-go-round.

Almost any of the older folk hunkering around in the gallery could have told her that a tab of acid or mescaline would have made all the difference in the world.

And old they were, for the most part, like the two surviving Beatles, Dylan, and everyone else who once thought a song called "When I'm Sixty-Four" had a fantastic ring to it. Even more than an attraction for the inquisitive young eager to see what they had missed, this show was a magnet for the improbably elderly.

On the way into the Whitney, I nudged my wife as a woman exited who used to haunt our favorite bar, Max's Kansas City, photographing all the slumming rock stars and glittering welfare drag queens. Back then she strutted around in hot pants; now she walked with a cane and wore the forlorn expression we would see on the faces of so many of our contemporaries as we toured the exhibition.

People not of my generation—the first generation in history to constitute a media-certified youth culture; the generation whose slogan was "Don't trust anyone over thirty"; I'll say it again: the Peter Pan generation that was never supposed to grow up, much less grow old—couldn't be expected to understand what it was like to see underground publications such as The East Village Other, The Oracle, The Fifth Estate, and Oz lined up in vitrines right alongside cheap exploitation paperbacks like "The Hippie Scene," "The Hippy's [sic] Handbook," "Hippie Sex," and "Psychedelic Sex Rebellion." Suddenly the sacred screeds of the underground seemed almost as campily dated as the sleazy commercial rip-offs.

Nor could solace be found in USCO's "Strobe Room," with its flashing lights, shiny reflective mylar, and tie-dye floor; or Abdul Mati Klarwein's "Aleph Sanctuary," a structure like a neon-lit mausoleum, its walls crawling with exotic imagery that now looked more corny than mystical. Such tacky sensoriums only reflected the dull desolation of seeing one's youthful illusions (even those outgrown and abandoned decades ago) entombed under glass. The abundance of ephemera and the film footage of euphoric, quasi-orgiastic events such as the Human Be-ins hardly produced nostalgia. They simply served as a reminder that, as even Abbie Hoffman had to admit in the melancholy aftermath of one of his hokey debates with Jerry Rubin, "the sixties were a fluke."

This was already clear in 1987, during the first flurry of media attention attending the twentieth anniversary of the "Summer of Love," when I published an article that resulted in offers to write a screenplay of that title. Emilio Estevez was supposedly interested in the project, but after innumerable meetings with people who referred to meetings as something one "took," like a pill, I was so turned off by the sheer, vulgar duplicity of the indie hipsters courting me that I took back my treatment and told them to fuck off.

If I needed further convincing that the spirit of the sixties was dead, it came shortly after, when a representative for Peter Max contacted me to write a book about his work. Once the most blatantly commercial of the sixties poster artists (tellingly, the sole example of his work in the Whitney show is a poster for a chic uptown clothing boutique) Max was trying to reinvent himself as a fine art painter.

This time it took only one meeting to sink the project, when, In lieu of proper payment, the millionaire designer proposed that I accept original artwork. Max appeared wounded when I turned down his offer, as though it constituted a critique of his worth as a painter (which perhaps it did).

I was not surprised when a book on Max eventually came out with the exact same title as a prize-winning video documentary that I had written years earlier about another artist.

* * *

Strangely enough, people still flash me the peace sign on the street. They seem to see me—even at the advanced age the Beatles sang about so blithely, back when none of us believed it could ever happen to us—as some sort of hippie stereotype, a throwback to a supposedly halcyon era many of them never knew.

If they asked, I'd probably claim that this isn't really hippie hair, it's maestro hair, Einsteinian genius hair--anything to avoid being perceived as a dinosaur who won't give up the ghost of grooviness gone.

Yet I am undeniably, inexorably, a child of the Sixties. Even now, rather than thinking of myself as over the hill, I prefer to think that I am only as old as The Rolling Stones.

* * *

Evoking Spirit: The Intuitive Transformations of Allan Wash

Certain timeless motifs that occur again and again in native cultures worldwide inform the art of Allan Wash, whose compelling acrylic paintings can be seen at Agora Gallery, 530 West 25th Street, from October 26 through November 15. (Reception Thursday, November 1, from 6 to 8 PM.)

As a boy, during the notoriously cold winters of his native Minnesota, Wash dreamed of tropical climes and exotic cultures. Later, he traveled the world and became enamored of art and artifacts that, as he puts it, reflect "a pure, unadulterated vision."

Although he holds an MFA from Minneapolis School of Art, and garnered over 160 awards in the course of a distinguished career as a graphic designer, as a fine artist Wash has been able to sidestep the pitfalls of sophistication and create paintings that—unlike those of A.R. Penck and other "neo-expressionists" who reduce the primitive to a mere mannerism—are refreshingly unbeholden to the trends and fashions of today. More in the manner of the original Expressionists, Wash draws energy from primal sources.

The influence of masks and totems comes across prominently in paintings such as "Triangle" and "Origins." In the former, the nearly monochromatic palette enhances the power of the angular figures. Central to the composition is a figure resembling a formidable female deity. She is flanked by

"Tijuana Heat"

mask-like faces and jagged shapes possibly derived from tribal designs. Yet the picture appears to present a subjective interpretation of indigenous themes, rather than specific aspects of a particular tribe or culture. It is the deliberate expression of a man with very evident grasp of the civilized traditions he has rejected on principle and the ability to combine them with more intuitive methods in a highly evocative synthesis of opposites.

In "Origins," the forms are more rounded than those in "Triangle" and the painting's combination of visceral red and earthy brown hues, mediated by areas of blue, further enhances its sensuality. Again, a female figure dominates the composition as its central motif. Only here, as opposed to in the previous work, her flowing contours suggest a goddess of fertility.

While the entire composition of another powerful acrylic on canvas is filled by a mask-like face possessed of a decidedly primitive power, the title suggests an emotion more prevalent in civilized cultures: "Ambivalence." Similarly, the acrylic painting that Wash calls "Red Dream" encompasses crosses, hearts, birds, fish, and other starkly simplified symbols; yet the figure occupying the center of the composition is not at all primitive-looking. Rather, it is more akin to Modigliani's sensual female nudes, with its elongated torso and warm red colorations. Indeed, its full-frontal pose and outspread arms bespeak a certain abandon that one rarely encounters amid the ritualistic patterns of primitive art. Similarly, the angular distortions of the Mexican street scene "Tijuana Heat" recall Tamayo, while the pictographic forms of "Majorca" are akin to the early semi-abstract works of Rothko and Gottlieb.

As all serious artists must—no matter how respectful they may be of indigenous sources and no matter how much they may endeavor to emulate their immediacy—Wash filters tribal iconography through a highly original modern sensibility, and thus frees it from its inherent superstitions, taboos, and aesthetic limitations. What he gives us, finally, is the spiritual power of such imagery, albeit translated into universal symbols that speak eloquently across cultural boundaries.

—Peter Wiley

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.

CUSTOM PICTURE FRAMING for artists and galleries. Museum quality, selected frames & mats. Float & dry mounting, canvas stretching. Jadite Galleries, 662 10th Ave. (Betw. 46/47St.) Hours: 12 - 6pm, Free delivery in Manhattan. 212-977-6190 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 fine artists at this esteemed artist-run gallery with its many Winners of Awards, Grants, Fellowships and Juried Shows. Exhibit your work and advance your career. www.pleiadesgallery.com - or SASE to Pleiades Gallery, 530 W. 25 St., 4th fl. NY, NY 10001-5516, Tel.- 646-230-0056.

A.I.R. FELLOWSHIP: 18-month sponsorship, solo show, for NYC area women artists. Selection panel: **Charlotta Kotik**, Independent Curator; **Claire Oliver** of Claire Oliver Gallery; **Nancy Princenthal**, Senior Editor, Art in America. Deadline:10/31. SASE to 511 W. 25th Street, #301, NYC 10001 or www.airgallery.org

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

EMERGING ARTISTS 2008, Sixteenth annual competition for exhibition, promotion and $2000 cash award. Deadline November 30, mail SASE for prospectus: SlowArt Productions, 123 Warren Street, Hudson, NY 12534 or www.slowart.com/prospectus

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.

G&S Deadlines for Nov./Dec./Jan.issue: color: Oct. 8th; black & white: Oct. 15th.
For ad rates, call (212) 861-6814 or email galleryandstudio@mindspring.com

Staten Island Comes to Chelsea

A passerby stopping to feed or observe a flock of pigeons gathered in a playground is hardly an uncommon sight in an urban setting. However, Ken Martin makes this simple scene an urban epiphany in his color photograph "Bird Meadow," on view in "Illusions: The Visual Power of Ten," a joint exhibition by members of The South Shore Visual Arts Association and the Creative Photographers Guild, two artist groups from Staten Island, at New Century Artists, 530 West 25th Street, from October 2 through 13. (Reception October 6, from 1 to 6 PM.)

