April/May 2011 www.galleryandstudiomagazine.com Vol. 13 No. 4 New York

GALLERY&STUDIO

Primary Lessons in My Sentimental Education

an excerpt from HOODLUM HEART: a memoir

by Ed McCormack, pg. 12

LABYRINTH OF COLOR

Dominique Boutaud
Claire Champy
Cary Griffiths
Chad Redl
Ford Weisberg

May 12 - June 1, 2011
Reception: Thursday, June 12, 2011 6-8pm

530 West 25th St., Chelsea, New York
212-226-4151 Fax: 212-966-4380
www.Agora-Gallery.com
info@Agora-Gallery.com

Agora Gallery

ARMADILLO FINE ART PUBLISHING

AGALLERY

PRESENTS

CRITICS TOP PICKS
FROM
SPRING 2011 ARTISTS COMPETITION

ERIN QUINN
BRETT EBERHARDT
RICHARD LUND
TOMIYUKI SAKUTA
RICHARD SILVER

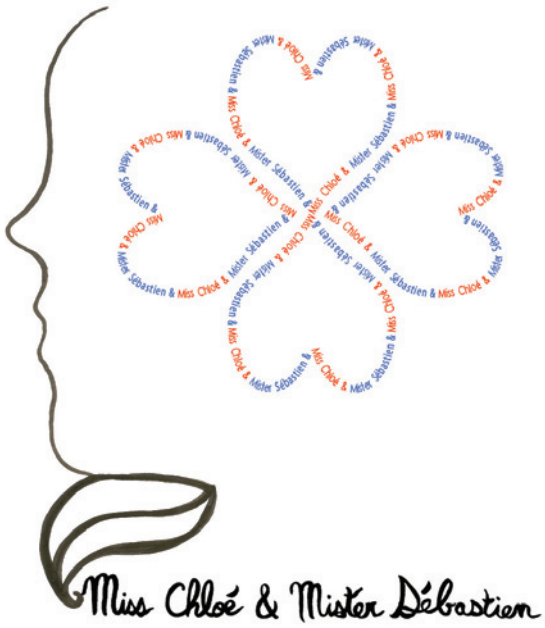
MAY 3 - MAY 19
OPENING RECEPTION MAY 5 6-10 PM

PLUS COMPETITION FINALISTS

JENNIFER PURDUM
JESSICA HAMILTON
PHILMORE PETERSON

AGALLERY
141 WEST 28 ST. NYC 10001 212.947.7638
WWW.AGALLERY.US
7th FLOOR BUZZER 15

www.chloeSebastien.com



ROSE SIGAL IBSEN

Japanese Painting & Calligraphy on Cotton Scrolls

NOTHINGNESS, 34½"H x 21"W

May 2 - 31, 2011

Berkeley Gallery

Berkeley College

3 East 43rd Street, New York, N.Y. 10017 (Between 5th & Madison)

Open to the Public

Mon. - Fri 9am - 7pm

Sat. 9am - 3pm - closed Sun.

Artist Reception and Demo in Calligraphy

Wednesday, May 11, 2011

5:30pm - 7:30pm

RSVP To Bob Keiber - 212 252 2065

berkeleycollege.edu/art_gallery

G&S Highlights

On the Cover:
From furtive feels copped at record hops at a settlement house on the Lower East Side to teenage lust with a "statutory chicklet" in the beatnik dives of 1950's Greenwich Village – the latest installment of an audacious autobiography. –Page 12

April Bending, pg. 29

Hedy O'Beil, pg. 11

Rose Sigal-Ibsen, pg. 25

Gerda Roze, pg. 21

Lisa Lichtenfels, pg. 4

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

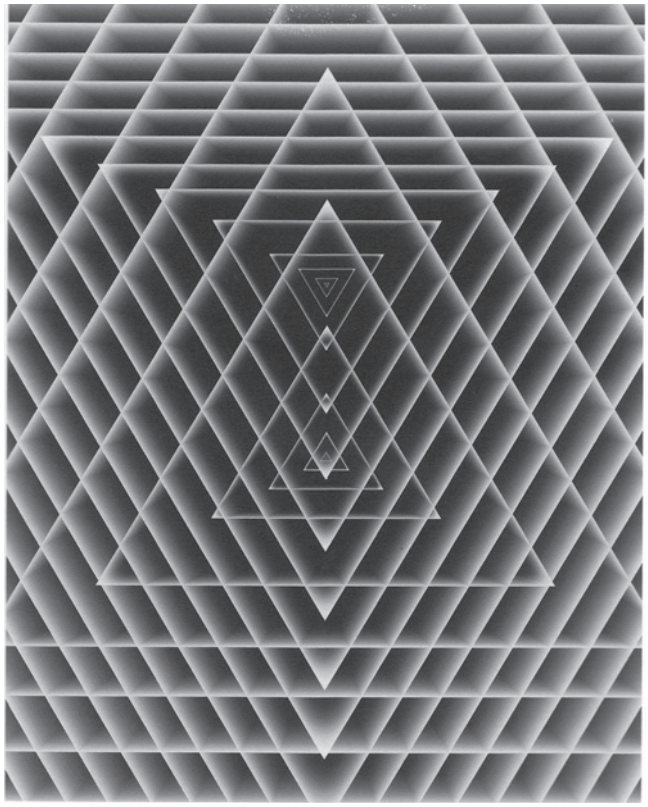
Wally Gilbert Stakes Out New Territory in Cyberspace

Wally Gilbert has always been a venturesome artist, but never quite so adventurous as in his most recent exhibition, where he has done away with all of the "eye candy" — which is to say, recognizable subject matter — that initially made his work so instantly appealing, in favor of striped down geometric abstractions. Gone from his new series of large digital prints, each printed in editions of three on luster paper, is the spooky still-life surrealism of grease-smeared machinery in a cavernous former factory in Poland turned technical museum; the tiny human figure silhouetted in apparent freefall against a vast blue sky amid rugged floating fragments of topsy turvy topology; the tense Mexican standoff between bull and matador in a dusty arena where only the death of one or the other will satisfy the bloodlust of the fans in the stands; the cool kiss of the Vermeer light illuminating the warm white shoulder of a ballerina in the rehearsal studio, and myriad other magical moments of actual or manipulated reality that once engaged the viewer emotionally, as well as intellectually and aesthetically.

In the case of a lesser artist their sudden absence would almost certainly be counted as a deficit, but in that of Gilbert one can only see the removal of such figments of the visible and/or imaginative world as signals of a brave new departure. For as Pete Frank, an art critic and adjunct senior curator for the Riverside Art Museum reminded us in the catalog essay for the artist's exhibition, at the Los Angeles Center for Digital Art, of some of the same works he also showed in his recent solo show at Viridian Artists in New York City, "Having innovated in molecular biology to the point of winning a Nobel Prize, Gilbert has since turned to the realm of visual art, although here, too, he keeps pushing at the limits of both his own imagination and the abilities of his tools."

The gamble has paid off handsomely for Gilbert in these dazzling and hypnotic compositions, which, despite their stringent geometries, are also highly evocative — albeit of something cloaked in the mystery of the infinite and thus not as comfortingly knowable as the subject matter of his previous work. In this regard, one might be advised to recall Willem de Kooning's famous statement, "Art, for me, has never been a situation of comfort."

Indeed, has there ever been such a thing as a comfortable adventure? Or one that did not involve a certain element of risk, even danger? In any case, Wally Gilbert is hardly an artist to play safely into the expectations of the viewer or to let insecurity regarding the critical response to his work inhibit him from going further into the mystery of artistic creation, which, for any serious artist, even one with a scientific background, and possibly the agnostic orientation that normally goes with it, is tantamount to a spiritual quest.



"Triangles #1D"

The new work is comprised of two series based on geometric figures: the first, the image of a square; the second, of a triangle. Gilbert manipulated and layered these figures by hand on the computer, his superimpositions resulting in various metamorphoses and mutations that created infinite metaphysical spaces. The sanctity of the two-dimensional "picture plane," that staple of modernist theory, with its dogmatic insistence on the artwork as actual object rather than vehicle of illusion, no longer applies in the postmodern realm of cyberspace, where all reality is by definition virtual.

In the seminal work in the series based on the square, "Vanishing Star," an eight-pointed star resulting from the superimposition of two red squares filled with intricate blue and black borders that recede and shrink beyond vision is centrally suspended on a black expanse. Next comes "Vanishing Star with Points," where five lines of tiny red triangles now radiate like stylized light-beams from each of the eight points of an almost identical image. When the two prints are regarded metaphorically together, it is as if the square to which Albers paid static homage has been set free from its moorings on the picture plane to couple with its double in inner space, as ecstatically as Blake's cosmic lovers.

The several progeny these parent works beget are a numbered sequence of six "Vanishing Squares," in which the square, tilted like a diamond in the black space, undergoes multiple permutations, its central forms multiplying like Escher's mazes and taking on luminous rainbow colorations. These works eventually give way to a sequence called "Vanishing Pattern," in which the outer square expands to fill the entire picture space with intricate overall patterns that zoom vertiginously, like a pulsing, breathing electronic mandalas, toward a central vanishing point. Although the first work in this sequence is the color of its predecessors and titled, "Vanishing Pattern Red," the following three are all titled "Vanishing Pattern Black and White," and as in the monochromatic optical paintings of Brigit Riley, their kinetic effect derives wholly from their linear intricacy.

Conversely Gilbert's "Images from Triangles Series" begins in monochromes, with steely, streamlined overlapping symbols suggesting intricate grids casting shadows on infinity. Gradually, they flower into full color , blazing like neon tubing arranged in intricate symmetries and emitting an unearthly light. As the series progresses, however, the compositions grow more minimal and the sharp, chevron-like shapes become increasingly more bold, ending with a lone, vibrantly colored triangular configuration hovering and pulsing chromatically against the primal black background with which the entire sequence that makes up the exhibition began.

Although a viewer addicted to Wally Gilbert's earlier imagery approached this show with a certain trepidation, he was soon seduced by the sheer, dazzling force of this new phase, which suggests a major breakthrough for the artist into heretofore unexplored aesthetic territory.

— Ed McCormack

Wally Gilbert, seen recently at Viridian Artists, 530 West 25th Street.
www.viridianartists.com

Lisa Lichtenfels: Hyperrealism Made Mythic

Surely new standards for art world hype were set last year, when private art dealer Philippe Ségalot hired celebrity hair stylist Frederic Fekkai to style the wig on Italian artist Maurizio Cattelan's hyperrealist sculpture of model/actress Stephanie Seymour before it was photographed for the cover of an auction catalog. That Fekkai happens to be the real Stephanie Seymour's hair dresser, of course, only adds to the absurdity of a work of art being primped as if for the Academy Awards.

Long before Cattelan made news with his gussied-up effigy, the American fabric sculptor Lisa Lichtenfels created 3-D portraits of Barbra Streisand and Demi Moore so eerily lifelike as to quicken the hearts of their most rabid fans, even while displaying all the formal attributes of enduring art. And, thankfully, Lichtenfels' dealer Neil Zukerman, of Chelsea's CFM Gallery, feels no need to resort to such tactics to promote his charge, since Lichtenfels' sculptures succeed splendidly on their own artistic merits.

That Lichtenfels transcends the People magazine mentality of Cattelan and others who pander to the disposable values of celebrity culture is made especially clear in her sculpture "Lon Chaney," depicting the silent screen star whose best known characterization, "The Phantom of the Opera," demonstrated his artistry as a makeup artist as well as an actor. Indeed, her portrait pays tribute to "The Man of a Thousand Faces" primarily as a fellow visual artist, showing him seated and holding a make-up brush like a cigar, beside the somewhat gruesome-looking models for two of his characters, propped up on his workbench like severed heads.

Commenting affectionately on the piece in the text of the exhibition catalog, the sculptor evokes something of Norman Rockwell's Americana when she likens the actor to her engineer father, saying, "Both had very rough lives but forged honorable careers. They were both of a certain generation of men ... You don't see faces like those any longer."

To a dispassionate observer, however, with his thinning, slicked-back hair and wolfish grin, Chaney could resemble Jack Nicholson playing a period serial killer showing off a couple of his trophies. In any case, much to Lichtenfels' credit, the mood smacks more of "Day of the Locust" than "Entertainment Tonight." For it is this subtle sense of weirdness at the heart of the ordinary that lends her pieces their sharp contemporary "edge."

Then again, several things set Lichtenfels' work apart from that of other hyperrealist sculptors of recent vintage. For one, her figures are created from scratch, rather than cast from living people in the manner of George Segal or Duane Hanson, which gives them a subjective expressive dimension that probes beyond surface appearances. For another, most of her contemporaries use polyurethane, fiberglass, resin and other unyielding materials to create figures they then paint over as a mortician might apply cosmetics to a rigor-mortised corpse, which gives them an embalmed appearance. By contrast, Lichtenfels employs the novel and more malleable medium of nylon stockings, which she wraps around a moveable internal skeleton to give her personages a more supple human quality.

Superimposing several layers of this soft, semitranslucent material (which she discovered over twenty-five years ago, while creating figures for stop-motion animation at Disney Studios) enables her to create a subtle range of skin tones that enhance the uncanny realism of her pieces, which range from a mere few inches to life-size.

This is especially striking in full-length nudes such as "Grace," based on one of photographer Eadweard Muybridge's late 19th century motion studies, and "Dual Nudes," where the warmly contrasting skin tones of a blond Venus and her dusky lover make for an engaging erotic frisson.

One of the most ambitious pieces in Lichtenfels' new solo show, however, is "Check Out," a remarkable installation/diorama inspired by an imaginative mental

"Check Out" (Diorama)

merger of the young barmaid in Manet's masterpiece "Le Bar aux Folies-Bergères" and a weary check-out girl that the artist observed in a local supermarket. As in the best large scale environmental works of Red Grooms, the action in "Check Out" fans out around this central figure to create a theatrical tableau comprised of diverse types.