Andrew Giambalvo

George Roos

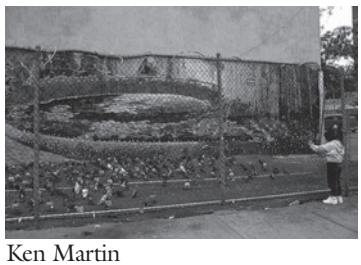
The illusion in Martin's picture derives from viewing the birds and the large mural of a pastoral landscape on the wall behind them through the chain-link playground fence. Its many tiny squares function as a grid, uniting the living birds and the brilliantly colorful mural as a single entity on the two-dimensional picture plane, like elements in an Impressionist painting.

Dick Capuozzo creates another kind of illusion in his digital print "Sailor's Delight," where sinuous trees are silhouetted starkly against a luminous red sky. As in a Rorschach test, the black calligraphy of the branches could suggest spooky creatures prowling a shadowy plane. However, learning that Capuozzo's title was actually inspired by the old saying, "Red sky in the morning, sailor's warning; red sky at night, sailor's delight" suddenly casts the picture in a brighter light.

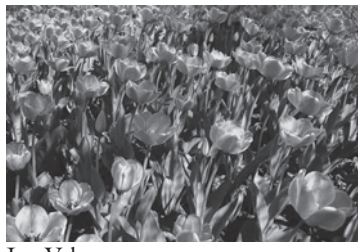
Liv Pandolfino

Dick Capuozzo

Liv Pandolfino's painting of a mound of weathered wood, twisted metal, and other debris under a turbulent blue and purple sky calls to mind the much publicized landfill that has blighted the image of the otherwise relatively bucolic borough of Richmond in the public mind. However, Pandolfino's gritty realism, reminiscent of some of the landscapes the German artist George Grosz painted after emigrating to America, is also compelling for its innate abstract qualities, with its muscularly contorted forms and intense colors.

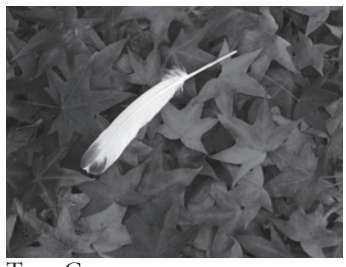


Ken Martin



Joe Vehry

By contrast, Richard Ekelund's "Nude" is a spare, graceful study of a female model's bare back and buttocks, rendered with a Renaissance refinement in red chalk. This is a subject that goes back to Doedalsas' early 4th century b.c. marble sculpture "Crouching Venus." Yet Ekelund imbues it with contemporary immediacy, proving that certain ideals of feminine beauty connect us to antiquity.



Tony Guo

Richard Ekelund

Fritz (Steven) Weiss

Lenny Khimishman

Andrew Giambalvo, on the other hand, interprets a decidedly modern subject with verve and wit in his upbeat painting of the New York skyline. Like Red Grooms, Giambalvo employs a light touch, filling the picture with a fanciful profusion of airplanes, zeppelins and old fashioned hot air balloons and many types of boats, transforming a familiar scene by virtue of his whimsical style.

Complex imagistic layering is employed in different ways in a photographic digital print by George Roos called "Flamenco" and an untitled drawing by Lenny Khimishman: In Roo's picture, dynamic red flashes animate the dancers and deconstruct the nightclub setting with a sense of neo-cubistic fragmentation.

In Khimishman's ink drawing, the figure of a reposeful reader is set against a musical manuscript of a symphony by Franz Schubert. Khimishman evokes a genteel sense of 19th century Vienna by virtue of a skillful cross-hatching technique reminiscent of the great Austrian illustrator and fantasist Alfred Kubin.

An element of Pop enters into the work of three other photographers who employ digital imagery in different ways:

Joe Vehry's "Tulips" creates an emblematic overall image with a field of the yellow and red flowers repeated in the manner of Andy Warhol's famous floral wallpaper. Only, Vehry's image is all the more appealing for its natural setting—albeit coloristically "tweaked" on the computer.

Tony Guo's image of a bright white feather set against an unnaturally vibrant carpet of red autumn leaves projects a mystical aura, suggesting the belief, held by some, that white feathers are signals from loved ones on the Other Side. At the same time, for this viewer at least, Guo's picture also evokes Egyptian mythology, where the feather symbolizes the wind and the creator gods in the pantheon of Ptah, Hather, and Osiris.

In his "Cape May Diptych," the final photographic artist, Fritz (Steven) Weiss employs an image of a shiny chrome hubcap, deconstructed and reassembled in the manner of a digital collage, to create a postmodern update of Precisionism from an object that has become a veritable icon of contemporary culture. Weiss's work is notable for his ability to imbue a familiar object with a pristine formal quality that transcends its original context, making us see the beauty in the ordinary.

Like that of the other artists in this show, his work is consummately sophisticated, yet gives the impression of being refreshingly unaffected by the more transitory trends and fashions, suggesting that New York's most overlooked borough could eventually emerge as an important new art destination.

—J. Sanders Eaton

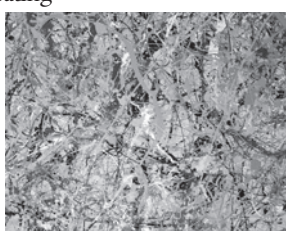
Monkdogz Fires a Bold Opening Volley Across the Bow of the New Season

From now on, when Bob Hogge, co-director with the estimable Marina Hadley of Monkdogz Urban Art, at 547 West 27th Street, in Chelsea, speaks, as he often does, of creating "a level playing field" for emerging artists, he should probably add that he is also creating a raucous playground in which the many diverse tendencies of postmodern pluralism can romp freely—and sometimes even battle it out.

At very least that is the impression one gets from the animated international group exhibition "Moriden," which opens with a reception from 5 to 8 PM on September 6 and runs through October 13. What this eclectic, eccentric, engaging exhibition proves above all is that the not-so-peaceful coexistence of opposing styles can set sparks flying. Coming at the start of the new art season, the exhibition also seems to constitute a statement that harks back to one of Norman Mailer's most prophetic early warnings: "Don't understand me too easily."

Monkdogz Urban Art made itself a formidable presence in the art scene in a remarkably short period of time by creating its own niche. Much of the art that it showed in its first couple of seasons ran counter to the conceptual austerity of much else in Chelsea. Gallery stalwarts now on the brink of serious art stardom, such as Jean Marc Calvet (reviewed at length in a separate article in this issue) and Sylvia Hennequin (whose two collage paintings in this show graft the heads of monstrous beasts onto fetishistically eroticized photo-images of naked female torsos with characteristic brio) exemplify the Monkdogz mood: Sympathetic to the raw energy of so-called Outsider Art and the Low-Brow Movement, but too sophisticated in technique and aesthetic ambition to fit comfortably into either of those categories. Yet artists as quirky and unclassifiable as both Calvet and Hennequin happen to be didn't seem to fit comfortably anywhere in the "mainstream" American art world either, until Monkdogz created a credible context in which to showcase their unique talents and make them accessible to the Chelsea crowd under the auspices of a venue that was recognized from its inception as puzzlingly disrespectful of the rules of pretension but nonetheless impeccably hip.

David Novak



Steve Reinhart

Betina Jung

Quintessential Monkdogz artists like Calvet and Hennequin occupy common ground in the present exhibition with Alex Mitchell, an American who employs a deceptively innocent faux-naif style to deal with loneliness, cruelty, shameful secrets, and other aspects of human vulnerability in 3-D wall assemblages somewhere between folk art, the box constructions of Joseph Cornell, and the fanciful little worlds of Paul Klee. Also very much in the Monkdogz bag, so to speak, are the bug-eyed Neo-Keane kewpie babes of the Japanese painter Mari Yamagiwa / Angie, which transcend the "Lowbrow" label, as well as the "Supercute" genre so popular in her native country by virtue of their deliciously sleazy punk panache. Ignore the part of Yamagiwa / Angie's artist's statement where she goes on about "the value of all existence. Believe her when she states, in her inimitable English, "My works consists in the other side and a dirty part."

Sylvia Hennequin

Alex Mitchell

Paul Rousso

Charles Schindler

The strident paintings and strange sculpted heads of American artist Betina Jung could almost seem like the bastard mutant offspring of some unthinkable union between Francis Bacon and Marshall Arisman. However, Jung has her own unique way with lumpishly distorted figures and tortured forms that signal a significant new voice for the New Humanism and an auspicious addition to the gallery roster. The mannequin-like mixed media sculptures of Charles Schindler, such as "Prime Times News," combining found objects like transistor radios with body parts finely crafted in wood, marble, and stainless steel for a bizarre "bionic woman" effect, also exemplify the offbeat appeal of the Monkdogz style.

But while all of these artists enhance the image for which the gallery is best known, now that they have our undivided attention, Hogge and Hadley appear to be subtly refining and broadening their curatorial stance to include more abstract and avant garde work as well. One example is the widely exhibited Italian painter, sculptor, and installation artist Lello Esposito, whose diverse multimedia works often deal with issues of identity, and whose imaginative scope suggests that he may yet become a figure on a par with Joseph Beuys. Another is Minya, a Yugoslavian-born former university professor of graphic design now living in Rome, whose abstractions meld elements of geometric art and Tachisme, the European counterpart of Abstract Expressionism, in an intriguing formal synthesis.

Other abstract artists make an impressive showing as well: Steve Reinhart creates historically savvy paintings in latex and enamel that simultaneously appropriate or quote aspects of Jackson Pollock and other famous artists while making energetic gestural statements in their own right. David Novak, who returned to his study of Zen Buddhism after a thirty year hiatus when he survived a serious health crisis and gained a new perspective on the meaning of life, has evolved a highly original style which encapsulates the exquisitely simple spirit of the ancient Zen literati painters in modern western terms by a process that evolves through computer imaging to vibrant color field painting.

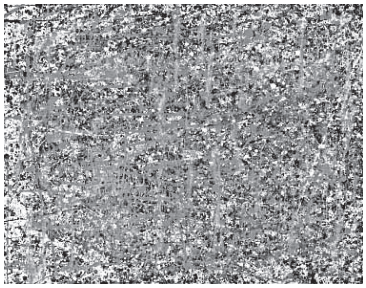
Perhaps the connecting link between the Monkdogz manner as we have come to know it and its ongoing evolution can be seen most clearly in the combination of tactile immediacy and conceptual chutzpah in the work of Paul Rousso, who wittily subverts crucial issues at the heart of modern art theory—most particularly, the supposed conflict between f 3-D reality and the two-dimensional picture plane—by flattening out entire editions of The Yellow Pages or The New York Times on large wood panels and exhibiting multiple photo-images of female nudes on the corrugated folds of an actual shower curtain.

Much as a flag might signify the ideals of a nation, the Duchampian playfulness of such works could stand for this innovative gallery's gritty determination to make serious fun an antnidote to ponderous folly.

—Ed McCormack

Dellamarie Parrilli

Reflections: Within And Beyond



November 1 - 30, 2007
***Reception:* Wednesday, November 7, 6-8pm**

Ezair Gallery
905 Madison Ave. (Betw. 72nd & 73rd), NYC 10021
Tue-Fri 12pm - 6pm 212 -628-2224
Fax: 212.628.7828 www.ezairgallery.com

WSAC West Side Arts Coalition 1979

Mug Shots

a photography exhibit
curated by Deena Weintraub and Jennifer Holst

October 3 - 21, 2007
Opening Reception: Saturday October 6, 2:30-5:30pm
Closing Reception: Sunday, October 21, 2:30-5:30pm

Rudy Collins • Harriet Green • Jennifer Holst
Irmgard Kuhn • Laurens R. McKenzie • Harry Peronius
Jean Prytyskacz • Carolyn Reus • Don Sichler
Janice Wood Wetzel • Deena Weintraub • Stephen Weintraub

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

CWAC

Catharine Lorillard Wolfe Art Club
111th Annual Exhibition

October 2-27, 2007

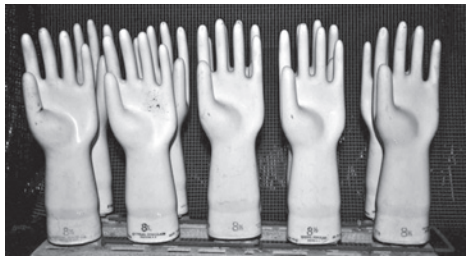
Monday through Friday 3:00-6:00 pm
Saturday and Sunday 1:00-6:00 pm
Sculpture Gallery Daily 1:00-6:00 pm
Preview Reception: Friday, October 12, 5:30-8:00 pm

Benefit of the Metropolitan Museum of Art
Donation: $20

National Arts Club
15 Gramercy Park South, New York, NY

---

sheila finnigan
"xoxoxo"



"Found Object"

September 25-October 13, 2007

PLEIADES GALLERY

530 West 25 St., 4th Fl., New York, NY 10001
Gallery Hours: Tuesday - Saturday 11-6 pm
646-230-0056/Fax 646-230-0056
www.pleiadesgallery.com

TALENT 2007
Emerging Artists Salon

September 15 - October 20, 2007

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

WSAC West Side Arts Coalition 1979

Sights and Insights

September 12 - 30, 2007
Pamela Belen Flores and Ava Schonberg, Co-Curators

Elke Albrecht • Terry Berkowitz
Elinore Bucholtz • Pamela Belen Flores
Kathleen A. Gibbons • Madi Lanier
Dana Lynn • Edward E. Neiger
Shirley Piniat • Emily Rich • Ava Schonberg

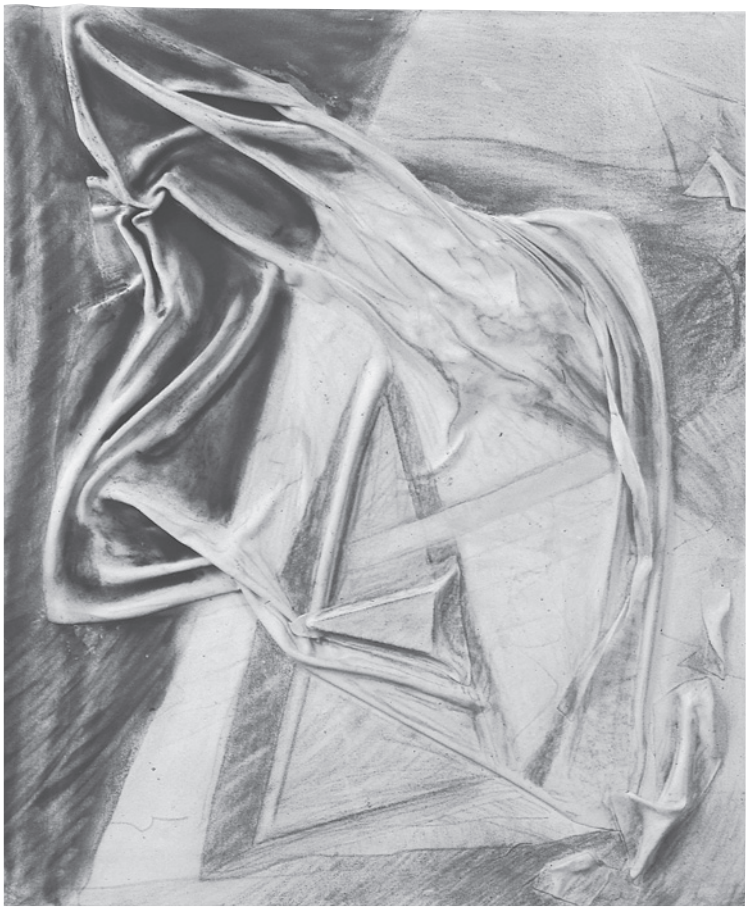
Broadway Mall Community Center
96th Street and Broadway, center island, NYC
Gallery Hours: Wed. 6-8pm, Sat./Sun.12-6pm
wsacny@wsacny.org 212-316-6024 www.wsacny.org

Drawing Lays the Groundwork for Marion Lane's Mastery of Mixed Media Relief

The modern wall relief occupies a unique terrain between painting and sculpture, and it is to its delicate balancing act between two-dimensional articulation of form and actual volumes occupying relatively shallow space that Marion Lane has devoted the better part of a long and fruitful career. Lane's latest exhibition at Pleiades Gallery, 530 West 25th Street, from September 4 through 22, consists of mostly new work, yet presents one with an auspicious occasion for considering an oeuvre that commenced in the 1950s and continues to gain momentum to this day.

Like most of the progressive artists of her generation, Lane came under the sway of Abstract Expressionism early in her career. The oils that she painted in the late fifties were vibrant, vigorous celebrations of gesture and color. If the two main stylistic poles of the The New York School were Pollock's overall energy and de Kooning's draftsmanly finesse, Lane's innate drawing ability automatically placed her in the latter camp. Her early oils also displayed a chromatic subtlety and sensitivity to nuances of surface akin to Guston's. Her prodigious command of this combination of qualities was recognized early on, when one of her paintings won a Grumbacher award in an exhibition at the Brooklyn Museum.

Lane's superb draftspersonship came to the forefront during a figurative period, prompted by the death of her daughter in the early '60s. As she worked through her grief, abstract forms were usurped for awhile by solitary figures as fragmented and tormented as those of her early teacher Leon Golub. Figures would reappear from time to time—most notably in some of her works on feminist themes and a series inspired by the raw freshness of expression she saw in the work of psychiatric patients during the ten years that she worked as an art therapist. However, while a strong anatomical allusiveness continues to inform her paintings, drawings, and reliefs, specific figuration, by and large, went "underground" after Lane started working on the reliefs in sheet aluminum, Sculptmetal and a variety of other materials for which she is best known.