Those familiar with Manet's painting, with its elegant nightclub setting of champagne bottles, crystal chandeliers, and sophisticated revelers reflected in shimmering mirrors, will relish the witty transformation Lichtenfels has wrought here, where the stark fluorescence of a tacky modern convenience store replaces that genteel Proustian atmosphere. This banal setting is evoked in minute detail, right down to the subtly altered product labels and the wittily parodistic cover photos on the check-out counter magazine rack.

As the sculptor makes clear in her catalog notes, an elaborate narrative scenario, complete with character names, accompanies each of her sculptures, providing a submerged "back-story" that, while tangential to its physical components, enhances its overall verisimilitude.

An especially engaging supporting player in the drama is the character Lichtenfels calls "Estralita," a corpulent hispanic woman in a belly-baring halter and cutoff denim hot-pants. Presumably plugged in via her iPod to hot salsa, she twirls in a swoon with closed eyes, transported by the soaring music, a plastic shopping basket dangling absently off one massive arm. Then there are Russell, an austere white-haired, prune-faced gentleman in professorial tweeds who stands impatiently, pen and checkbook in hand; Martina, a youthful, stylish mom, holding a laden shopping cart while chatting distractedly into a cell phone, and Poly, her cute toddler daughter, who clutches a cellophane-wrapped bouquet plucked from a nearby display gaudily festooned with festive balloons. Eyes wide with wonder, this radiant child appears to be the only member of the cast fully in touch with the moment.

While playing off each other within the context of the diorama in a manner that brings the venerable yet sorely neglected art of the genre scene right up to the present moment in Malltown U.S.A, each of these highly detailed portraits also stands alone as an autonomous sculptural statement. For it is Lichtenfels' special gift to impart to every figure the vital spark of life that distinguishes the very best realist art.

And it is her ability to ignite this vital spark that makes it possible for her to impart a sense of immediacy to even mythic characters such as "Falling Angel" and "Livia." Perhaps the winged being plunging like Icarus (an effect achieved by balancing the figure on the pedestal by the point of its elbow) gains some of its poignancy from the fact that its face was inspired by a news image the artist once saw of a Bosnian refugee. On the other hand, one might not be eager to meet the model for Livia Drusilla (58 BCE to 29 CE) "the most powerful woman of the early Roman Empire." For here, as Lichtenfels depicts the gowned seated figure, perched like an elderly eagle on one of those little antique Roman benches between classical columns, is a formidable matron indeed. Her gaze, fierce and piercing under bushy white brows that the sculptor has fashioned thread by minute thread, is captured so compellingly as to leave no doubt as to why she was considered fully as formidable as her husband, Emperor Caesar Augustus.

Whether depicting a native maiden in the Yukon, holding an ice-cream cone; a slender flapper perched on a stool like a coy Art Deco arabesque; or an old-fashioned nightclub cigarette girl with a platinum Harlow bob and short skirt, displaying her tray of Camels, Luckie Strikes, Chesterfields, and Old Golds, Lisa Lichtenfels evokes people of various places and periods with a wit and empathy all but extinct in the art of our century. It is for its humane qualities, as well as its technical proficiency, that her work shows every promise of enduring into an age more aesthetically enlightened than our own.

— Ed McCormack

"Lon Chaney"

"Grace"

"Dual Nudes"

Lisa Lichtenfels, CFM Gallery, 236 West 27th Street. April 1 - 30.

Curator Carrozzini Explores Art at Play

Thomas Wolfe's scathing fictionalized parody of Alexander Calder as a hulking simpleton sculptor called "Piggy Logan" performing with his miniature circus at a chic party in the novel "You Can't Go Home Again" is one of the best examples of how writers sometimes misunderstand the notion of playfulness in visual art.

Putting a positive spin on creative levity, curator Stefania Carrozzini, an artist as well as a writer, cites Plato's observation of the need of all young creatures to jump, and suggests that an artist "has to learn to use the ground as a trampoline and then land bouncing" in order to test the power of gravity "but without escaping from it," in the catalog essay for her international exhibition "Among the Serious and Playful Things." And participating artist Barbara Busetto, of Milan, exemplifies the theme quite literally with her painting of a gung-ho woman frolicking among a herd of leaping kangaroos.

Sculpture/cabinetmaker Paul Carbo, a native of Baltimore now living in West Virginia, takes his own playful yet utilitarian approach with his figure of Albert Einstein wearing a cardigan that opens to reveal a set of shelves. Then there is Jim Dixon, a graphic and game designer fascinated with robotics and "automata," whose zany mechanical assemblage combines novelty false teeth, a kicking leg, and a Mr. Potato Head-like protagonist in a witty kinetic melange.

Painter, installation artist, and assemblagist Monica Wolf, a German transplanted to Italy, shows a found object piece juxtaposing illegible scrawls with a row of five chocolate Easter rabbits gaily wrapped in gold foil. Viewed from another angle, however, the benign bunnies look like wounded beasts, the black space between their ears turning into a gaping maw.

Although inspired by the concepts of Carl Jung and somewhat ponderously titled, Japanese photographer Sayuri Shimizu's sequence of Fuji Chrome prints "Synchronicity with the others Vol. 5" comes off as suitably playful for this show. Apparently it has much to do with self-conscious young fashion victims who present themselves with a gravitas verging on comedy.

Similarly, Rachel Schneider's black and white photographic portrait "James" focuses on the vanity of a young Jimi Hendrix look-alike peeking playfully from behind a beam on the street. That he is obviously trying to look dramatic and somewhat dangerous, but comes off as merely handsome and harmless, only adds to the human interest of this effortlessly artful image.

Such contradictions abound in irony-saturated precincts of contemporary art, where even the most poetically elusive preoccupations seem to require the backing of a complex thesis. Luciano Maciotta, for example, has studied the effects of light more assiduously than many scientists and experimented with battery-powered illumination within the canvas to create special effects in combination with natural light and so on. Thankfully, however, his piece in this show has a buoyant quality of flotation that needs no explication, with its severely simplified central form surrounding painted yellow beams and projecting a sense of solar warmth.

Other works, however, perversely suggest the very opposite of play, most particularly Adriana Collovati's photo on canvas of pink high heeled shoes, a matching handbag, a rose scattered on gravel, suggesting the aftermath of a mugging or rape in a parking lot. Perhaps this work falls on the more serious, if not to say drastic, side of the equation.

In the case of some of the more abstract

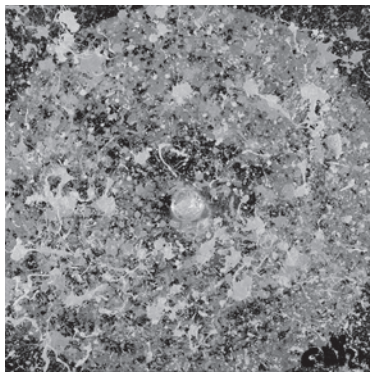
works, well, the viewer must take on faith the idea that they partake of play in the serious way that art automatically does when it is created in the spirit of adventurous visual research. Concrete Art, after all, of the type that Tina Parotti practices makes a point of excluding even the most vaguely representational elements; yet the severely simplified yellow symbols set against a pure black ground in Parotti's oil on canvas "L'immensitá = noi" appear as carefree as a game of tic tac toe. And while, aside from its coloristic sumptuousness, the composition of Barbara Rosenzweig's precise linear abstraction "Untitled (Horizontal in red)" is every bit as austere, her way of bouncing the eye in and out of the picture plane via spatial ambiguity could certainly be described as playful. Rosanna Forino also has a way of making stringently geometric forms behave with uncharacteristic animation in a collage painting where razor-sharp black gray and blue shapes appear to collapse like a house of cards.

Continued on page 30

Among the Serious and Playful Things, Onishi Gallery, 521 West 26th Street, May 5 - 18.

Charting Painter Paul M. Cote's Lightning Ascent

Although he has only been painting for a relatively short period of time, Paul M. Cote, who signs his work "Cody," has quickly established himself as something of an up-and-coming artistic enfant terrible, given his untrammeled ambition and the large scale and rugged aggressiveness of his Neo-Abstract Expressionist canvases.



"Morganite"

Indeed, although his nonobjective style and swirling skeins of pigment may be more akin to Jackson Pollock, Cote makes one think of the emergence of Julian Schnabel in the late 70s and early 80s. For he enters the postmodern fray as though ready to take on all comers. And he has already established a personal myth to go with his outsize talent: Apparently, Cote was driving home from work one evening during a dark period in his life not many years ago when he suddenly experienced an epiphany and ended up in an art supply store. "The Gift," as he refers to it, revived his faith in life, and resulted in a growing oeuvre of over 100 paintings faster than you could say "instant prodigy." The kicker is that, while he had always frequented museums wherever he travelled in the world, the bulk of Cote's youth had been taken up with sports ranging from hockey to baseball to football, from bodybuilding to tennis — the latter at which he made his living before shifting his allegiance to artistic production. It all makes sense, when one considers the athletic physical energy with which he approaches the act of painting.

No doubt, some cynics might think he lacks tact or caution; others might even harbor the sour-grapes opinion that the enthusiastic critical response to his work is a case of "too much too soon." But Cote seems to possess the goods to back up the epic claims his paintings make by sheer virtue of their size and boldness.

Everything goes into them but the proverbial kitchen sink: studio detritus, crystals, nails, screws, feathers, broken picture frames, masks, plastic doodads — apparently anything within reach at the time he is dripping and spreading paint on large expanses of canvas laid out on his studio floor. Seemingly such objects simply get caught up in the volcanic tide of the molten pigment, yet somehow seem to land just where they belong in the finished painting. Thus his work can seem to be a process-oriented act of aesthetic shamanism, predicated on a combination of chance, lucky accident, and sheer will. However, no painter could get it right so consistently without an innate talent for form, color, and composition that makes his intuitive approach stunningly successful.

Witness for one impressive example of what he describes as his "topographical, real/surreal paintings" the canvas called "Morganite," with its swirling, thickly impastoed circular composition, like a tactile mandala. Here, as in many of Cote's paintings, the symmetry of the perfectly square format enhances the sense of limitless space that lends the work a cosmic quality. Indeed, the somewhat smaller work in acrylic and ink called "Paraiba" appears equally infinite, with its blue orb emerging from actively overlapping networks of flung pigment. Then there is "Sphene," a light-radiating work in acrylic and mixed media with a more "overall" composition of dominant yellow hues that swarms like a network of nebulae.

These and other works in Paul M. Cote's most recent exhibition herald the arrival of a brash new talent whose development will almost certainly bear continued watching in seasons to come.

— Byron Coleman

Paul M. Cote, Agora Gallery, 530 West 25th Street, April 19 - May 10. Reception: Thursday, April 21, 6 - 8 pm.

Black Art Transcends Labels Via Vital Diversity

While a curator at The Studio Museum of Harlem once coined the term "Post Black Art" in an understandable attempt to prevent art world "ghettoization" of African-American artists, it did not stick. Fo that the unique qualities and problems of being Black in America, even in the Obama era, are still too compelling to ignore, as the recent exhibition "Black Renaissance," curated for the West Side Arts Coalition by Sonia Barnett and Robert N. Scott demonstrated more than amply.

Rosa Maye employs photo-collage and mixed media as a meaningful vehicle for autobiography in "My Journey in Art," suggesting her trajectory from the neighborhoods of Brooklyn to the wider world of self-fulfillment. And in her acrylic on canvas "Winter 2010," the same artist depicts the Prospect Park subway station in a snowy season in a style as strong and direct as a Jacob Lawrence tempera painting.

Mainstream as she may be, Oprah Winfrey is still a proud Black woman and living proof that the '60s civil rights slogan "Black is Beautiful" still applies. For in two strong chalk portraits, respectively titled "Oprah Winfrey" and "Oprah Winfrey Up Close," Sonia Barnett captures the inner strength behind the mass media icon's glowing countenance.

Classical realist Gloria A. Shepherd has a special knack for capturing the subtle distances between people. In Shepherd's "Disconnect," a man and a woman stand in close physical proximity but appear worlds apart, while in a bravura oil one might mistake another couple for interracial lovers holding hands, before realizing that the blond man is having his palm read.

Carol Maria Weaver also makes a subtle point with her painting "Alexa," a winning portrait of a little girl practicing in a tutu, executed in the unusual mixed medium of oils and stained glass on board. First one is visually charmed by the child's serious pose, then quickly reminded how sadly few African-American dancers are represented in the major ballet companies. In Nate Ladson's digital print "The Corner Store," the postures of a group of men lounging outside a neighborhood business bespeak the camaraderie of old friends, comfortable in each others' presence, while his "Crucifixion" defies the stereotype of a white Anglo-Saxon Christ.

Gloria Patton employs charcoal, wax resist, India ink, and graphite to create seductive and tactile qualities in semiabstract compositions such as "Ocean Voyage 1." Here the artist sets an almost sinister-looking hook-like nautical apparatus within a splashy gestural context. Gertrude Fleming is another gifted artist with a style that harks back to the experiments of early American abstractionists such as Arthur Dove and John Marin, as well as the Vorticists in intimate yet dynamic watercolor compositions such as "Feathers of Birds" and "Celestial Explosion."

Herbert Evans combines exacting black and white portraiture within the looser gestural paint-handling of an abstract composition, melding the two seamlessly in a mixed media work "Glorius Harriett." Particularly striking here is Evans' ability to make his realist portrait of the elderly woman's face a veritable map of experience. And William Hunt is clearly one of our more gifted and inventive young graphic artists, working on a relatively large scale in charcoal, paint, marker and pastel. His drawing "Stages of Her Life" combines fragmented figurative imagery with totemic structuring to make a strong and witty visual statement.

Continued on page 30

Black Renaissance 2011, recently seen at Broadway Mall Community Center, Broadway and 96th Street (center isle).