"Draped Drawing 4"

Although the prominent use of draped fabrics and formed paper in Lane's present exhibition could appear to be new developments, they actually date back to the late seventies and early eighties, when she went through a minimalist period and created works in which the softness of these malleable materials were contrasted dramatically with the unyielding qualities of shaped aluminum. More recently, rather than soft and hard contrasts, Lane has been exploring the equally fascinating contrasts between drawing and sculpture in compositions where forms created with fabric or paper soaked in acrylic medium and applied to canvas interact with other elements delineated in graphite or acrylic paint.

In contrast to her previous exhibition of large, colorful abstract paintings with flowing biomorphic forms in the same venue last year, Lane's new mixed media works are predominantly monochromatic, enabling one to concentrate on the rhythmic interplay of shapes that spring from what she describes as her "lifelong love of dance and movement."

On a superficial level one could find resemblances between Marion Lane's works—particularly her painted shaped aluminum wall reliefs of the 1990s—and those of Elizabeth Murray. Both women employ expressive contours and work with literally layered, overlapping planes in a similarly exuberant manner. Both are also somewhat stylistically beholden to Frank Stella's wall reliefs of the mid-seventies—at least as signposts pointing toward their own very different aesthetic directions.

While Murray's forms have a cartoon-bulbousness influenced by Pop and often allude to common household and personal items such as coffee cups, spoons, and shoes, Lane's compositions are closer in spirit to the heroic lyricism of her first love, Abstract Expressionism. Rather than taking off from banal objects, they appear to be material manifestations of movement and energy, gestures frozen in space and endowed with a physical heft which plays off dynamically against the graceful sense of velocity that they project.

Lane achieves these disparate qualities (particularly her ability to invest the most physically palpable materials with a paradoxically metaphysical dimension) by virtue of the drawing ability which serves as the bare bones and the formal armature for everything that she creates in mixed media. Style, someone once said, is character, and Marion Lane's character comes across most clearly in the expressive line that underlies and animates all of her compositions, lending each of them the unmistakable stamp of her unique sensibility.

It is this indelible sensibility which has enabled Marion Lane to adopt a wide variety of expressive modes and mediums over the years while retaining the innate quality that unites all of her work and makes the present exhibition so consummately satisfying.

—Ed McCormack

Open Wounds: Eduardo Terranova's Heartrending Tribute to "The Disappeared"

Abstract painting and the art of protest are generally considered to be poles apart. Almost unanimously, abstract purists—particularly those American converts in the Abstract Expressionist era who got more than their fill of social realism during their tenure in the WPA program—tended to dismiss any art that addressed political issues as "propaganda." Yet even the most vociferous opponents of social realism and proponents of "art for art's sake" had to make exceptions in the case of particular masterpieces such as Picasso's "Guernica" or Robert Motherwell's "Elegies to the Spanish Republic." For these were works that transcended politics to voice a universal cry for justice, even while adhering to the highest standards of modernist aesthetics.

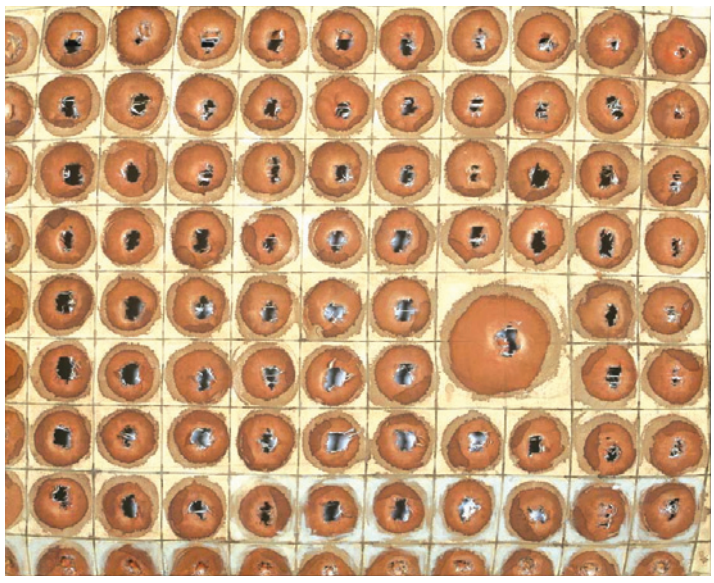
In more recent decades, of course, the balance has shifted in the opposite direction. Aesthetic considerations are routinely shouted down by the strident rhetoric of political orthodoxy in the noisy, media-saturated arena of postmodern posturing, where unembarrassed passion has become the Last Taboo. Artists are invariably offered the same limited menu of approved domestic issues, and if they are wary of appearing "uncool" must mask their human concerns in irony.

This would hardly seem an ideal climate to welcome an artist like Eduardo Terranova, who comes to us bearing a powerful human message informed by personal experience, yet proves that deep social commitment and aesthetic innovation need not be mutually exclusive.

A painter and architect born in Cali, Colombia, now living in New York City, Terranova has exhibited in galleries and museums on three continents. In the year 2000 he was artist in residence at the Museum of Abano Terme and the Sala Todeschini al Montirone, in Padua, Italy, where he also exhibited. In 2005 and 2006, he was honored with two solo shows at the Albarracin Galleries in Buenos Aires, and also presented an installation entitled "Body and Soul" at the Nature Lab Gallery in Providence, Rhode Island.

New York art audiences first became aware of Terranova's work in several solo exhibitions, most notably at Pleiades Gallery, in Chelsea. His most recent New York solo exhibition, the subject of this review, continues through September 30, at Richart Paris Gallery, 7 East 55th Street. Curated by Halldor Kristinsson, its title was "The Disappeared (Lost Desaparecidos)," for it deals with the "tens of thousands of people who have been kidnapped, tortured, killed or simply 'vanished,' and are still disappearing in Colombia."

It is important to know in relation to this show that coffee (Colombia's best known national export before cocaine began to usurp it in the news reports issuing from that troubled country), plays an important role in the "Los Desaparecidos" series. Terranova employs it as a pigment in a diluted manner, creating a "stain" effect that can also suggest dried blood. This effect is especially powerful in "Animas, 2007," where coffee is combined with gold, varnish, acrylic, and needle and thread on canvas. Here, as in most of the other works in the series, Terranova has also punctured the canvas with a sharp instrument. By these symbolic acts of violence, the artist creates what he calls "voids," empty spaces to signify the absences of those who have been "disappeared."



"Animas" Artist contact: 917.848.4511 terranovae@gmail.com

These "wounds," with their ragged edges, like the uneven fissures that bullets can make in flesh, are particularly poignant in "Animas," where they are driven through the centers of many roughly circular stained shapes arranged in an overall grid. The grid itself suggests the anonymity of mass victimhood, the state in which an individual is reduced to a mere statistic, a number among so many others who have lost not only their lives but their very identities in the unforgiving junk-heap of history. To the artist, the term "Animas," which, in Jungian jargon, represents the androgynous facets of the inner personality, also "evokes the breath of life, the last breath which, unseen, shakes the whole body and indeed the universe."

Puncturing, slashing, scoring, and otherwise mutilating the painting surface has been employed as a technique in the past by artists such as Lucio Fontana and Antoni Tapies. The latter artist's ideas about the "noumenal" in relation to the essential spirit of materials seems especially akin to Terranova's approach in this series. None of his predecessors, however, has employed such devices as effectively as Terranova does here to express a sense of outrage at specific injustices inflicted on a particular group people.

Other unorthodox techniques also come into play in canvases such as "El Olvido, 2007" where prominent cracks in the irregularly shaped area of dark brown running along the top of the composition could suggest the rents and erosions in a distressed terrain, while complex configurations of white thread and twine traversing the ghostly white grid below evoke a sense of private turmoil muffled by brutal governmental repression. One of the most innovative aspects of the series is how elegantly Terranova integrates materials and meaning to make eloquent statements about the disappeared.

In "Untitled 2007," one of the most eloquent works in the show, despite its lack of explication, the piece de resistance is a single hand-print near the bottom of the composition. Presumably that of the artist, placed there in solidarity with those the series honors and memorializes, it could also suggest the last mortal gesture of a dying victim attempting to steady him or herself by placing a bloodied hand against a blank brown wall.

In another affecting work called "Tracings, 2007" Terranova literally "draws" with thread, the sewn lines meandering over the surface of the canvas like the trajectory of a person desperately searching for a vanished loved one or a mind in search of understanding. Here, too, occasional openings interrupting the continuity of the stitched lines, however narrow and far between, raise at least the possibility that light may eventually enter to redeem even the darkest of human situations.

In the meantime, one can only be thankful for the redemptive qualities of art itself, which are exemplified in this extraordinary exhibition. For, as Eduardo Terranova seems to know all too well, it is only through art that we can remain civilized and preserve our sanity in the face of the unspeakable.