The Treasure Room Gallery
presents

Gerda Roze
"Homage to the Circle"

"Circles in a Square" 24"W x 24"H

April 7 - May 13, 2011

Artist Reception
Thursday, April 14th, 4 -7 pm
Gallery Hours: Mon. - Fri. 9 - 5

The Interchurch Center
475 Riverside Drive
(61 Claremont Avenue @ 120th Street – one block west of Broadway)
New York, N Y 10115
www.interchurchcenter.org www.gerdarozeart.com

Kelly Hunt Probes the Secret Life of the Flower

"A rose is a rose is a rose," wrote Gertrude Stein, but one feels almost certain that Kelly Hunt would disagree. For in her large digital photographs of floral forms on canvas, Hunt makes clear that a rose — and indeed any other species of flower — can be ever so much more.

Having grown up in Bermuda, where all manner of exotic flora, fauna, and sea creatures abound, it seems only natural that Hunt has chosen flowers as her vehicle for aesthetic expression. However, it is her unique slant on the subject that lends her work its singular distinction. For one thing, most of her compositions are extreme close-ups that, much in the manner of Georgia O'Keeffe, focus on the abstract and suggestive qualities of flowers and plants.

Hunt's eye for form and composition is unerring. Her prints are as pristine as the floral pictures of Robert Mapplethorpe, which are more exquisite in formal terms than the more controversial sexual imagery that gained him the most attention. Hunt, however, accomplishes the seemingly impossible task of maintaining that exquisite formal balance while working with lush, luscious color. It is a tribute to her taste that no matter how rich the colorations of the species she is photographing, her compositions never become gaudy or overbearing.

Rather, they retain a subtle chromatic beauty, even in a composition such as "Morado," where the petals of the deep purple flower with a yellow center billow out to fill the entire picture space in soft, satiny waves. Here, as in another scrumptious picture called "Linda," where the pink / yellow petals curl around a dark central orifice, there is an undeniable labial suggestiveness fully as pronounced as in O'Keeffe's famous "Black Orchid," in the collection of the Metropolitan Museum of Art.

"Flow"

Obviously, the sensuous colors and sensual forms in Hunt's photographs often suggest human anatomy. Yet they also evoke a host of autonomous abstract forms as well, as seen in "Orchid II," one of her most striking prints, in which the deep red form, hovering near the upper left corner of the composition, takes on an unearthly quality, almost suggesting an apparition of a spectral face. Then there is "Lily," where the delicate yellow and pink petals recede into the background, becoming as ethereal and immaterial as pale beams of light, while the six clustered pods appear to float freely in space near the lower left side of the composition.

It is almost as though Hunt, who has stated, "In my estimation, the job of an artist is to illuminate the mundane," is revealing in these pictures an alternative reality within a familiar subject. Indeed, her imagery has the opposite effect from Andy Warhol's silkscreened flowers, which seemed to concur with Gertrude Stein's deadpan literalism in suggesting that "what you see is what you get."

Rather than numbing the perceptions in a similar manner, Kelly Hunt's floral explorations invite the viewer to open up to new imaginative possibilities. In other words, they show us not only the visual manifestation of natural beauty, but invite us to contemplate the ineffable mystery of what the great Welsh poet Dylan Thomas once referred to, unforgettably, as "the force that through the green fuse drives the flower."

— Maureen Flynn

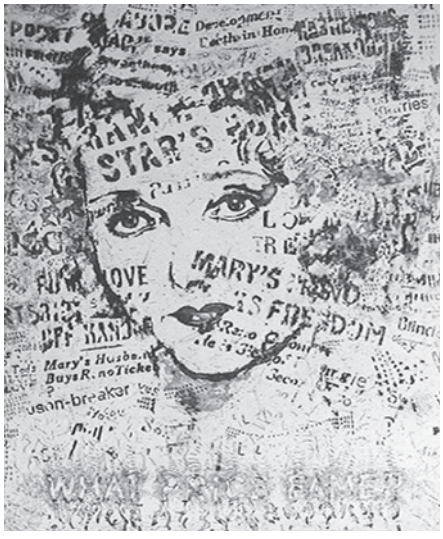
Kelly Hunt, Agora Gallery, 530 West 25th Street, April 19 - May 10. Reception: Thursday, April 21, 6 - 8 pm.

The Lethal Charm of Ann Chernow's "Bad Girls"

Ann Chernow is contemporary art's Drama Queen — and the capital letters should indicate that one means this in the very best sense of the term. For Chernow is our master dramatist of the feminine woes and wiles, filtering compelling myths of women's lives through the smoky, shadowy conventions of 1940s film noir.

That she chooses to work in the medium of the etching and aquatint, on a scale somewhere between black and white film stills and old fashioned movie posters, rather than in oils or acrylics in the manner of most Pop and post-Pop artists who deal with neo-narrative subject matter, makes her intimate scenes all the more atmospherically resonant. And scenes they are, even when Chernow zooms in for a close-up of a blowzy blond with a cigarette dangling from her bee-stung lips. The viewer's mind can fill in the dark corner and the street light that both the subject's attitude and the picture's author suggests when she writes, "She was a fallen angel, the kind of woman men want but won't introduce to their mothers."

Nor is "author" a misnomer for Chernow, who writes one paragraph "Bad Girl Stories" in sparse Mickey Spillane prose to go with her pictures. A line from the one accompanying the etching and aquatint and photogravure that she calls "Vendetta" goes:



"What Price Fame?"

"She was the flashiest kind of tramp ... tall and sleazy looking with violet eyes and a provocative mouth, deep dish apple pie in a satin dress that revealed everything." The print depicts a real glamour girl out of the Rita Hayworth mold, with hair like sea-waves, full lips, a creamy bared shoulder and a dagger in her hand. The etching ink is a shade of red like dried blood on a bedsheet.

By contrast, a bluesy blue is the dominant hue of "No Bed of Her Own," in which a somewhat more coy femme fatale wearing not much more than a '20s bob and pointy-toed high-heeled flapper pumps curls up, hugging herself and flashing a wan smile, on a floral print spread.

And in "What Price Fame?" Chernow switches from the silver screen to behind-the-scenes scandalmongering. Here, the fragments of text that, in some of her prints, suggest movie posters, multiply and turn into gossipy newspaper headlines that all but devour the face of a beauty with a Cupid's-bow mouth and huge Betty Boop eyes. Although the face is a dead ringer for silent film star Mary Pickford, for one viewer the "Mary" evoked the story of Mary Miles Mintner a lesser ingenue accused in the 1920s of murdering one of her lovers. Chernow's short-short story addendum to "What Price Fame?" adds to the mystery with the lines, "Harry had seen all sides of her and knew she had killed for sheer ambition. But he loved her anyway."

That a lithograph by Ann Chernow called

Continued on page 30

Ann Chernow, Washington Art Association, 4 Bryan Plaza, Washington Depot, Ct., April 2 - May 1, 2011

"New Expressions 2011" at New Century Artists

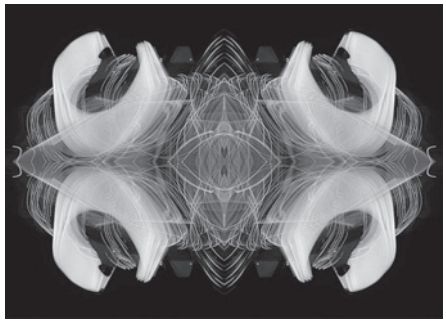
While not a movement or a collective, the artists who have been exhibiting together under the name of "New Expressions" for the past few years seem to share a penchant for the personal and the intimate that is refreshing in an art world rife with schtick. Some have come and gone, others have been added to their annual group shows, but core members and emphasis on individual sensibility, rather than attention-hogging sensationalism, central to their exhibitions have remained.

Mark Lerer

Mark Lerer, one of the original members, is always intriguing for his insistence on using the simplest of means as his primary medium. A pen or a pencil and a sheet of paper is all that Lerer needs to make full-blown artistic statements that often put the more elaborate productions of many others to shame. His most recent project is a series of simple ink drawings he calls "Fictitious Portraits." As usual they are drawn in a clean linear style influenced by comic strips, film story boards, or magazine layouts. His naked pictorialism is almost puritanical in its eschewal of stylistic flourishes.

Lerer's "Fictitious Portrait — Ex-Con" depicts a burly man in a wifebeater undershirt and a pair of high-rise slacks standing against a backdrop of urban tenements, holding a flask, and wearing an expression that suggests the contentment of one who has learned how to do time, in or out of jail. Lerer's "Fictitious Portrait — Indian Woman" is equally evocative, showing a pleasant-looking woman with modestly lowered eyes and the "bindi" or vermilion dot (in this case indicated with a black outline) that married Indian women wear on their foreheads as a sign of their status. Given the stately embassy style of architecture and sleek parked town car in the background, it is easy to imagine her on some mysterious diplomatic mission. Then there is "Fictitious Portrait — Career Woman," depicting a dressed-for-success middle-aged female executive posing, as if for a snapshot, in front of her desk. This drawing seems quintessential, for it is so innately, deliberately deadpan and mundane. And Mark Lerer, in his own deceptively, modest way, may very well be one of the most accomplished masters of the mundane since Andy Warhol.

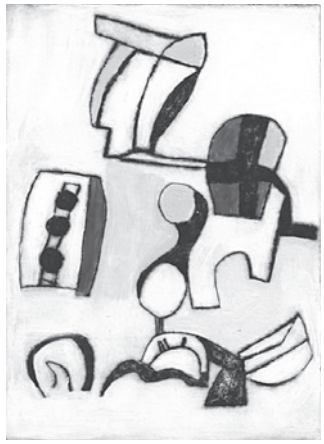
Marilyn Stevenson defines the digital



Marilyn Stevenson

C-prints that she has been exploring for the past eight years as "photographic light drawings." Employing her camera as a drawing instrument, Stevenson creates compositions that succeed splendidly in her stated aim of imaginatively transcending the documentary function of photography. The brilliantly colored, vibrantly glowing prints in her "Pink Series" have the dynamic quality of psychedelic mandalas further enlivened by a figurative suggestiveness as gaudily groovy as the paintings of Chicago's Hairy Who School, an iconoclastic movement of the late 1960s that presented a mapcap challenge to the sterile impersonality of some of New York's more heralded Popmeisters. One sees echoes of that movement particularly in vertical pieces by Stevenson such as "Pink Series # 10-1\ ," where the initially abstract central pink form morphs with further looking into what appears to be a demonic face, as angularly stylized as an African mask. By contrast, prints in a more horizontal format such such as "Pink Series # 4\" evoke vast spectral realms. That these digital C-prints are six-by-four feet in size lends them an impact more akin to painting than photography. Yet the real power of Marilyn Stevenson's work emanates from this greatly gifted photographic artist's unique ability to express such an adamantly subjective artistic vision with state of the art technology.

Quite opposite in scale and spirit, the drypoints of printmaker Linda Dujack, another artist who has been with the group since its beginning, make a virtue of being small, spare of composition, and exquisitely austere. "Pennsylvania-6-5000," a work in drypoint and acrylic named for the great Glenn Miller song of the 1940s, for example, is a mere five by seven inches in size. Yet with its buoyant abstract forms suggesting an old-fashioned telephone receiver ringing off the hook, it comes across like the playful offspring of some magical mating of Fernand Leger and Joan Miro — especially given Dujack's way of looping a fluid black line like a lasso around areas of bright red.



Linda Dujack

Another musical reference, a punning play on the title of a pop song by Paul Simon, provides inspiration for Dujack's drypoint "A Diamond on the Soul of My Shoe," a graceful linear excursion apparently built on the contours of the Jack of Diamonds playing card.

Even more spare is a mixed media work called "Water Tower," in which Dujack manages to suggest an entire vista of urban rooftops with just a few angular black lines and a piquant smear of red. Here, the artist's grasp of something at once delicate and gritty can only be likened to the evocative title of e.e. cummings' early sheaf of poems "Tulips & Chimneys." Indeed, like that great syntactical and typographical innovator in another medium, Linda Dujack tackles profound subjects with a light touch, making statements notable for their combination of effortless poetry and formal grace.

Barbara Cuthel

A relatively recent addition to the "New Expressions" group, the collagist Barbara Cuthel, reminds one of another poet, Emily Dickinson, for her delicate observations of nature in its more domesticated forms. In her brilliantly colorful and enticingly

Continued on page 30

New Expressions 2011 was recently seen at New Century Artists Gallery, 530 West 25th Street.

A More Intimate Side of Hedy O'Beil's Varied Oeuvre

That Hedy O'Beil was recently awarded a Pollock-Krasner Grant seems altogether apropos, since this veteran painter has exemplified quite faithfully over a long career the ideals of pure painterly endeavor advanced by Jackson Pollock and Lee Krasner, the Abstract Expressionist namesakes of that foundation.

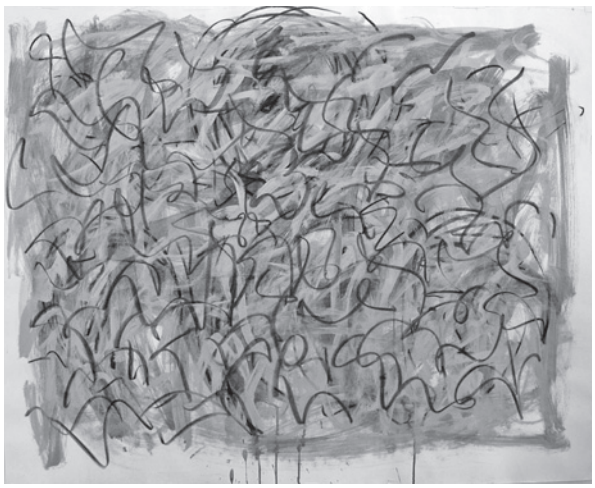
O'Beil's new exhibition, however, is made up of works on paper, most small in size but hardly in ambition, that give us a more intimate view of an artist whose works on canvas have generally partaken of the expansive spirit of classic New York School painting without being overblown. Which is to say, even at easel size or only slightly larger, her paintings have invariably possessed a compositional boldness and gestural freedom suggesting a scale beyond their actual dimensions.

Like that generation of artists who came of age in the vital postwar period when New York City was flooded with avant garde refugees from Europe, O'Beil had a fling with Surrealism. Yet even when she was engaged with mysterious still lifes involving incongruous objects and had a flirtation with feminist subject matter in the 1970s, the formal thrust of her compositions was essentially abstract. This was as true in her case as that of de Kooning or Guston during their prolonged figurative forays.

These qualities carry over into O'Beil's new works on paper as well, some of the smallest and sparest of which, executed in diluted Higgens India Ink, privilege the calligraphic element which has always played an important role in her larger compositions in acrylic on canvas. Isolated here against the white field of the paper, however, her linear forms appear every bit as beholden to Asian influences as do those of Henri Michaux or Julius Bissier. But while both Michaux and Bissier were essentially miniaturists whose forms are more crabbed, O'Beil's brush leaps and pounces with swift, splashy decisiveness akin to those primordial "action painters," the Zen literati artists of ancient China and Japan. Indeed, although similarly smitten with Eastern aesthetics, she is more in the true literati spirit than Brice Marden in his "Cold Mountain Series," letting her line flow freely and dance buoyantly over the white field of the paper in tune with the subtle impulses of her nervous system, rather than adhering to a predetermined structure.

Also among the smallest yet most intriguing works in the show are a series of darker and more thickly painted works in ink-wash and acrylic which marry a similar brevity to mass rather than line. Broad strokes of opaque white are brushed vigorously over shadowy areas of gray ink, enlivened here and there by the muted glow of metallic pigments. Although equally intimate, these gemlike compositions play off as polar opposites of O'Beil's ephemeral Asian-inflected ink, as if to flesh out their ephemeral forms with bravura Western heft and depth.

In another, somewhat busier and more fleshed-out group of drawings in charcoal and wash by O'Beil on relatively larger sheets of paper, structure and rhythm occur by



sheer force of gesture. The lively ecriture displays something of the funky insouciance of graffiti, as the whiplash charcoal line ranges boldly over the entire picture plane, offering what de Kooning once referred to in a lovely turn of phrase as "slippery glimpses" of phantom forms that could suggest anatomical fragments or figments of landscape. Interwoven with equally bold ink lines that function like underlying shadows, and further enlivened by elegant vertical skeins and drips of the paler gray wash beneath, these works handsomely bridge the gap between drawing and painting with their somewhat frenetic figure-to-ground ambiguity.

Full-bodied painting pushes to the forefront and prevails, however, in a series of acrylics on paper where pastel pinks and soft blues predominate. The tantalizing ambiguity in these works arises from the contradiction between a shimmering, unabashed chromatic beauty that can almost suggest Impressionist floral bouquets and a brash bluntness of execution that veers clear of the merely "pretty." One is reminded of an early phase of O'Beil's work in which, somewhat perversely playing into the then prevailing idea among the macho men of the New York School that women were "flower painters," she painted rugged roses in steely hues.

It seems a sign of her present mature mastery that O'Beil can now give free reign to her most lyrical coloristic tendencies, even while retaining the hard-won vigor and toughness that finally gained her the grudging respect of her male peers. (And without benefit of having married into that boy's club like Lee Krasner or Elaine de Kooning, mind you!)

In yet another series featured in the show, O'Beil combines various colors of oil stick with diluted monochromatic ink washes, the combination of oil and water creating subtle "resist" textures in considerably more painterly compositions. Here, the piece de resistance is her use of white oil stick to create a continuous, cursively scrawled swirling linear network that acts as a kind of web which simultaneously calls to mind Mark Tobey's "white writing" and the rhythmic skeins of tossed pigment that Jackson Pollock' employed in some of his more densely worked paintings, such as "Full Fathom Five." Yet, characteristically, the movement in O'Beil's compositions comes across as more lyrical than violent.

This distinction aside, what O'Beil and Pollock have in common is that, as Frank O'Hara once put it in relation to the latter painter, "the artist's action is significant purely and simply of itself." In other words, the meaning of the gesture derives from its own autonomousness and thus requires no references or functions beyond its own exhilarating existence in the context of the composition. At the same time, it takes nothing away from the purely abstract appeal of O'Beil's densely convoluted linear networks to add that, in the most general and obvious terms, they can also suggest a sense of the complexity of life — its twists, turns, and constantly changing permutations.

Overall what Hedy O'Beil's drawings reveal is the hand of the painter thinking for itself; they are charts of process as much as fully realized images, showing the split-second decisions, hesitations, turnabouts, and thrilling resolutions of an artist who clearly sees the act of art making as an endeavor fraught with existential risk. One literally lays one's self bare on the canvas — or the paper, as the case may be — and not even the most sophisticated aesthetic cunning can prevent the final result from being as nakedly revealing of the artist's psyche as any Rorschach test.

That kind of daring seems precious rare in the calculating, often careerist, climate of today's art scene. It harks back to an earlier and more idealistic time in the bohemian precincts of Lower Manhattan, when to paint was also an act of faith, a leap into the unknown — especially for a woman. Far from having settled into a comfortable style in her mature years, Hedy O'Beil is still taking more chances than many artists half her age. Thus her work remains forever fresh and vital.

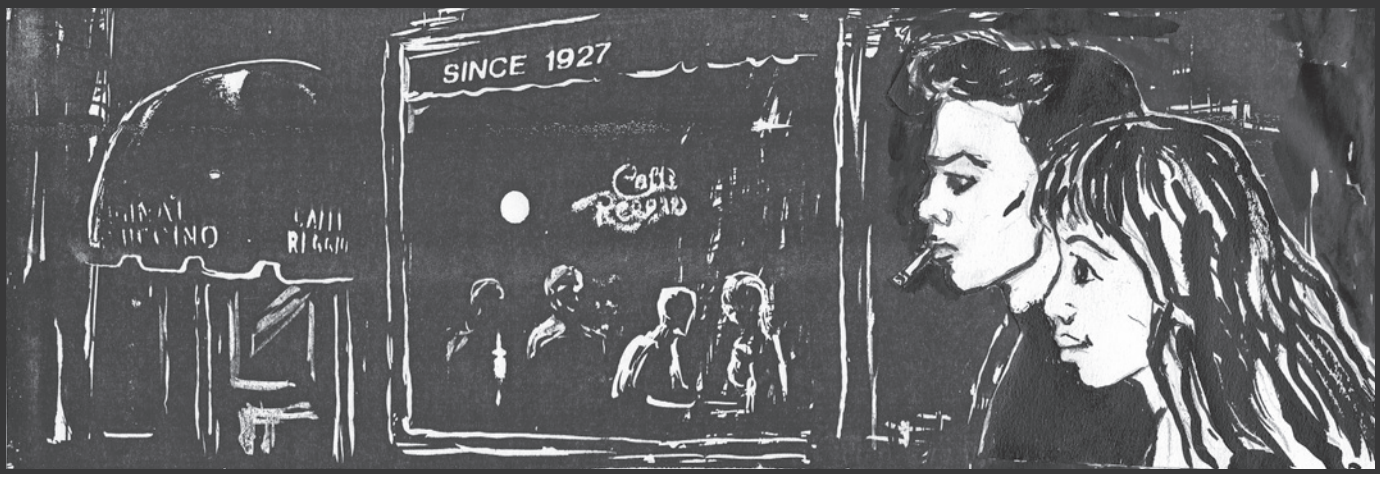
— Ed McCormack

Hedy O'Beil, Works on Paper, Gallery 307, 307 7th Avenue, Suite 1401, April 7 - 11.

Primary Lessons in my Sentimental Education

an excerpt from HOODLUM HEART: Confessions of a Test Dummy for the Crash and Burn Generation

a memoir in progress by Ed McCormack



As in a striptease, feminine mystery was unveiled for me in slow, tantalizing stages. One of my earliest erotic memories occurred while sitting in a movie theater in Woodside, Queens, watching a Western and sharing a bag of popcorn at a saturday kiddy matinee with a teenage baby sitter named Peggy Scanlon.

I couldn't have been older than five at the time, since my clannish mother moved us all back to the Lower East Side to look after her recently widowed father when I was six and my sister Maureen was three. But I remember vividly what happened when, amid manly shouts and great clouds of dust, a cattle stampede erupted on the screen.

As all that beef on the hoof thundered overhead, seeming to vibrate our rickety seats for several seconds, something strange came over Peggy: She started breathing heavily and her sturdy legs stiffened as if in spasm under her plaid Catholic school skirt. Involuntarily, it seemed even then, she suddenly kicked out at the empty seat in front of her with her saddle shoes, sending popcorn from the bag she was holding in her lap flying into the air.

"Holy Cow!" my baby sitter exclaimed with an ecstatic astonishment that it would take me several more years to identify.

Not much else happened until early adolescence, when it was still a big deal to get blue-balls dancing The Fish or The Grind to rhythm & blues ballads at the friday night record hops at the Henry Street Settlement, where the custodians of that worthy social work organization would dim the lights on the slow numbers in deference to our raging hormones. Aside from a few furtive feels, dry humps, and a handjob or two, I didn't get much chance to advance my sentimental education until I met a pretty Puerto Rican girl named Maria Vega in my junior high school social studies class.

Although she was born a brunette, with the help of a magic potion of peroxide, a tight sweater, and a natural suntan, Maria had transformed herself into as close as I had yet come to one of those buxom all-American blonds in the Playboy centerfolds. And I, for some reason, was the lucky little gringo that she chose to favor with her not altogether synthetic charms, squeezing into my seat in the back of the classroom and letting me cop a feel or two while the teacher had her own hands full with the usual Blackboard Jungle chaos ensuing up front.

Almost as thrilling as Maria's tactile proximity and the intoxicating narcotic of her Woolworth's perfume, however, was something she once told me as we played kneesies under the desk while studying a picture in that day's *Daily News* of a girl in a bathing suit, apparently a participant in some swimming meet or other, standing like a comely hood ornament on a diving board with her arms raised high above her head, as she prepared to take the plunge.

I've sometimes wondered if this cozy interlude with Maria and the girl in the bathing suit could have been the primal trigger for my future obsession with erotic triangulation. But my menage a trois fixation would come much later in my young manhood, in an era when all manner of drug-fueled erotic experimentation was in the air anyway.

Naturally, at this more innocent time, before I became so jaded and perversely cerebral about sex as to even consider such fantasies, I was singularly overwhelmed by the womanly warmth of the real live girl pressed against me in the seat.

Hoping to flatter Maria, who would coyly remove my hand whenever it attempted to venture above her thigh, into letting my fingers crawl further, I leaned over and whispered into her fragrant ear, "She's really flatchested compared to you."

As she grabbed my climbing hand with one of hers and slapped it gently with the other, Maria adopted an instructional tone I had never heard in her voice before. All at once I felt as though I was in the charge of a being much wiser than myself, as she explained, "She's not really that flatchested. It's just that a girl's titties always look smaller when she holds her arms up like that."

With this, she raised her own arms in the same manner, guilelessly inviting close scrutiny of that which I normally ogled more surreptitiously, before quickly dropping them to her sides, lest the teacher get the crazy idea that she was eager to be called upon to answer a question.

Granted, what Maria pointed out that day might seem an obvious thing that any observant artistic boy bent on imparting utmost anatomical accuracy to his drawings of the unadorned female form would eventually have figured out for himself. Yet at the time it seemed like the most scintillatingly intimate and privileged information — especially coming from a girl who had recently passed through puberty with such breathtaking success.

* * *

I finally had the remarkable good fortune of meeting my first serious girlfriend Helen Aronson, who was something of a sexual prodigy for that backward time. A student of modern dance at The Playhouse of the Henry Street Settlement who had long raven hair, ivory skin, and always wore black leotards, Helen was only 14 the first time we made love. But here I should hasten to add that, while I was two years older, it was she

who took my virginity rather than the other way around.

It happened in the spooky bachelor apartment of a man who was in the hospital at the time, supposedly dying of cancer. His nephew, a creepy mama's boy and classmate of mine named Stevie Hackman, had lent me the key on the condition that I would give him a detailed account of everything that Helen and I did there. Having already exploited my talent for drawing to become the most popular pornographer among my dead-end peers, I had no scruples about this arrangement; you might even say it was my first journalistic assignment.

To keep my part of the bargain, I had to sit in Stevie's stifling monkey-cage of a room in the Hillman Houses, a cooperative development for garment workers and their families on Grand Street, staring out the window at Saint Mary's Roman Catholic Church, where I had made my First Holy Communion, to avoid having to watch the creep play with himself through his pants. The muffled dialogue of his doting mother's soap operas would be droning through the locked door. Or else she'd be banging on the door and yelling in: "Steven, don't you think you should get started on your homework? Steee-vun! Don't you hear me? Why don't you answer me when I talk?"

While I was supposed to be describing what it was like when Helen and I made love in his uncle's spooky, stale-smelling bachelor apartment, I was forced to regale Stevie sotto voce with exaggerated sexual heroics ala Henry Miller. For it was hardly within my poetic powers back then (and probably still isn't now) to describe what it was really like, with the alarm clock stopped on the dresser-top and the cold-sweat sensation that the dying man was breathing down my naked back as we rocked the wheezing springs of a single bed whose sagging mattress, swaddled in an ancient, itchy army blanket, still bore his sickly imprint...

* * *

I knew I wanted to be with Helen when I used to see her around the neighborhood with her former boyfriend, a disheveled kid my own age named Robbie Rosen, because she looked "Villege-y," like a younger version of girls who had intrigued me years earlier, when my parents would sometimes take my sister Maureen and me to a bar and pizzeria called Grenados on Bleecker Street for Sunday dinner.

My father, in his blue serge communion suit and my mother, in one of her pillbox hats and "smart" sunday outfits, would gawk and nudge each other like tourists.

"I wonder if he has bugs in that beard."

"Get a load of his girlfriend in those sandals. Do you think she ever washes her feet?"

Already it sounded like sour grapes to me, because these unusual-looking people looked so free and easy, and it was obvious that they were having a lot more fun than my uptight parents. Something about them gave me a feeling like some kids supposedly had about running away with the circus.

My attraction to bohemianism became even more intense when, after a brief period in early puberty when I stood in the mirror primping my pompadour, strumming a pawnshop guitar, and practicing curling my lip like Elvis Presley, Jack Kerouac became my new role model.