—Ed McCormack

The Next Vital Step in the Ongoing Aesthetic Evolution of SM Lewis

In a different manner than collage, as practiced by Picasso and Braque in the pioneering of Cubism, photomontage, as practiced by John Heartfield and Hannah Hoch during the Dadaist era, must be acknowledged as one of the major developments in modern art. The most obvious distinction between these innovators in both mediums is that, while Picasso and Braque employed cut-out newspaper type and texts mainly as formal elements in their Cubist collages, Heartfield and Hoch used visual images culled from similar sources to make trenchant social commentary in their Dadaist photomontages.

All of which brings us to the contemporary artist SM Lewis, who, abetted by digital technology, extends the possibilities of both traditions by combining strong formal and abstract qualities with imagery that often verges on the surreal, in his newest exhibition of postmodernist photomontages, at Amsterdam Whitney Gallery, 511 West 25th, from October 5 through 30.

In previous exhibitions in the same venue and elsewhere, Lewis has established himself with relative speed as a figure to be reckoned with in the contemporary art scene. He has done so by bringing to his photomontages a degree of skill and imagination that simultaneously harks back to the glory days of his medium and points the way to its future development.

What is traditional in Lewis' work is its romantic allusiveness and an atmospheric enchantment that transcends mere aesthetic gamesmanship. What makes it new is the seamless synthesis of state-of-the-art technology and subjective vision that enables one to enter his compositions as if they were alternate worlds, possessed of their own rarefied qualities.

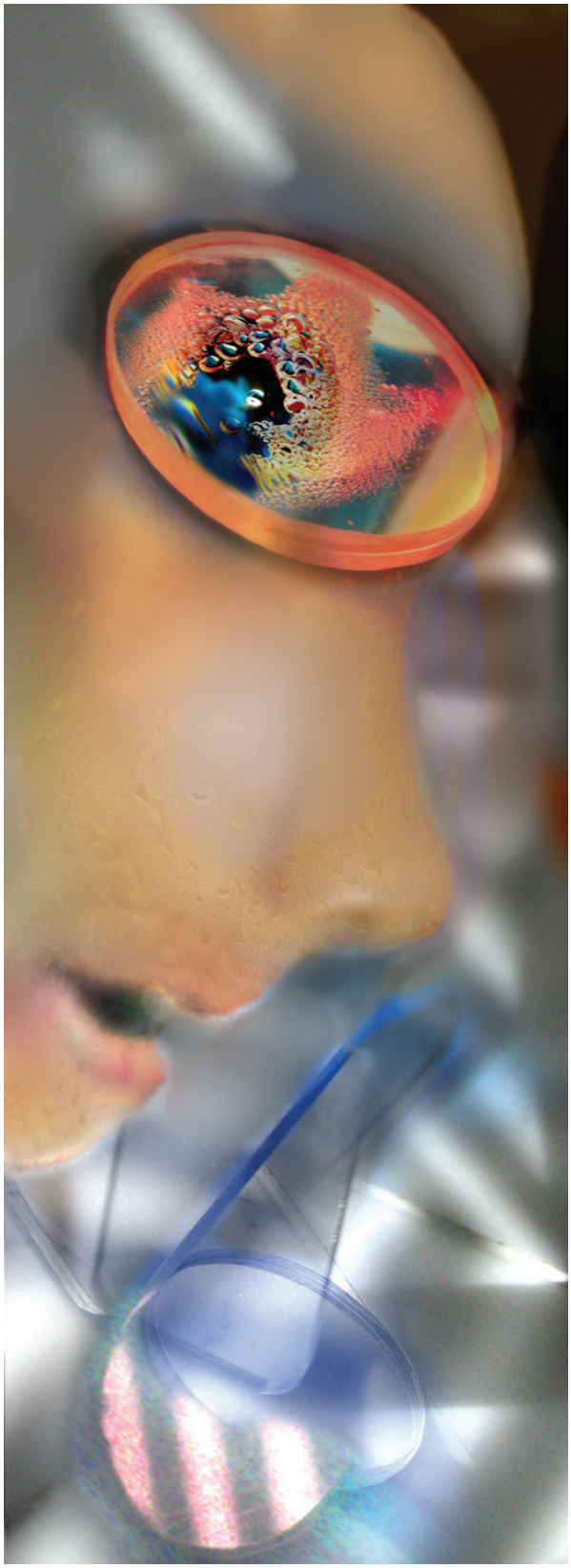
Although Lewis has titled his compositions in the past, and the titles that he chose were invariably evocative, his decision to avoid titling his newest pieces seems a wise one in terms of their somewhat more abstract qualities. By not hinting at meanings, he opens the way for a broader range of imaginative interpretation on the part of the viewer. Thus a composition in which the dominant element is a large profile, more doll-like than human, takes on a mysterious resonance that the viewer must take at "face value," so to speak. For this viewer, at least, the picture evokes haunting memories of childhood, when inanimate objects and characters could take on fantastic—sometimes even frightening—lives of their own.

Here, an oval shape covering the single eye of the large, looming profile could resemble either the lens of a pair of sunglasses in which an environment of almost psychedelic intensity is reflected or a shallow pan bubbling with brilliantly colored unknown substances. It is also possible to "Rorschach" all manner of forms and meanings into the shadowy shapes enlivening the silvery ground against which the face is set. Yet by not hinting at specific meanings by labeling the picture with a title, Lewis enables the viewer to enter the image as if it were a doorway to perception and explore heretofore undiscovered areas of his or her own psyche.

In another untitled recent photomontage by Lewis, a shadowy form that, at first glance, suggests a single silhouetted figure, and, on second glance, appears to be comprised of two or more superimposed figures, occupies the center of a composition. This form is enveloped in luminous purple auras and swirling patterns of light bulbs suggesting some exotic, possibly phantasmagoric, environment.

Indeed, one viewer might conjure up memories of small town carnivals that he or she has experienced personally, or seen in films, or been transported to in a spooky short story by Ray Bradbury, while another may be reminded of the modern malls in which we are all perpetually reduced to mere reflections by a multitude of sleek surfaces that subsume individual identity like funhouse mirrors. Yet even an image of depersonalization and alienation takes on an atmos-

Untitled



Untitled

phere of romance in a photomontage by SM Lewis. As in some of his earlier photomontages, where urban settings were more clearly identifiable, he invariably finds magic in the mundane.

At other times, Lewis proceeds from a premise that is fantastic to begin with, as seen in another photomontage in which two large, disembodied hands appear to grasp at a variety of various colorful floating orbs in a composition as complexly metaphysical as a print by M.C. Escher. In Lewis' picture, however, in place of the optical trickery and facile allusions in which Escher specialized, what comes across is an affecting visual metaphor for longing—a poignant expression of our perennial concupiscence, our eternal grasping after truths that remain just out of mortal reach.

Floral forms are another frequent motif that Lewis employs both as formal elements and seeming symbols of life's transience. These images, at once delicate and boldly composed, come into their own with special force in the present exhibition as components of some of his most exquisitely lyrical compositions to date. In one, circular shapes resembling peaches appear to inhabit the transparent outlines of large flowers clustered around another flower with shapely red petals. The juxtapositioning of these disparate elements suggests a metamorphosis in which one aspect of nature appears pregnant with another.

In yet another recent photomontage, large beads of dew, the phallic silhouette of an unopened bud on a tall, slender stem, a blur of many delicate yellow flowers, and other less immediately discernible shapes converge to create a kaleidoscopic vision of natural flux that seems to allude to no less ambitious a subject than the vital energies which activate all living things. Here, to put it in the eloquent words of Dylan Thomas, Lewis summons up "the force that through the green fuse drives the flower."

Having seen and reviewed two previous exhibitions by this artist, what I am most impressed by in the present show is his willingness to take new risks. After all, it takes considerable courage and true commitment to an abiding inner vision to strike out beyond those specific themes and subjects for which one has been highly praised, in order to explore unchartered territory. And make no mistake about it: Lewis' move into more abstract modes of expression in some of his photomontages involves no small sacrifice in terms of possibly stilling (or at least muting) the quick applause that his earlier pictures garnered from many who appreciated his ability to evoke specific sites and atmospheres with consistently pleasing panache, even as he transformed or transmogrified them in unexpected ways by filtering them through the distorting lens of his singular sensibility.

Lewis had to be aware of the risks involved when he embarked on his newest pictures; yet he has proceeded on intrepidly to the next necessary step in his artistic evolution, which, as every good artist knows, often means having to thwart the expectations of even one's most ardent admirers, in order to grow apace with the demands of one's talent. The payoff is that those who not only admire his work but understand its larger significance will immediately realize that his new photomontages are some of his most adventurous to date. In fact, this particular admirer can state unequivocally that Lewis' present exhibition represents a bold step forward for an artist who was already well on his way to making his mark as an important contemporary innovator in his medium.