One night I turned on "Nightbeat," a TV show hosted by John Wingate, a tough interviewer famous for making his guests sweat like the franks sizzling on the grill at Katz's Delicatessen over on Ludlow Street. But even in Wingate's hot seat, with the dark shadows of the stark studio lighting filling the hollows of his ruggedly handsome face, Kerouac came off as cool as Marlon Brando

in "The Wild One."

Before the networks learned how to dumb it down, television provided a brilliant window on possibilities beyond the neighborhood for urban provincial kids like myself. Quirky middle-American existentialist Jack Paar would put people on his pioneering talk show not because they had a new movie, book, or product to promote, but simply because he found them fascinating and he knew his viewers would as well. People who weren't young in the '50s and shopping for an identity (rather than seeking mere entertainment) probably can't imagine the wonderfully subversive thrill of turning on the tube and encountering characters like the twitchy, drug-addled, madly witty composer Oscar Lavant, or the brilliant bohemian illustrator and raconteur Alexander King — personalities who wouldn't have a prayer of invading the bland commercial wasteland that is late night TV today.

For me, discovering Kerouac on "Nightbeat" turned out to be an even more profound experience than watching Elvis sing "Heartbreak Hotel" on the Ed Sullivan Show — especially when Wingate asked him what he and this so-called "Beat Generation" of his wanted, and Jack said, "I want God to show

me his face."

The next day I checked "On the Road" out of the Seward Park public library branch on East Broadway and never returned it, thus beginning several years of library delinquency, during which I believed that any book I loved was mine to possess permanently, obliging my poor enabling mother to tell investigators who periodically showed up at our door that I had fled home to places unknown.

If at first I was wowed by Kerouac's cool image and personality — so unlike the stuffy stereotype of the anemic academic writer — his book spoke to me on a much deeper level. It was the first novel I had ever opened that didn't have the formal, artificial quality of what they called "literature" in school. From the first sentence, the narrator seemed to be addressing me directly, as a friend might, in a recognizably human voice. Soon I would feel that same vital connection not only with Beats like Ginsberg, Corso, and Ferlinghetti, but to the so humanly haunted narrator of Ralph Ellison's "Invisible Man," for one, and countless other living voices, some centuries old. Still, it was Kerouac who first blew the dust and cobwebs off the printed page for me.

Midway through "On the Road," I took the guitar back to the same pawnshop on the Bowery and traded it for an old black monster of a Remington manual typewriter. It was a decision I would never question until at least a decade and a half later, when I ended up writing for *Rolling Stone* and playing underpaid Boswell to so many boy millionaires of rock&roll.

* * *

I took some kidding when I first started hanging out in the Village and would stop by the candy store on Henry Street for an eggcream (that deceptively named eggless restorative elixir of the slums, consisting solely of Fox's U-bet chocolate syrup, a splash of milk, and seltzer), wearing a grubby sweatshirt, shapeless khakis, and shredded tennis sneakers, carrying a copy of "Howl" or "A Coney Island of the Mind."

"Hey, what's happenin,' Maynard?" one or another of The Mayrose might greet me, referring to the goofy beatnik character Maynard G. Krebs that Bob Denver played on the "Dobie Gillis" TV sitcom. But it never went beyond good-natured teasing, since my mother's family were neighborhood people who went way back with most of the gang members' families. (In fact, on a rare entrepreneurial impulse, my uncle Georgie had taken over the candystore briefly before going back to work on the waterfront, and unlike his hapless predecessors and successors, didn't hesitate to kick the Mayrose out on the street when they got too rambunctious.)

What it came down to was that, like cop killer Frankie Falco's kid brother Louie, even after he started studying modern dance in the same class as my girlfriend Helen at the Henry Street Settlement Playhouse and going around with a Capezio bag slung over his shoulder, I was exempt from real hassles because I came from what was known in the neighborhood as "good people." But even though I was accepted in a way that no oddball outsider would have been, I no longer felt a part of Henry Street.

Helen, too, felt more at home in the Village than in our own neighborhood, where we would often draw disapproving stares and hear rude comments from some of the elderly busybodies and yentas who sat all day gossiping on the benches in the courtyard of the Vladeck projects, where she lived with her family.

"Such a pretty face, but why doesn't she do something about that hair?" one of them said in what sounded like a stage-whisper as we strolled by one day. "What a shonda."

Helen laughed loudly, then said, "I wanted them to hear because they wanted me to hear."

"What does 'shonda' mean anyway?" I asked, because Helen was teaching me yiddish. ("Kinisht vert adonk," she had said earlier when I thanked her for surprising me with Kerouac's new novel, "The Subterraneans, then translated: "It's not worth a thanks.")

Now she said,"Shonda? It means a shame, you know, like a disgrace. Like my hair's a disgrace — like I'm a disgrace!"

Then she laughed loudly again, and flipped the old busybodies the finger behind her back.

* * *

For a while my relationship with Helen seemed as idyllic as that iconic picture on the cover of "The Freewheelin' Bob Dylan" album, of Dylan bopping down 4th Street with his own hip, witchy chick Suze Rotolo hanging on his arm. But while that album wasn't released until 1963 (something I wasn't really aware of until recently), Helen and I actually made the same scene in the late fifties, at the height of the Beat craze, when the Village first became a magnet for kids fleeing the sterility of the Eisenhower era.

On sunday afternoons, we would hang out in Washington Square Park, where you could almost hear the bastard mutant musical hybrid known as modern rock and roll being born out of all its diverse elements, as streetcorner dowop groups from Brooklyn or the Bronx crooned "Gloria (It's Not Cheri-i-i)" in oozing acapella harmony, and cool "spadecats" down from Harlem blew bebop or discordant Ornette Coleman free-jazz trumpet riffs, while guitar and banjo-strumming bluegrass folkies — by far the majority among the musicians who gathered weekly around the circular fountain — strove to drown them out, even while stridently insisting, "THIS LAND IS YOUR LAND, THIS LAND IS MY LAND..."

Since Helen had grown up in a left-wing family, listening to Pete Seeger and the Weavers at rallies and demonstrations, at first she was partial to folk music, which I considered corny and fake — especially among the younger generation of singers and strummers, most of whom were middleclass white kids trying to sound like they'd grown up in Southern black or hillbilly sharecropper shacks.

A Catholic working class romantic like my hero Kerouac, I had no family tradition

of radical politics to give meaning to the sentiments in such songs, despite belonging to the very constituency they aimed to inspire. Jazz seemed hipper and more authentically evocative of urban life as I knew it. And I eventually turned Helen on to it by taking her to The Jazz Gallery, a club over on Saint Marks Place, where they never asked for ID no matter how young you looked, as long as you didn't try to order drinks and sat in the rows of low bleachers off to the side of the bandstand that they called the Peanut Gallery. There, for a one-dollar admission charge, you could hear the mellow vocal stylings of the great Joe Williams, or even dig back-to-back sets by Theolonious Monk and John Coltrane.

I loved the weird hats — including, one time, a fez! — that Monk wore like crowns; the way his soft gum-soled shoe slapped time on the stage like a big floppy bear claw; how he'd sometimes get up from the piano bench and do a little somnambulant shuffling step, as though off in his own world, when one of his sidemen soloed.

Although Helen came to agree with me that jazz musicians like Monk and Trane improvising complex solos were a lot cooler than fake okies twanging banjos, we still liked to hang out on weekends under the Washington Square Arch, among crowds of other young people from all over Manhattan and its surrounding boroughs. This was the original "Human Be-in," a full decade before the hippie scene got underway. Only, while the hippie thing was dumbly democratic and basically mindless (any imbecile who could grow hair, do drugs, and say "Far out, man" was welcome), hanging out in the Village in the late '50s felt more exclusive. One had to at least have artistic or intellectual pretensions to make the scene years before the holy mantle of Hip could be purchased, along with a day-glo mandala, a tie-dye t-shirt or a rhinestone roach-clip, in your nearest head-shop or unisex boutique.

Helen and I already considered ourselves too sophisticated for the hokey tourist traps like the Cafe Bizarre, where bogus bards in berets and pubic goatees beat bongos and chanted finger-snapping doggerel like "i want to hear once more / the bedspring music of your kiss" for clueless squares from suburbia. We bypassed these pseudo-scenes for the more authentically laid back Cafe Figaro, where walls papered with French newspapers made you feel like an existentialist flaneur in Paris; or for the poetry readings at the Gaslight Cafe, back before it was overrun by folkies after Dave Van Ronk and Bob Dylan started playing there.

At the Gaslight, years before he got on his '60s Black separatist kick and moved out to Newark ("New Ark") to become the militant Amiri Baraka, LeRoi Jones regaled us with

lyrical lines such as "Morning: some tear is broken / on the wooden stairs / of my lady's eyes." There, we also dug the syncopated word-riffing of Ray Bremser, a wiry, edgy, lantern-jawed New Jersey Rimbaud in an army surplus jacket who supported his heroin and poetry habits with armed robbery and spat out stuff like,"but I love / the visionary journey out of jail, / that spectral escape that screws the federal government!/ I would prefer to run around with tramps,/ and homosexual cats in drag rather than suck/ the tinfoil tits of brittle broads/born in Nebraska!"

Granted, a lot of it sounds hyped up and simplistic now, but at the time it struck rebellious kids like us and Dylan (who later cited Bremser as his favorite Beat poet) as mondo profundo. At the Gaslight, too, Diane Di Prima, a petite Beat goddess from Little Italy, would prop herself atop the upright piano in her peddle-pushers and Roman sandals to read from her paperback book of verse "This Kind of Bird Flies Backwards." Hugh Romney, who'd reinvent himself a decade later as hippie jester Wavy Gravy of Hog Farm fame, combined poetry with Lenny Bruce-style standup shtick. And an elfin wisp of an actor named Taylor Mead, later to become the campy underground Charlie Chaplin of the Warhol films, seemed to be innovating some outrageous thing, as yet unnamed, now known as "performance art."

Although Helen also dragged me to see foreign films by Ingmar Bergmann and others whose names now escape me, I didn't really respond to movies as art until "Shadows" by the American director John Cassavettes came out, with its jazz score,

jumpy hand-held 16 millimeter kinetic energy, recognizably Village-y characters, and interracial love story.

Then one night we wandered into a little place on Cornelia Street street called The Cafe Cino, where one-act plays were performed on a tiny stage surrounded by little round tables, the action often spilling down between them, putting you right in the middle of the drama. We were kind of adopted as baby beatnik mascots by the owner, a chubby, curly-haired little Italian guy named Joe Cino, who favored us with free espressos from one of the biggest, most baroque machines in the Village, a gleaming silver monstrosity so ornate it looked like a drawing by Saul Steinberg.

Once, while someone else minded the store, he even invited us to a mellow party in his basement pad right under the cafe, where cool jazz percolated softly, muscatel flowed, and kindred hipsters sat in a circle on the floor smoking a single toothpick-thin joint down to the infinitesimal fingernail of zero.

Several years later, after he committed suicide over a failed affair with a male lover, I would learn from Joe's obituary in the Village Voice that, along with Elaine Stewert of Cafe La Mama, the sweet, unpretentious man who warmly befriended a couple of baby beatniks was considered one of the major pioneers of off-off Broadway theater. But to Helen and me, he was just a kindly older cat who made us feel welcome in a world way over our heads.

Eventually, a cellar dive called The Cock 'n' Bull a few steps down from the bleeding neons of Bleecker Street, came to be our favorite hangout. It was right in the middle of the most touristy part of the Village, in that saturday night Ensor carnival of gargoyle faces across from The Village Gate, where the swinging jazz sound of Charles Mingus' band issued out when the doors opened, mingling with revving motorcycles and the smell of sizzling Italian sausages wafting out of fast food stalls all up and down the block. We'd stroll through the weekend tourist throngs, past the barkers shilling outside the strip clubs on West 3rd Street, as drums thumped within for the bump and grind show about to begin; cut over to Bleecker, and descend to that dim cave, where slapdash abstract paintings decorated bare brick walls and lit candles dripped stalagmites of wax down empty chianti bottles on every table. (One winter night, on the way out, I snuffed out the flame on one of them, stuck it under my toggler coat, and presented it to Helen with a flourish out on the street, in what I thought was the dashing romantic gesture of a bold existentialist.)

For all our feigned hipness, we were as thrilled as only two naive kids could be by the Cock 'n' Bull's stagey atmospheric trappings — as corny, actually, as anything at the Cafe Bizarre — especially after we fell in with a clique of sleazy artist manques who habitually frequented the place like extras in a beatnik B-movie. These seedy grownup bohemians struck us as "subterraneans," like the ones in Kerouac's novel of that name, not only because their lair was an actual celler, but because their apparent leader, Joe Singer, had a beautiful "spadechick" girlfriend named Joyce who reminded us of Mardou Fox, the mysterious Negro woman with whom the first-person narrator of the book falls in love. But they were subterranean, too, because there seemed to be an undertone of sly, almost telepathic communication, at once amused and slightly sinister, that passed between them, even as they paid us the flattery of soliciting our opinions and treating us like adults.

Joe Singer had frizzy red hair sprouting out from under an omnipresent beret, bushy eyebrows that arched devilishly over his shotglass lenses, and a pointy Satanic goatee. He always carried a sketchbook in which he obsessively drew erect penises, often being fellated by men as well as women. Given our naiveté and Joyce's beauty, it never occurred to either Helen or me that he might have been bisexual; his preoccupation with phalluses merely struck us as bizarre. (One night he sketched separate portraits of Helen and me — mercifully, sans phalloi! And I'd later think it prophetic that we each kept our own, rather than exchanging them.)

While other furtive-acting hipsters slithered in and out of Singer's circle, his most constant sidekick was Abe F.F. Friedman, a balding, sallow-complected man with a receding hairline and a severe stutter, who

claimed to be a poet, although none of his friends could vouch for it, and always wore a long tan raincoat that made him look like a subway flasher. It seemed doubtful, however, that he would have been an exhibitionist, since the initials in his name stood for "Finger Fuck." But it apparently didn't bother him that he was legendary around the Village for his impotence. Perhaps he felt that it gave him a certain dubious distinction in a milieu where establishing oneself as one kind of character or another was absolutely essential; where people used terms like "on the scene" or "on the set," as if to concur with Shakespeare that all the world truly was a stage.

"Other c-c-cats only have one j-j-joint, but I have t-ten," F.F. Friedman once crudely joked to Helen, insisting with a suggestive leer that she feel his pale, bony fingers.

"No, Joe, you actually have eighteen," she said, coyly ignoring the innuendo (since "joint" was jazz slang "penis," as well as "reefer") and poking each individual joint with a fingernail sharply enough to make him wince.

I sometimes suspected that the only reason these older hipsters tolerated me was because of Helen, the sexy "statutory chicklet," to cop a phrase from Ted Joans, a cynical spadecat poetaster who not only read his doggerel ("So you want to be hip little girls? /You want to learn to swing? / You want to learn to dig and take in everything?") at Cafe Bizarre, but also hired himself out as a "Rent-a-Beatnik" to entertain at parties for affluent squares out in Westchester and Long Island. For like that of the hip little Lolita in Andre Previn's jazz ballad "Like Young" who "digs Kerouac and Cafe Espresso," Helen's nymphet appeal obviously captured the fancy of these older bohemians — even Joyce, who sometimes seemed to flirt as playfully with her as she did with me.

But Helen and I were both so enamored of the whole scene that we didn't even think about the subtly predatory implications of these older Village characters' interest in us. For being welcomed into their circle validated our bohemian fantasies, making the Cock 'n' Bull seem like a cozy sanctuary from the square world.

That is, until my parents, to whom I must have bragged superiorly about the place to assert my sophistication, unexpectedly showed up there one night. I was shocked and deeply humiliated when I suddenly saw them: my mother in her pert pillbox hat and cultured pearls, my father looking like the movie stereotype of a tall Irish detective in the white shirt, black knitted tie, and blue serge suit that he invariably sported whenever they went out on the town. To me, they stuck out like some museum diorama with a wall label that should have read "Squares from Squaresville," and I wished I could pretend not to know them. But they spotted me immediately and headed straight for the table where I was sitting with Helen, Joe, Joyce, and Abe F.F. Friedman.

"Hi Chum, how are you Helen?" my mother said, addressing me by my embarrassing family nickname, and smiling at Helen, who she already knew from the neighborhood. (I was not about to introduce her to anyone else).

"Daddy and I went to Grenados for pizza, and I said to him, 'Let's go see if Chum's at that place where told us Helen and him hang out and say hello."

Mortified, I nodded and mumbled something incoherent, not daring to glance at the expressions on the subterraneans' faces and not about to introduce them. My mother glanced self-consciously around the Cock 'n' Bull, taking in the decor and all the "characters" before breaking the long, awkward silence: "It's nice ... different, like."

Meanwhile my father just stood there, one hand in the pocket of his suit-pants, a Lucky Strike in the other. smirking at me contemptuously, as if to say, "What kind of kid gives his own mother and father the cold shoulder?" And I knew he was right; I knew I should say something, and was ashamed of myself for being ashamed of my parents. But I couldn't help it; their sudden intrusion into my private world had literally struck me dumb.

"Well listen, kid, your mother and I are gonna shove off," my father finally said. "We'll see you at home."

"Does your mum always call you chum?" said Joe Singer, smirking, after they left.

"It's just a nickname,"

I told him, omitting that it was short for "Chumley," a name that sounded like a British butler, which they had called me, for some reason, since I was a a toddler.

"You s-sure your f-f-father isn't a n-n-n-narc?" F.F. Friedman teased.

Only the women didn't rub it in and make me feel even more humiliated. Helen smiled sympathetically and squeezed my knee; Joyce put her warm hand on mine and consoled, "We all start out with parents, baby."

It was something I thought I would never live down. And of course I knew there would be all kinds of questions at home about the older "weirdoes" I was associating with. At the same time, even as I felt a kind of remorse for denying them, I was spitefully proud of one thing: that my parents now knew I was one of those "characters" they used to gawk at on our Sunday outings in the Village.

I was relieved when time went by, and our friends didn't seem to hold my square parents against me. I even felt honored one cold winter night, when, after neither F.F. Friedman or any of the other subterraneans in their circle showed up at the Cock 'n' Bull, Joyce and Joe invited Helen and me over to their pad to see Joe's paintings. It was a narrow railroad walkup on the top floor of a decrepit tenement way over in the far west Village, where there were mostly darkened garages and warehouses and cold winds blowing off the Hudson River.

Before going out earlier that evening, they had left all the burners lit on the stove to heat the place. So the air in there was very close, with a whiff of gas and oil paint that gave me a woozy, slightly nauseated feeling. It was dark, too, only the blue flames of the gas jets providing illumination, until Joyce switched an overhead light on in the room off the kitchen, where Joe had his easel. The walls were covered with predictably pornographic paintings, expanding the cock-in-mouth motif of the pencil drawings in Joe's sketchbooks in garish color, with a few cock-in-cunt compositions thrown in for good measure.

After we had looked at them and made whatever comments we could come up with. Joyce switched off the overhead light and invited us into the third and final room, which was completely dark, except for some light filtering in from a lamppost outside the window, until she switched on a lamp with a red bulb in it that was propped up on a milk crate near a mattress on the floor.

There was very little else in the room, other than an old phonograph on the floor near the mattress and small bookcase holding a few paperbacks, some record albums, and other odds and ends. Joyce motioned us toward the mattress, saying, "Joe, baby, why don't you roll us up some tea."

Joe put a Charlie Parker album on the record player and left the room for a moment, then came back with a little vial and some rolling papers, and kneeling on the mattress, where the three of us were already sitting, proceeded to roll a thin reefer.

Joyce started stroking Helen's hair, and said, "It's so pretty, so silky. Sometimes I wonder if I should grow mine out and have it straightened, but I'm kind of against it on principle, you know. So I keep it short. But I always wear these big ol' earrings so people don't mistake me for a boy. Not that I don't sometimes feel like a boy..."

Meanwhile Joe was leaning uncomfortably close to me on the bed with one hand on my knee, holding a joint up to my lips, and as if I had never turned on before, saying "Take a nice deep drag now, man, and hold it deep in your lungs as long as you can."

We listened to the album for awhile, Joe going on about how great "Bird" was while Joyce rolled another joint and talked about her plan to write a novel someday. After the second joint went around, our host and hostess grew silent and both started looking back and forth from Helen to me with strange little smiles on their faces. The combination of the pot, the woozy gas and oil paint smell, the red light, and the sexual tension in the room began to make me intensely uncomfortable.

I finally said to Helen, "Aren't your parents gonna be bugged you if you don't get home soon?"

"They won't only be bugged, they probably won't let me go out again for weeks," she said, taking the hint and jumping up, obviously as relieved I was for an excuse to get off the mattress. "I really think we'd better go. Thanks for showing us your paintings, Joe. They're really ... beautiful."

But as soon as we got out on the street, she said, "Wow that was strange. I'm glad you thought of a graceful way to get us out of there."

We laughed all the way over to the subway station on 8th Street and Sixth Avenue, vowing never to get talked into going over to Joe and Joyce's pad again when we ran into them at the Cock 'n' Bull. We got off the D train at Canal Street and walked the couple of blocks over to the borrowed apartment on East Broadway.

Being very quiet, as we always were, in order to slip into the apartment without being seen by anyone else on the floor, I was just about to put the key in the lock when we heard voices behind the door and had to turn right around and tiptoe back down the stairs.

* * *

The joke in the neighborhood was that nobody was supposed to get out of Gouverneur Hospital alive; the doctors there were such butchers, went the local legend, that the ambulance might as well skip the preliminaries and go straight to the funeral parlor.

I learned the next day from Stevie Hackman that his uncle had been released from Gouverneur to the care of visiting nurses. Whether his condition had miraculously improved or he had been sent home to die, Stevie couldn't say for sure. It made no difference to me; I was screwed — or perhaps I should say unscrewed — either way.

I can't help wondering in retrospect if it was simply because we no longer had a place to be alone together that I soon started finding fault with almost everything that Helen said and did. All the little mannerisms I once considered cute began to grate, and when she tried to teach me a new Yiddish word or expression, I'd say "What do I need to know Yiddish for ? I'm just a dirty goy boy anyway."

This was a dig at her parents, who I didn't know had forbidden her to go out with "goyische" boys until she had to pull me into a doorway one day to avoid running into her mother on the street. About this, Helen confessed, her mother was even more adamant than that, in cold weather, under her black leotards, her daughter must wear the itchy winter panties that she called " red woolies." These were so ugly that, for more than the obvious reasons, I was always eager to get them off her. And although they were actually more of a rust color than truly red, I always pictured them whenever Helen referred to herself as a "red-diaper baby," the term that was used for the children of Communists during the McCarthy era.

Apologetic about her mother's anti-Christian attitude, she said,"It's ridiculous, and I'm embarrassed by it — what can I say? It's not even like a religious thing, because they're atheists. Besides, how can you be a progressive and still be so prejudiced that you think all non-Jewish boys are automatic juvenile delinquents? It's absolutely hypocritical but, really, you shouldn't let it bother you, because that you're forbidden fruit makes you all the more enticing to me!"

This mollified me at first, even after she confessed that her parents used to leave her and Robbie Rosen, the former boyfriend who took her virginity, alone in their apartment when they went out. But once we lost Stevie's uncle's place, I never let her hear the end of how unjust it was that Robbie never had to sneak around to borrowed apartments or meet her on the street rather than being welcomed into her home.

In truth, at that point in my life I was jealous of most Jewish kids for having grown up in a social environment that seemed

not only more culturally sophisticated but sexually enlightened than my own. This was something I began to notice almost as soon as I started thinking of myself as an artist and intellectual and naturally gravitated toward Jewish friends, since they were the ones, at least on the Lower East Side, who shared some of my interests and hung out in the Village on weekends. And I noticed whenever I was in their homes that there was often easy, unembarrassed sexual banter between the generations; that some, if not all, of my Jewish friends could talk and joke with their parents in a way that would have been impossible in my repressed Irish Catholic workingclass home. My family only said "fuck" in anger, as in "fuck you," "fuck that," or "you're a fuckin' fool." In order to be tolerated at all, the word (which I never thought sounded dirty, but actually quite clean, like a ping pong ball being hit back and forth or the syllables of my last name: Mc-Cor-mack) had to be divorced from its actual, sexual meaning and hurled at someone as an epithet.

How nice it would have been to be born into a religion that didn't equate sex with sin! I hated being Catholic, with all the guilt and repression it instilled, and if not for fear of pain and possible genital mutilation should a slip of the hand occur, would gladly have surrendered my foreskin to any competent rabbi with a pair of pinking shears in order to be welcomed into the homes and arms of all the bookish but sexy Jewish girls for whom I routinely lusted on both the Lower East Side and in the Village. (Although I had heard of guys who got turned on by their little plaid Catholic school skirts like the one my old babysitter Peggy Scanlon once wore, because of all the prudish associations I had about our religion, most Irish girls seemed as sexless as nuns to me.)

In fact, I had barely been able to believe my good luck when I ended up with Helen, who was not only pretty and hip — a veritable apprentice beatnik's dream chick! — but treated me lovingly and was more than any horny adolescent boy had any right to hope for. So I don't really know why I started treating her so badly, unless the loss of our little love nest, on top of being rejected by her parents, had awakened a bitter self hatred in me for which, perversely, I wanted to punish her.

Now the only place we could go for privacy was Jackson Park, on the FDR Drive, not an especially safe spot to take a girl after dark. Leaning back on a bench as Helen leaned over me, for some reason I remembered a puzzling playing card I had found in the bathroom when I was about six, soon after we moved into the apartment on Henry Street, when I got down on all fours to retrieve a coin that had fallen out of my pants and rolled under the toilet tank. Instead of the usual designs, on the back of it was an amazing photograph of a man who appeared to be suspended in midair, like a circus acrobat, by his enormous erection from the mouth of a kneeling naked woman. Now, even as a spasm of pleasure overtook me like a warm, wet wave, an ugly, backward old word, grossly unworthy of the hipster I aspired to be, made a shameful appearance in my mind: Nympho.

* * *

The only way I could later excuse myself for reverting to the kind of Irish Catholic hypocrisy I was raised with was by imagining that I may have wanted to rationalize myself out of my relationship with Helen, since her parents would never accept me and our breakup was probably inevitable anyway. After all, she was a member of Arista, the citywide scholastic honor society, and would eventually be off to college, while I was already contemplating dropping out of high school. I told myself we simply belonged to different worlds, but in reality, as young as she was, she was probably already too sophisticated for me. And the same thing probably held true for her first boyfriend Robbie Rosen, with whom, it shames me to admit, I ended up comparing notes on her.

Since the Lower East Side in the late '50s was still an insular place, as provincial and gossipy in many ways as any small town, it really didn't surprise me to learn that Robbie had been as aware of me when I was with Helen as I had been of him when the situation was reversed. After he introduced himself one day in the school cafeteria at Seward, we both formed the habit of discussing her defensively, as if her precociousness was something freakish to snicker superiorly about. To say that we merely behaved in the flippant way of caddish young men everywhere in no way excuses our mutual betrayal of the intimate trust that Helen had placed in each of us.

However, we did discover that we had cultural interests in common and started hanging out in the Village together with another aspiring beatnik named Irwin Felter, whom Robbie had met at a Jewish children's camp in the Catskills where they had both worked as counselors one summer. Irwin's family lived in Eastern Parkway, Brooklyn, and he'd travel into the city on weekends to hang out with us in most of the same places I had once frequented with Helen.

Just as I had suspected all along, my older bohemian friends at the Cock 'n' Bull turned out to be a lot less interested in me when I showed up with my gawky male friends, rather than with the exquisite little statutory chiclet for whom they all lusted. And, not surprisingly, the Gaslight, the Figaro, and even the smoky, atmospheric Jazz Gallery had also lost much of their romantic glow.