—Ed McCormack

Monkdogz Art Star Calvet Knows Exactly What He is Doing

How much of what they say about Jean Marc Calvet, the painter from Granada, Nicaragua, who has recently created such a stir in the New York art scene —how he supposedly gave up on life, secluded himself in a room to die, and discovered his artistic vocation and a reason to go on living by painting all over the walls with some discarded paints that he found there—is true and how much is apocryphal I do not know; nor do I care to know.

There is a very real danger for an artist as brilliant as Calvet (whose new paintings can be seen at Monkdogz Urban Art, 547 West 27th Street, from September 6 through October 13) in having too colorful a backstory. It is too easy for the legend to flourish at the expense of the art. (Just think how many people know nothing about van Gogh except that he cut off his ear.)

That Calvet happens to be self-taught only complicates matters. It could too easily get him relegated to the gilded ghetto of so-called "outsider art" and deprived of his rightful place in the mainstream art world, where he most definitely belongs, given the innate sophistication of his vision and the accomplished technique with which he makes it manifest on canvas.

And just what is that vision? A swarming, infernal Boschian panorama of the human condition, albeit conjured in a slyly sophisticated faux-primitive style in vibrant comic-strip primaries. Munch's famous masterpiece "The Scream" must have lodged itself in Calvet's consciousness early on, for his own stylized version of that harrowing visage, with its skull-like shape and gaping mouth, is one of his recurring motifs, appearing among the horror vacui crowds of frenetic Day of the Dead figures that populate just about all of his large canvases.

In fact, devouring mouths are everywhere in Calvet's oeuvre. In "Sunday Family," for example, the monstrous maw of a huge horned head filled, in the manner of the 16th century Italian painter Giuseppe Arcimboldo's grotesque faces comprised of overripe fruits and vegetables, with a multitude of tiny figures, engulfs a crowd of hapless victims with their own mouths gaping in alarm. The head itself is set against a nocturnal blue background filled with other hysterical screamers who remind one of riders on a roller-coaster, as they sweep along on the rhythmic waves which lend many of Calvet's compositions their exhilarating visual velocity.

"The Marionetist"

In other compositions, such as "The Marionetist," the sinuous rhythms may be restricted to the rubbery limbs of a single dominant figure and jarringly jogged by a contrastingly angular backdrop of riotously colorful comicstrip panels in which a varied cast of characters enacts all manner of slapstick psychodramas. Here, the main protagonist, sporting a stage magician's tophat and chomping down with fearsome horse-teeth on a tiny skeletal screamer and a cross, is more than a mere puppeteer. He is Moloch himself, evoked as harrowingly as in the most hypnotic stanza of Allen Ginsberg's "Howl."

Other characters in Calvet's paintings may have faces like animated African masks, or sport multiple octopoid limbs, or have sharp protuberances sticking out of their heads like the spikes on a Roman gladiators helmet or the lethal-looking points on Lady Liberty's tiara. Although female figures appear here and there (sometimes distinguishable as such by their flower-shaped bouffants), most of Calvet's figures appear to be male, like the gleefully combative inhabitants of some hellish universal mosh-pit where naked aggression runs rampant 24-7, as they jockey for primacy in jam-packed compositions that constitute one of the most self-contained private universes in all of contemporary art.

While outsider artists invent their universes from the whole cloth of their uncontrollable and ultimately stifling obsessions, sophisticated artists, no matter how original, invariably refer in one way or another to precedents in art history. In Calvet's case, there is a clear lineage from the Expressionism of the aforementioned Edvard Munch, to the Art Brut of Jean Dubuffet (who learned from the inmates of asylums but was eminently sane), to East Village art stars of the '70s and '80s such as Keith Haring and Jean-Michel Basquiat (who copped some moves from the graffiti kids but always had eyes for the prize of High Art).

Calvet is most like Dubuffet in his relatively light-hearted canvas "The Simple Things," which shows two of his pop-eyed screamers enjoying (insofar as they can in a constant state of hysteria) a Sunday outing in a yellow jalopy amid a verdant green landscape of screaming plant-life; most like Haring in an antic overall composition like "Behind the Door," with its Aztec two-step of primal symbols reminiscent of Mexican folklore; most like Basquiat in the funky panache of his horizontal epic "Poison d'Avril." But like those omnivorous, insatiable mouths that terrorize the smaller denizens of his swarming compositions, he devours his predecessors and kindred spirits whole.

Far from the mad artist stereotype or guilelessly intuitive idiot savant some might imagine upon encountering his work for the first time, Jean Marc Calvet, soon to be the subject of a major documentary film that should increase his art world visibility a hundredfold, knows exactly what he is doing. And so did Bob Hogge and Marina Hadley, the savvy co-directors of Monkdogz Urban Art, when they took Calvet under the wing and made him one of the featured attractions of one of the most heavily trafficked and talked about exhibition venues in Chelsea.

—Ed McCormack

SHOWCASE:

Postmodern Mythmakers

"Moderne sklaverei," Ilona van Hoek

Two artists exemplified a tendency that might be termed "the new mythology," in recent exhibitions at Agora Gallery, 530 West 25th Street, in Chelsea:

Berlin-born painter Ilona van Hoek is often compared to Hieronymous Bosch for her meticulous technique and willingness to plumb the depths of fantasy. Yet for all the picturesque elements in some of her canvases, she can also invest a simple portrait with a haunting allusiveness, as in "Moderne sklaverei," which translates into English as "Contemporary Slavery." Does the "slavery" of the title refer to domestic bondage, or is the woman simply a slave to beauty?

Part of the power of van Hoek's art is that the viewer must draw his or her own conclusions.

California sculptor William C. Mang combines lively visual wit and technical ingenuity to create metal and mixed media pieces that capture one's attention both for their formal qualities and glimpses of an imagination in which ancient symbology and futuristic elements mingle freely.

"Flash," William C. Mang

One of his most compelling sculptures depicts a sleek feline creature that, for this viewer, evokes the world of the Egyptian pharaohs. Its title, however, is "Flash," a term which simultaneously suggests the lethal speed of large cats and slang for stylish rock star strutting.

Mang is a postmodern mythmaker with his own timeless take on iconic imagery.

—Peter Wiley

Ruth Bilowus Butler: Stormy Weather and Surreal Juxtapositions

Like Proust's madeleine, storms are epiphanous prompters of memory for Ruth Bilowus Butler, an artist represented by Monkdogz Urban Art, at 547 West 27th Street, in Chelsea. On her website **(www.ruthbutler.com)**, which is well worth a visit, Butler recalls standing behind the screen door of her family's house in western New York on rainy nights as a child, watching the lightening, listening to the thunder and feeling "physically moved."

Now living in New Mexico, Butler finds inspiration in its stormy skies and small towns, which, as she puts it, "provide the quirkiness and otherworldliness I've read about in children's books."

To achieve the dream-like synthesis of fantasy and reality that she strives for in her digital photographic art, Butler creates composite images from her archive of past photographs with her contemporary images of the Sante Fe skies, manipulating them digitally to create a convincing synthesis. The resulting vistas, often of storm clouds rolling over low-lying landscapes are possessed of great beauty and drama. They are also remarkably painterly in a manner reminiscent of the abstract expressionist Jon Schueler's compositions inspired by the tumultuous skies above the Sound of Sleat in a remote area of the Scottish Highlands where storms were every bit as prevalent as in New Mexico.

Butler achieves these painterly qualities by virtue of her skillful use of a stylus to subtly blend and blur her forms and colors in a manner that also calls to mind the great British painter J.F.W. Turner's characterization of his oils and watercolors as having been conjured up "with tinted steam." For her effects are just that luminous and ethereal in pictures such as "Blue Line Storm," the 2007 work which was reproduced on the cover of the "abqARTS" photographic annual, and "Cloud Kiss," in which the white cumulonimbi appear to rest right on top of earthy brown mounds.

"Cloud Kiss"

In the latter work, by "smearing" the pixels, Butler softened the surface of the mountains to bring them into harmony with the cottony texture of the clouds, uniting sky and land in the "kiss" of the title. Her tactile engagement with computer programs such as Photoshop and Painter appears to be as tactile as the manner in which some painters employ more traditional art mediums, enabling her to create effects such as those in "Painted Storm," where the chiaroscuro of the clouds and the eerie light bordering the shadowy landscape recalls certain atmospheric details of El Greco's "The View of Toledo."

Along with stormy landscapes, a visitor to Ruth Bilowus Butler's website will discover a variety of other images: In "Golden Delicious," several small apples scattered over a red silk woman's top with shoulder straps project a subtly erotic lyricism. In "Rear View," a woman wearing dark glasses, glimpsed in a car mirror, suggests a Garbo-esque elusiveness. In "Angel Baby," four identical photographs of a child's face, grafted onto stylized putti-wings and set afloat in a characteristically cataclysmic sky above a dark landscape dotted with little houses, exert an almost spooky power.