Many years later I ran into Robbie by chance and he reminded me of one particular day when he came to meet me at to our apartment on Henry Street before we went to hang out in the Village, as he and I sometimes did on weeknights, as well as on weekends. It happened to be Ash Wednesday and my mother was hounding me about making sure I stopped at St. Mary's for ashes before leaving the neighborhood. I argued that I didn't see why I should, since I didn't believe in organized religion anyway.

"I don't care what you don't believe in," my mother said. "Just don't even bother coming home tonight if you don't get ashes."

Of course, there was no way I was going to show up in any of our regular hangouts with a black smudge on my forehead like some primitive Catholic stigma of squareness. So we took the subway straight to West 4th Street, and for the next several hours made the rounds of the cafes, doing our cool cats on the make routine. The usual unlikely fantasy was that we were going to meet a couple of swinging older chicks who not only had their own pad but plenty of wine and pot.

As usual, we didn't score, ending up back in the neighborhood later that night, both of us probably still secretly wishing we had not been so hasty with Helen.

"Do you remember what you did?" Robbie asked, chuckling, when we met recently. "We were standing in front of your building saying goodnight or whatever the fuck it was we said back then. And just before you turned to go in, you stooped down at the curb, took some black shmutz from the gutter, and smeared it on your forehead."

* * *

G&S Classifieds

opportunities

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 info: 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. 46/47 Sts.) Hours: 12 - 6 pm, Free delivery in Manhattan. 212-977-6190 jaditeart@aol.com

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

NY ART MAGAZINE seeks experienced advertising rep to help expand advertising base beyond galleries to include art related cliental. Generous commission.
email: galleryandstudio@mindspring.com

NOHO GALLERY is viewing portfolios in all media for our Chelsea location. Visit nohogallery.com <http://nohogallery.com> for application form, or send SASE to Noho Gallery, 530 West 25th Street, NY, NY 10001.

NATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF WOMEN ARTISTS, INC. (N.A.W.A.)
A non-profit founded in 1889, is seeking membership applications from serious and professional women artists in all media. Members are provided with juried and curated exhibition opportunities in NYC and across the USA. Three areas of membership: Regular/Juried, Junior/Student and Associate. Applications are due March 15th and September 15th of each year. Download application: www.thenawa.org <http://www.thenawa.org> or send SASE to: N.A.W.A., 80 Fifth Ave, Suite 1405, New York, NY 10011, 212-675-1616.

THE ALEXANDER TECHNIQUE
•Learn how to use your body corrrectly.
•Improve your posture.
•Achieve lasting results.
A hands-on redirecting of the mind and body that has been used successfuly for over a century. Learn how to use your body in a more efficient way which will have far-reaching benefits. It involves changing old habits and learning new ones to last a lifetime. Please call for a private consultation and introductory lesson. Union Square studio, or house and office calls available. Limited Introductory Offer: Consultation, photo analysis, intro lesson plus free additional lesson. Sliding scale available.
DIANA MULLMAN, AmSAT. 212-734-7875

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.

ASIAN ARTS & CRAFTS

Offering a variety of artifacts depicting Lord Ganesh and a rich assortment of Asian specialty items and antiques.
Shrigupta@verizon.net

Visit our store
MAILBOXES & BEYOND INC.
A full supply of shipping needs and services, including Fine Art Packaging.
217 East 85th St.
New York, NY 10028
Tel 212 772 7909

The GALLERY&STUDIO
advertising deadline for the June/Jul/Aug issue is
May 9 for color, May 16 for black/white.

An Important Exhibition at the Interchurch Center Does Justice to Gerda Roze's Long-Term Engagement with a Timeless Subject

The tondo, or painting in a circular shape (tondo being Italian for "round"), was especially popular in Florence in the 15th century, particularly for paintings of the Virgin and Child, its perfect geometrical form perhaps intended to suggest the moral perfection of Christ and Saint Mary, as seen in Michelangelo's Taddei Tondo. In modern times, it was also used occasionally by Orphist painters such as Robert and Sonia Delaunay, since its contours rhymed visually with the round forms that early 20th century movement favored.

But, for whatever reasons, aside from an occasional experiment in the round by painters here and there, over the years the format has become sufficiently rare that only one contemporary artist — at least, to this writer's knowledge — can be considered its principal exponent: Gerda Roze.

Born in Riga, Latvia, in 1925, Roze fled her homeland with her mother in 1944 to escape the second Soviet invasion, an ordeal she recalled in her affecting early social realist painting "Into Exile." Arriving in the U.S. in 1950, after spending years in international refugee camps in war-torn Europe, she studied for a Bachelors Degree at Columbia and enrolled in studio classes at the Art Students League, in New York.

Over the years, Roze has worked through a variety of styles, ranging from meticulous magic realism in the manner of Andrew Wyeth, to a flirtation with post-Impressionist paint handling, to a neo-cubist phase, to an Abstract Expressionist period, in which she began to perfect the luminous color harmonies and vigorous gestural vocabulary that distinguishes her tondos and other paintings today. Along with works where the circle's contours enclose the entire composition, mirroring the inevitable circles within, Roze creates shaped canvases and modular constructions with variable panels in which the circle figures prominently as an internal element, as seen in "Homage to the Circle, Opus IV (Circle in a Square)," in which the central circle is intersected by sharp angled rectangles and triangles in lime green, pink, and other softly modulated hues. She is also drawn to the irregular formats of the shaped canvas and has been an innovator of complex modular constructions with variable panels.

"Of the many different universal shapes that I have explored over the years, the circle is my favorite," this veteran abstract painter says in an artist's statement issued in connection with her new exhibition "Homage to the Circle," at the Interchurch Center. "It's so simple and yet so complicated! By utilizing the circle as the shape of my canvas, my paintings are given a sculptural look that evokes the theme of eternity. It has been a challenge to me to create a balanced composition with a direction and focal point within a circle. The eternal, mysterious shape has no beginning and no end..."

"Homage to the Circle Opus IV (Lunar Orbit)"

Indeed, the most significant difference between Roze's use of the tondo and that of its earliest exponents is that she employs the circular shape for its own sake, as a discrete entity integral to her aesthetic intentions, rather than as a mere vehicle for content. Anyone familiar with the writings of Clement Greenberg, of course, knows that the idea of the canvas as an object with its own physical integrity, as opposed to a container for illusion, has been central to formalist abstraction for some time. However, along with its formal attributes, Roze's work is also possessed of an allusiveness and a lyricism that is very much in evidence in her shaped and modular constructions, as well as her tondos in her present exhibition.

In her layered acrylic triptych "Moonlight Sonata II," for example, the circular shape in the central panel is clearly lunar, while the horizontal blue gestural forms flowing rhythmically across all three panels obviously represent the ocean waves whose tides respond to the moon's gravitational pull.

The moon takes on a more abstract planetary aspect in Roze's tondo "Homage to the Circle (Lunar Orbit)," where the orb within the orb is set afloat within swirling linear forms amid vibrant areas of green, blue, and orange. And in another tondo in acrylic on canvas, "Solar System, Opus, VII," a fiery circle is veiled by semitranslucent elements that make outer space appear as liquescent as ocean depths. Geometric and organic shapes are also combined exquisitely in yet another tondo, titled "Homage to the Circle, Opus, V," where clearly defined hard-edge elements, both circular and rectangular, are juxtaposed with vigorous gestural strokes.

For all her apparent engagement with cosmic mysteries, Gerda Roze has not been known to make mystical claims for her work. Yet her approach to abstraction harks back to the very origins of nonobjective painting as an exploration of the unknown, rather than a calculated formal strategy. One places her very much in the tradition of such early twentieth century avant garde pioneers as Kandinsky, Malevich, and Mondrian, who, influenced by esoteric belief systems such as Theosophy and Rosicrucianism, sought not to empty art of content but, quite the contrary, to conceive a new language for the unseen.

For while the spiritual systems that inspired those early masters may have fallen out of favor with the dawning of our scientific age, the human urge to apprehend the unknowable has hardly abated. And it is this that makes the circle, a universal symbol still so pregnant with mystery for every existing culture on the orb that we call the earth, such a rich source of inspiration and innovation for the greatly gifted painter, printmaker, and constructionist Gerda Roze.

— Ed McCormack

Gerda Roze, The Interchurch Center,
475 Riverside Drive, April 7 - May 13, 2011
Reception: Thurs., April 14, 4-7pm

Lydia van den Berg's Paintings Filter Innocent Wonder Through Sophisticated Vision

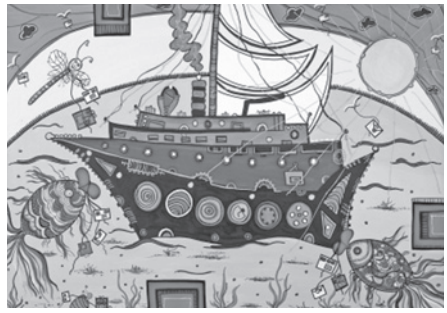
Although the Bulgarian-born artist Lydia van den Berg, who now lives and works somewhere in the vicinity of Zurich, Switzerland, classifies her painting style as "Magical Poetic Realism," it would not be inaccurate to add yet another descriptive word to that designation: "Visionary." For imagination plays a very big part in how van den Berg transforms down to earth landscape and townscape subjects depicting everyday life into almost otherworldly visions, at once fanciful and mysterious.

Such is the immediate charm and upbeat quality of the mood in van den Berg's pictures that the untrained eye might initially mistake them for "folk" or "naive" paintings. However, she has arrived at her iconography via a long period of experimentation with a variety of mediums, including oil on canvas, papier mache, watercolors and encaustic, as well as having worked through several different modes of expression.

Among contemporary artists, her work seems closest in terms of its joyous spirit and its innate sophistication and its brilliant ribbons of color to that of the Austrian avant garde painter and architect Fritz Hendertwasser, who once said that the ultimate aim of his paintings was to "introduce the observer into a new life of peace and happiness." Indeed, the fanciful dwellings in some of van den Berg's paintings, with their baroque structures and flowing contours are similar in some ways to the organic structures that Hundertwasser designed in Vienna as an alternative to the sterile, dehumanizing lines of much modern architecture.

Van den Berg, however, surpasses even that famous Austrian in the imaginative wit of her delightful limited edition Giclee print "Post Boat," in which intricately patterned fish and insects bear nets of letters to a fantastic combination sail and steamboat afloat on wiggly blue waves. Nor has any other contemporary visionary whose name springs immediately to mind come close to the antic animation that van der Berg achieves in her acrylic on paper "Daydream Street," with its dizzying array of sinuous roadways running like an amok subway map between multiple rows of oddly shaped houses and stylized trees in a rainbow array of luscious-as-sorbet hues.

Architecture often takes on an anthropomorphic sensuality in her work, as seen in the acrylic on paper titled simply, "Light," where overlapping kandy-kolored



"Post Boat"

houses with ornate steeples appear in the process of melting like ice cream sundaes in the heat of a big orange sun riding high in a sky scattered with sprinkles of morning stars.

By contrast, in "No Boundaries," the title painting for her exhibition, pointed steeples, set against a dark nocturnal background, converge from all directions like spears. Then there are "The Secret," a considerably more abstract composition, comprised of flowing areas of hot colors reminiscent of "Indian Space" painters of the 1940s, as well as a new, somewhat anomalous series entitled "Reflections," featuring more linear central

Continued on page 30

Lydia van den Berg, Agora Gallery, 530 West 25th Street, May 12 - June 1. Reception: Thursday, May 12, 6 - 8 m.

Memories made manifest by the Photographer's Art

Memories, like dreams, transform reality. Several photographers associated with the West Side Arts Coalition set out to capture this alternate reality in a recent group show.

Dan Gelb gave us a magical view of a solitary water bird standing in a long winding puddle on a beach that seemed to extend, like the yellow brick road of Oz, to infinity. Low-lying clouds, dramatically shadowed and backlit in a brilliant blue sky, further contributed to the surreal effect. By contrast, another view by Gelb juxtaposed a suburban driveway shot through a rearview mirror with the mystery of dark woods and was aptly titled "Through a Different Looking Glass."

David Ruskin's hand colored photographs are invariably dreamy and haunted by memory anyway. Here, this gifted exponent of a lost art showed a landscape image as forlornly lyrical as an Irish ballad in his moody "River Liffey, Dublin." And in "Florence," Ruskin's delicate tints enhanced the enchanted atmosphere of a vista of picturesque bridges and spanning and surrounding a placid river.

Cal Eagle, on the other hand, goes searching for magic among the city's madding crowds. In one especially dynamic color print, Eagle captures the telling gestures of pedestrians in Times Square: A young woman appears to mop her brow with a limp wrist while a man in sunglasses gazes up as if shell-shocked by the aerial bombardment of flashing lights. Doubtless, both will remember their trip to the Big Apple for a long time to come.

Jonathan Morrison's miniature print, "23rd Street," freezes the glowing illuminated cone of an old-fashioned skyscraper as though in an amber emulsion of nostalgia. Here is a bit of old Manhattan preserved for all time. Morrison's more panoramic "Triborough Bridge" also has a charmingly retro feeling, with a tiny passenger plane flying high in the sky above the majestic structure's sweeping span.

The versatile image maker Janice Wood Wetzel makes an almost abstract Pop statement with a brightly colored digital print of converging Broadway show billboards. Yet Wetzel also makes poignant human statements with "Long Forgotten Mother," an image of an overturned gravestone, and "Dancer," in which a young man in a wheelchair contemplates a poster for the New York City Ballet.

Affecting in another way, Deena Weintraub's poetic silver gelatin prints treat old vintage automobiles stalled and rooted in tall grasses with the sensitivity of portrait subjects. One picture of a beat-up jalopy with a busted grill is titled "Scarface." And an old 1960s hippie van painted in psychedelic swirls with a sign in its front window that says "Furnished Apartment" also attests to Weintraub's visual wit.