"Angel Baby"

All of these images bespeak a prodigious talent, possessed a peculiarly compelling world-view and the technical proficiency to share it with the rest of us.—Ed McCormack

A Timeless Resonance Marks the Art of Maria do Carmo Cid Peixeiro

Given the generally myopic vision of the art American press, the contemporary art of Portugal is woefully unknown on these shores. For this reason, and because her work is so interesting on its own individual merits, it was enlightening recently to encounter for the first time the work of Maria Do Carmo Cid Peixeiro, on her website: **www.geocities.com/mithologues.**

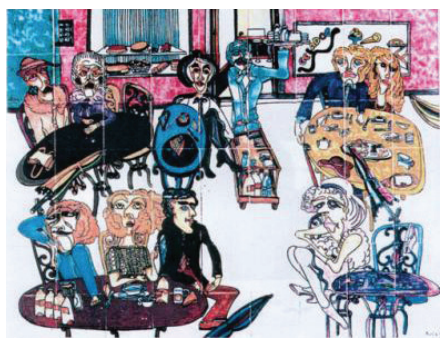
Peixeiro has been working in the unusual (for a contemporary artist) medium of handmade tiles since 1978, and has exhibited widely in Lisbon, Paris, Firenze, Milan, London, and Seville, among other cities. Although she also makes ceramics and paints in oils, these tiles are her favorite medium, not only for her commissioned works, such as the three walls she created for the Palace of Marquis de Fronteira, at Sao Domingos de Benfica, in Lisbon, but also for her more personal work, most of which deal with people in her life.

While some of her work is more traditional, depicting decorative subjects such as floral vases surrounded by ornate frames, Peixeiro's subjective pieces are among her most compelling. One is a portrait on six connected tiles of a young woman with flowers in her wavy raven hair. Although the figure's elongated neck has a Modigliani effect, Peixeiros' use of a linear technique, combined with areas of color, also has qualities in common with Japanese prints.

Peixeiro puts her strong stylistic signature on a variety of subjects, as seen in a composition depicting three fisherman seated in a small boat with their catch, a large turtle, while stylized birds swoop overhead. Yet another picture on a much larger grid of tiles is an appropriation / homage in the manner of Gauguin, including exotic female nudes and foliage—albeit, here again, informed by Peixeiro's own inimitable manner.

Perhaps her most engaging work is a cafe scene akin to George Grosz for its lively sense of caricature, although Peixeiro's vision is considerably more affectionate. Rather than the decadence of the Weimar period in Germany, one is reminded of the intellectual and artistic ferment of Lisbon in the late 1920s and early 30s, when the poet Fernando Pessoa, still largely unpublished and supporting himself as a clerk, would sometimes venture out of his self-imposed solitude to meet with artists in restaurants and cafes to discuss Futurism and Modernism.

For someone familiar with Portugal's most revered avant garde poet, Peixeiro's incisive delineation of the various types seated at the cafe tables evokes an atmosphere of romance and intrigue, of private dramas simmering below the public surface. These people could either belong to Pessoa's generation or to the Lisbon of today, so timelessly does the artist evoke the scene in clear areas of color enclosed by her fluently descriptive line.



Handmade tile composition by Maria do Carmo Cid Peixeiro

However, that Maria do Carmo Cid Peixeiro chooses to work in the venerable medium of handmade titles imparts to her work a sense of sandosismo, a nostalgia for her country's heroic past, that lends her work its particular resonance.

—Maurice Taplinger

Dumbo Group Show Intriguingly Interrogates the Feminine Mystique

Amy Hertog,"French Actress"

"How Women Look," one of the most timeless themes in art, was the subject of one of the more intriguing group exhibitions seen over the summer months. Nine artists of both sexes conjured fresh views of femininity from often unexpected angles at Safe-T Gallery, 111 Front Street, in Dumbo, Brooklyn.

The 19th century ambrotype wet-plate process imparted a patina of frozen time to Keliy Anderson-Staley's black and white portraits of women. Her subjects appeared as eerily distant as Matthew Brady's Civil War soldiers or the corpses in Victorian funeral portraits, even as they stared the viewer down with the frank gaze of modernity.

By contrast, Ed Barnas' archival inkjet prints gave us such in-your-face color images of the painted and tattooed performers in a Coney Island strip show that one could almost smell their sweat, cheap perfume, and ennui. Then there was H. Lisa Solon, who played it coy with ostensibly abstract cyanotypes that, in the manner of Rorschach tests, gradually revealed shadowed mounds of flesh.

A monstrous cartoony wicker women with conical breasts dominated Lucien Dulfan's 7 by 7 foot tondo, "Big Bang / Last Straw," presenting a spectacular basket-case view of the birth of the universe, detailed meticulously in oil on canvas. Equally unsettling in their own way were Paul Shore's obsessive reliefs in beeswax and hair and drawings in graphite and blood, all inspired by women's braids, each a compelling synthesis of craft and creepiness.

The surreal and the slightly sinister come into play to varying degrees in the work of two painters: James Cole's small, refined oils on panel or linen show one woman as a kind of cool postmodern Barberella, wearing a sci-fi cat-suit and brandishing a ray-gun; another's naked lower torso merges with a globe in a landscape of phallic columns and ruins. Saki Kishimoto's larger neo-expressionist oils focus on severely cropped closeup views of female body parts afloat in a pink haze, as well as a woman's face with eyes covered by an identity-obscuring black bar in the manner of old-fashioned porno pix. Then there is Alex Stein, who generates ambiguity by drawing and painting incongruous images over torn-out magazine pages, such as the small sketch of a male nude superimposed over the photo of a smiling woman in "Life Study."

Refreshingly unmitigated by familiar post-modern stylistic schtick, the zany mixed media works of Aimee Hertog are disarmingly direct expressions of an offbeat sensibility. Hertog's "Drudge" is an upended feather duster with a limp mop propped on top for hair and two Brillo pads for eyes; her "French Actress" has a visage fashioned from frilly long-handled back scrubbers and sports a garish pink wig. Along with common household items from the 99 cents store, Hertog uses doll heads, cheap plastic purses, a red rayon cocktail dress, and other banal objects of kitsch to evoke feminine presences with the odd power of shamanic fetish objects or voo doo dolls. Audacious and unpredictable, she is decidedly the exhibition's wild child and most startling talent. (Aimee Hertog will also be one of the featured artists in an exhibition on September 9 at FusionArts Museum, 57 Stanton Street, on the Lower East Side.) —Ed McCormack

Anya Rubin's Paintings Explore Issues of Human Interconnectedness

A singular synthesis of humanistic and formal factors enlivens the art of Anya Rubin, a Russian-born painter presently living and working in New Jersey, at Agora Gallery, 530 West 25th Street, from September 28 through October 18. (Reception Thursday, October 4, 6 to 8 PM.)

One of the paintings that best reveals Rubin's ability to meld abstract and figurative elements is the acrylic composition that Rubin calls "Watching You Grow." Here, the almost ghostly figure of a woman gazing fondly on a row of three plants is superimposed over a grid of subtly modulated red, green, blue, and yellow hues that serve as a formal armature for the subject matter.

The device of superimposition has been employed by a wide range of artists over the decades, ranging from Francis Picabia to David Salle; however, few have integrated disparate elements so successfully. For not only do the sinuous shapes of the plants and flowers harmonize with the squares that adhere them to the picture plane by virtue of Rubin's skillful handling of complementary chromatic qualities, but the picture's formal attributes enhance its emotional resonance by contributing to its serene mood. Obviously, these plants that she regards so fondly are vital to the woman's well-being and the feeling that she has created an orderly private world within the larger world's chaos and uncertainty.

A more metaphysical visual metaphor for harmony comes across in a composition in oil and mixed media that Rubin calls "Artist at Work." Here, the figure of the female artist emerges from a deep blue ground in a manner that recalls both the linear fluidity and the haunted nocturnal atmospheres of Edvard Munch. This is one of Rubin's most overtly Expressionistic paintings, and yet it also contains an element of surrealism.

As she raises her hand to the canvas that one can only assume exists (for while its contours are swallowed by the shadowy blue background, gracefully delineated abstract shapes are clearly visible against the surrounding darkness), the artist's forearm morphs into the miniature yet full length figure of a man. Other figures and faces as well swirl within the folds of her colorful garment as, suggesting that her creations form the true substance of her existence.

Figures within figures are a recurring motif in Rubin's work, appearing again in "Letting Go," another work in oil and mixed media, where the shapely figure of a kneeling woman appears simultaneously nude and cloaked in a colorful swarm of smaller figurative forms. At the same time, other small semi-abstract figures, independent of the central figure, cavort nearby, as though inviting her to join them in a communal dance. But although she evinces interest and even appears amused at the activities of the others, the main figure remains aloof, monumental, perhaps suggesting (as the title hints) that it is necessary to let go of certain human involvements in order to be an observer and a true creator.

"Artist at Work"

That Anya Rubin, an artist who appears haunted by the spiritual meaning of our innate interconnectedness, raises such questions, without attempting to answer them in some pat way, makes her work philosophically, as well as aesthetically, intriguing.

—Wilson Wong

Ben Wohlberg's Paintings Are Possessed of a Rare, Gritty Grace

"Sea Opus"

Inspired by nature, Ben Wohlberg aims to "translate the microcosmic light and colors and shapes of my natural environment into a more expansive abstract macrocosm." On the other hand he is involved in a "continual discovery about paint and its responses to various surfaces."

If this sounds like a tug-of-war between the very different concerns of Claude Monet and Robert Ryman, perhaps it is the tension between the ethereal and the material elements in his work that lends such drama to Wohlberg's solo show "Intuitive Synthesis," at Viridian Artists Inc., 530 West 25th Street, from September 25 through October 20.

For while he responds directly to light and color as he perceives them at their primal source, Wohlberg, who advances the gutsy lyricism of Abstract Expressionism into the postmodern era, obviously has no interest in imitating the effects of nature through the devices of landscape painting. Rather, he prefers to explore the processes of painting and the properties of pigment as autonomous entities, making their own vitality surrogates for the vital forces of nature.

Thus, while the blue and green hues saturating the surface of Wohlberg's oil on canvas "Sea Opus," could seem to simulate the subtle fluctuations of light and shadow in the ocean's depths, the gracefully billowing forms dominating the center of the composition subvert any too literal reading; for they resemble no flora or fauna to be found below the water. Nor do the two calligraphic scrawls, laid down with impetuous spontaneity, on both sides of the composition (which contradict the illusion of oceanic depth by emphasizing the two-dimensionality of the picture plane) invite the viewer to partake of any further marine imaginings. What Wohlberg gives us instead is a work which, while alluding in its title and its color scheme to the sea, must finally be taken on terms peculiar to painting rather to nature.

Another example of how Wohlberg deliberately subverts the innate allusiveness of his compositions with gestures that thwart atmospheric interpretation can be seen in another major oil called "Numen." Here, as befits a painting named for the spirit believed by animists to inhabit certain natural phenomena or objects, a luminous white area, glowing out of a predominantly blue field, could suggest light emanating from some supernatural source. However, a spontaneous, graffiti-like charcoal or crayon scrawl in the immediate vicinity of the white area contradicts any such illusion, obliging the viewer to question the theme that the title so tantalizingly posits.

The reward for parting with one's pat way of looking at things is that, taken on its own uncompromising painterly terms, "Numen" is a magnificent work of art, its majestic vertical composition enlivened by vigorous brushwork, succulent splashes, drips, and other engaging gestural felicities.

Although somewhat more restrained and usually limited to specific areas of the composition, Ben Wohlberg's use of brash graphic flourishes can be compared to Cy Twombly's anxious scribbles. Yet given that Wohlberg's paintings are more lyrically suggestive than those of the older artist (which tend to remind one of blackboards or weathered walls), these seemingly impetuous scrawls also serve as warning signs. Which is to say: they alert the viewer not to succumb too easily to the seductiveness of surfaces. Yet for all his vigilance in this regard, Wohlberg must know—must, in fact, calculate—that these graffiti-like touches have the opposite effect, making his compositions all the more evocative.

Indeed, much of the drama in Wohlberg's paintings comes from the pitched battle between their ethereal and material elements, the constant back-and-forth between a lush lyricism and an equally persistent physicality, which manifests in all manner of rugged textural effects. Oil paint that appears dripped or poured forms a tough, thickly pigmented skin with a waxen quality akin to encaustic (suggesting that wax may indeed have been added to the medium). In some works, such as "Parturient," textures vie with more thinly painted gestures to define the dominant forms in the composition. (Here, the dialogue between the relief-like embossments of meaty pigment in the overall pale blue field and the blocky black strokes that impinge on it as emphatically as Franz Kline's girder-like calligraphy, provides the central drama of the painting.)

In other oils, tactile elements, rather than clearly defined brush strokes, dominate, providing the main thrust of the composition, as in certain Color Field paintings by Jules Olitski. In this regard, one of the most chromatically dazzling of Wohlberg's paintings is "Refraction," where saturations of green are shot through with touches of subtly nuanced subsidiary hues that enhance its verdant shimmer.

Ben Wohlberg is a painter too single-mindedly in pursuit of serious goals to make any attempt to ingratiate himself to the viewer. Yet he captivates us nonetheless with colors that resonate like sonorous music and textures that morph from gritty, clotted passages to bold, swirling lines, scored deep into his thickly-pigmented surfaces, as if with a giant comb raked rhythmically across the canvas, producing forms fully as graceful as Hokusai's immortal wave.

—Ed McCormack

monkdogz urban art

monkdogz.com

MoriDen

From September 6 to October 13, 2007

Opening reception Thursday September 6, 2007 from 5 to 8 pm

Jean-Marc Calvet
Lello Esposito
Sylvia Hennequin
Betina Jung
Minya
Alex Mitchell
Dave Novak
Steve Reinhart
Paul Rousso
Charles Schindler
Mari Yamagiwa

Tuesday - Saturday
11 am to 6 pm
and by appointment

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

WSAC Group Show: More Than a Mere "Fling"

The lighthearted title "Summer Fling" hardly prepared one for the surprises in the recent group show by members of the West Side Arts Coalition, at Broadway Mall Community Center, on the center island at Broadway and 96th. Chief among them were the first four paintings from Meyer Tannenbaum's brand new "Expansion Series." Aptly named, Tannenbaum's present compositions suggest infinite spaces and a sense of flotation, their color areas sizzling chromatically, their cloud-like forms seeming to expand beyond the boundaries of the canvas itself, making one eager to follow the future evolution of the series.

Jutta Filippelli also surprised us by exhibiting a vigorously gestural abstract painting along with her familiar still lifes and cityscapes. Then again, Filippelli's oils and acrylics have always been about the process of painting as much as about subject matter at hand, the subtle sensuousness of her surfaces and her finesse in paint handling recalling Cezanne.

Fans of Meg Boe Birns' densely patterned textured abstractions found something new to admire in her equally tactile figurative paintings, in which she displayed an unexpected sense of whimsy. Yet she also showed two exquisitely vertiginous abstract tondos as well.

If Gustav Klimpt had been an abstract painter his work might have resembled that of Joseph Boss. A combination of sinuous linearity and solid geometry, united by saturated emerald green hues, lends Boss' intriguingly titled series "Indiosics" a unique elegance.

K.A. Gibbons showed a characteristically Neo-Fauvist cityscape in oils as well as a pastel portrait on black paper. Something of a departure for Gibbons, the latter work depicted a formidable woman wearing a star-patterned hat that gave her the aura of a wizard.

A fanciful eccentricity is the forte of Jeanette Arnone-K, whose acrylic painting "Main Course," depicting a long-in-the-tooth fellow at table, apparently eating a dissected world, evoked satirical political connotations. Another painting of a deluge engulfing a city showed Arnone-K's visionary imagination at its most uninhibited.

Taking the same simple vase of flowers through a variety of formal permutations in watercolor and crayon, acrylic, monoprint, and collage Anne Rudder gave visual meaning to Marshall McLuhan's famous catchphrase "The Medium is the Message." Rudder's ability to exploit the unique capabilities of each medium gave every work a unique quality.

Pamela Belen Flores has evolved a formal shorthand for evoking emotion through color and form in her abstract acrylic paintings on watercolor paper. While Flores' "Embrace" is a warm merger of complementary hues laid down in washy horizontal streaks, in her "So So Difficult" more strident hues are all but buried under a rough black gestural grid, affectingly suggesting the eclipse of high hopes.

The abstractions of Julie Tersigni, with their circular centers recalling mandalas, combine tactile presence with spiritual allusiveness. Tersigni's "Sun Flower" is somewhat more literal, simultaneously evoking a flower and a fiery orb.

Created in the manner of mosaics with myriad shard-like shapes, the collages of Shirley Z. Piniat conjure a sense of unseen forces, as suggested by the title "Ghost Walker." Even in "Beneath the Reef," the inference is of something subterranean, mysterious, ultimately unknowable.

By contrast, in both her pastels and her oils, Linda Lessner appears enamored of natural surfaces. Lessner's sensitivity to nuances is especially impressive in her pastel "Winter Field,' where shadows on snow, patches of foliage, and the clouds above are balanced in exquisite harmony.

—Peter Wiley

Anne Bachelier

New Paintings

October 5 thru November 3, 2007

CFM Gallery

112 Greene Street, SoHo, New York City, NY 10012

Tel: (212) 966-3864 info@cfmgallery.com **Fax: (212) 2261041**

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

www.cfmgallery.com