Jean Prytyskacz finds surprising beauty in diverse places, in her pictures full of wonderment for the small miracles in life. In one of her poetic black and white silver gelatin prints delicate blossoms growing between railroad tracks speak of survival and hope that springs eternal. In another, Prytyskacz finds formal perfection akin to the geometric paintings of Agnes Martin amid the grid of windows and bricks in a nondescript office tower.

Barry Pinchefsky's obvious sympathy for humanity is rewarded by such subjects as a group of tribal children in the Amazon who mug winningly for his camera, or a reunion of elderly former airmen who pose with proud dignity in front of a fighter plane. Among Pinchefsky's most moving digital prints, however, is one of an American soldier in fatigues kneeling with hand over heart at the grave of a fallen comrade.

Whether photographing spectators and marchers in the Puerto Rican Day parade or a bird's eye-view of a deserted intersection, Carolyn Reus has an unfailing eye for composition. Reus' exquisite way with spatial

Continued on page 30

"Memories Linger On," recently seen at Broadway Mall Community Center, 96th Street and Broadway (center isle)

Defying Watercolor Stereotypes in AWS Annual Exhibition

Among the works that make the American Watercolor Society's 144th Annual International Exhibition a splendid survey of developing trends in an often underestimated medium is "All Dressed Up," a splendid portrait by Bev Jozwiak of a trendy-looking, long-legged young woman with tawny, tousled hair in a green minidress leaning forward with dangling arms in an easy chair. Jozwiak's picture is at once vivacious and detailed, capturing her subject's winning mixture of awkwardness and sophistication. Also outstanding is Carol Huppard's "Del Oro," in which a woman is seen only from the chest down, as she sits cross legged on a park bench feeding a flock of swarming pigeons. The artist's bold handling of the bird lover's brightly patterned clothing (floral poncho and broad-striped pantaloons) within a severely cropped composition lends a figurative work an emblematic abstract boldness. Two other figure paintings defy stylistic stereotypes regarding the medium, each in a different manner: In Bill Teitsworth's "Sunday Rebecca," the curvaceous form of a young woman as wholesome in her nudity as a Renoir is defined by sparkling areas of morning sunlight and shadow. Here, again, the artist employs watercolor to give the figure palpable presence in a manner usually associated with oils, yet retains the special freshness belonging to aquarelle alone. By contrast, Gary Akers' "Woody," a portrait of a man with closely cropper gray hair in mostly muted earth tones has a Wyeth-like meticulousness of execution. Unlike the older painter, whose watercolors often tended to be looser, Akers apparently achieves similar detail with drybrush rather than tempera.

In Wilmer Anderson's "Apple Rain," tiny figures in an idyllic country landscape witness the phenomenon of huge apples floating down from the sky amid farmhouses and barns. Anderson's folksy surrealism seems a visual equivalent of Garrison Keillor's tall tales about "Lake Wobegon."

Photorealism, another style usually associated with oil painting, makes an impressive showing in Kris Preslan's "The Old Indian," where the familiar logo of a native American in a headdress enlivens the brilliant red chassis of a motorcycle, above the gleaming chrome of its motor, seen in extreme close-up. Somewhat more muted in its tones but equally intricate in its own manner is Marilyn Miller's "Wheels," in which several tricycles, strollers, and other children's vehicles, set against a grassy expanse, also in close-up, add up to a skillfully orchestrated composition. Then there is "Gears, Pulleys & Cables," by Neil H. Adamson, where massive, monolithic railroad machinery, its rugged, rusted steel surfaces evoked with verisimilitude by the artist, are set dramatically against a sky as

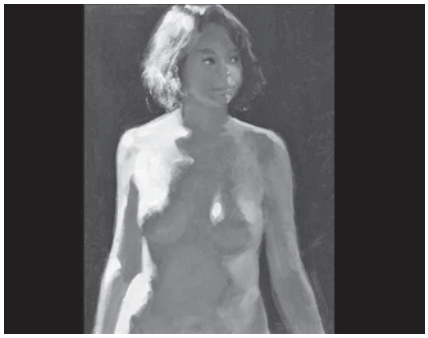
Continued on page 24

Elizabeth Carr

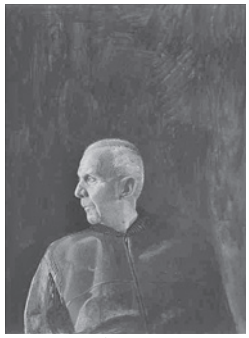
Wilmer Anderson

Carol Hubbard

Ken Taylor



Bill Teitsworth

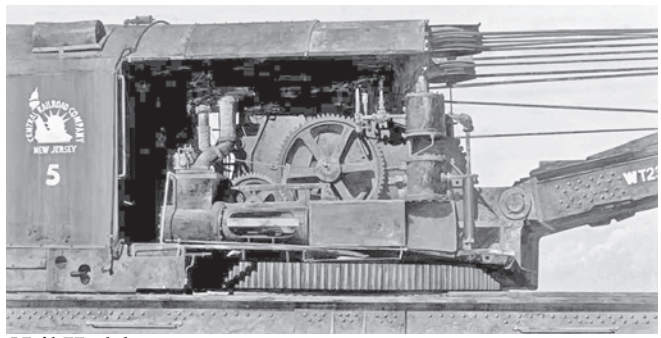


Gary Akers

Al Beyer

Joseph Alleman

Edwin Shuttleworth



Neil H. Adamson

American Watercolor Society, 144th Annual International Exhibition, April 5 - May 1, Salmagundi Club, 47 Fifth Avenue.

Group Show's Good Vibrations Herald Spring

Perhaps the signature piece in the exhibition "Intimations." curated by Linda Lessner and Anne Rudder for the West Side Arts Coalition to "welcome intimations of light, hope, warmth and rebirth as this new time comes, opposing the darkness we've experienced in short days of snow and pale sun" was Nate Ladson's oil, "A View from the Train." For while the sun was still pale, as it shone through woods stripped bare of leaves, in Ladson's painting there was indeed a sense of hope and imminent redemption among the thin, shivering trees.

Curt Kaufman took the theme into the realm of the surreal with his painting of a fearsome serpent entwining broken egg suspended in the sky before a metaphysical portal within which a large cockroach crawls across a prone clock. Even here, however there was a sign of rebirth: a huge Yellow and blue butterfly in flight.

In both Linda Lessner's "White Mountains, NH" and her "Sunset," the artist displayed a sublime sense of chromatic harmonies. These were especially striking in "Sunset," with its combination of fiery orange and soft blue hues.

Eva Sochorova's paintings are adamantly abstract, yet highly allusive with their bold blocky forms and luscious colors, as bright as the brightest floral bouquet. In "Abstract IV," for example, there was a strong sense of nature and sunlight illuminating the canvas from within.

Anne Rudder, always a visionary for her illuminated works melding painting and poetry, showed an especially uplifting piece in pencil, watercolor, and mixed media. A composition that Rudder stated had "very obvious references to Gerard Manley Hopkins in the alliteration of the prosody" soared with delicate and light-filled images of a snow-white dove and delicate floral imagery rising above a charred and shadowed world of strife.

It is a brave feat for any contemporary artist to attempt the subject without falling under the large shadow of Monet, yet Marguerite Borchardt succeeded effortlessly by virtue of her own unique vision in her oil "Lily Pond." For, as seen in her floral compositions as well, Borchardt's solid sculptural grasp of form, even in the most ethereal of subjects, could almost be termed "anti-impressionistic."

Beatrice Rubel, on the other hand, combined fanciful symbolism, such as a pair of green lips afloat amid colorful, organically suggestive yet ultimately elusive shapes in her work in colored pencil , graphite and pastels, "The Big Laugh and Small Giggles." Like those of the eccentric abstract outsider Forrest Bess, Rubel's compositions are possessed of a peculiar and delightful visual wit.

Two other gifted artists also made buoyant statements in keeping with the upbeat theme of the show: An entire cosmos of luminous orange and yellow orbs floated joyously amid flowing fields of more subdued hues in Daniel Jumpertz's "Orange Fields Forever," its title wryly evoking a Beatles tune. And even while freely indulging her talent for nonobjective composition, Amy Rosenfeld evoked yet another foray into whimsy by the Fab Four with her boldly brilliant acrylic on canvas, "Colors & Shapes Galore," suggesting such lyrics as "tangerine trees and marmalade skies."

Emily Rich, an artist who has always moved easily between abstraction and representation by virtue of the consistent gestural vivacity that unites both modes, showed fine examples of both in this show.

Photo by Herb Fogelson

Outstanding here were Rich's Neo-Fauvist urban vista "Rooftop Memory," and her vigorous landscape "Maine Cove."

Then there was Joseph Boss, whose mixed media collages invariably possess a bold emblematic quality that suited his most recent series, in which the outlines of hands emerge from a dazzling plethora of colors and patterns. Given the forthright optimism of the works showed here, the term "gland-handing" came immediately to mind. By contrast, Richard Carlson employed his characteristic grid format with a somewhat more austere formal grace in paintings such as "Wet Pain" and "Oil Supply," their titles reflecting a world rife with bad news. Yet in a larger work called "Levels," where the upper portion of the composition burst into brilliant yellow, Carlson appeared to ascend to a semblance of sunny joy.

— Maurice Taplinger

Intimations, recently seen at Broadway Mall Community Center, Broadway and 96th Street (center isle).
www.wsacny.rg

AWS

Continued from page 23

delicately blue as a robin's egg.

A particularly contemporary subject all too familiar to many of us is brought to antic life in Al Beyer's untitled watercolor of a cluttered computer work station where a confusion of cables drips off a desk littered with papers and all manner of personal items and office supplies, some of which appear to have spilled over into the surrounding space. In this complex composition, Beyer makes witty commentary on the way the electronic gadgets we rely upon to keep us up with the so-called information age can appear to be taking over our lives.

Ken Taylor's unpopulated street fragment, "Barber Pole," focusing on the facade of an apparently closed shop, has a bittersweet poetic melancholy akin to vintage Edward Hopper. Also quite stark is "Scavenger," Joseph Alleman's strongly composed picture of a lone black mutt rooting around outside the austere white front of what appears to be a clapboard country church. By contrast, in "Renovations," by Edwin Shuttleworth, a crew of several workers swarms the facade of an old house on a rundown suburban street where sheets hang on a nearby clothesline and children standing on a flight of steps leading down from a neighboring porch watch all the commotion as if its a momentous event.

One of the things watercolor does best, when handled by a talented exponent of the medium, is to evoke subtle atmospheres. Stewart White displays great skill in this regard in "A Walk in Chanticleer,"in which two semidistant figures stroll amid mists and high grasses in a verdant summer field on an overcast day. Then there is "Cold Dawn on Gulf Blvd.," a virtuoso aerial view of a waterfront vista engulfed by fog by Elizabeth Carr, an artist with a rare gift for evoking vast spaces and suggesting a great deal of detail while retaining the sense of freshness and spontaneity essential to the medium.

One of the most iconic watercolors in the collection of the Museum of Modern Art is "Handball" by Ben Shahn. No less than two artists in the present exhibition treat the same street sport in their own individual styles. In Nancy Barch's "Hester Street Handball," three players are seen in action on a court on the Lower East Side of Manhattan with a wall whose bright geometric designs enhance the boldness of her composition. Three players are also featured in John Salminen's "Invited," a tautly organized composition in a somewhat more realist style. Both artists exemplify the level of quality that invariably makes large AWS group surveys such satisfying affairs.

— Maurice Taplinger

Rose Sigal-Ibsen Transcends Cultural Categories

Although the Romanian-born New York artist Rose Sigal-Ibsen bears a striking resemblance to the actress Shirley MacLaine, one is told that she is often mistaken for an Asian person. This would be perfectly understandable if one were only familiar with her work and had never laid eyes on the artist herself. For Sigal-Ibsen is the sole non-Asian member of the North American Chinese Calligraphy Association, inducted as such after one of its officials saw her work in an exhibition, and after visiting her studio to see more of it, was so astounded by her grasp of a highly specialized foreign aesthetic that he extended an invitation for her to join the organization.

Even more remarkable, however, is that more than one Asian person who attended one of her demonstrations of Chinese calligraphy and Japanese Sumi brush painting, has reportedly assumed, despite all external evidence to the contrary, that she simply had to be Asian herself.

Such cases of mistaken identity are a source of pride to the artist, but she is even prouder that she has been embraced as a peer by contemporary masters of Chinese brush painting like C.C. Wang and Wang Fangyu. Sigal-Ibsen grins broadly when she speaks of her encounters with these great men, something she could never have imagined when she enrolled in her first class in Asian painting several years ago, prior to studying for nine years with the esteemed Japanese painter and sensei Koho Yamamoto.

Since then, Sigal-Ibsen has had several exhibitions here and abroad, appeared on Chinese television, and won numerous awards for both her painting and her calligraphy. However, for those of us long familiar with her work, her new exhibition at Berkeley College in midtown Manhattan represents a major departure. For while in the past it has been her practice to paint in the traditional manner on paper, her new series is in ink and Chinese pigments on raw cotton supported by bamboo scrolls of her own making.

While such a change of medium might not seem significant for another painter, for one so bound by tradition as Sigal-Ibsen has been for her entire artistic career, it is quite a big deal indeed. For one thing, according to the artist, painting on cotton is much slower going than painting on paper — or even on silk, the much smoother fabric sometimes substituted for paper in Chinese painting — since the rougher weave of the material prevents the brush from gliding over the surface so smoothly. Thus there is a loss of spontaneity that makes it necessary to deliberately calculate each move, no small matter for an artist so used to working with swift, sure strokes.

"Become a person of love"

"Lotus Flowers"

"Bamboo"

On the plus side, however, at least for those of us who appreciate departures from tradition and value improvisation and innovation for their own sake, Sigal-Ibsen's new series has a whole new look, somewhere between Eastern and Western art. The slower process, particularly in the paintings as opposed to the purely calligraphic works, results in a new formal solidity that is especially striking in "Lotus Flowers," where a smaller, as yet unopened bud, placed next to one of the lovely pink flowers in full bloom, resembles a Sumi brush. Thus, whether it was intended as such or not, the receptive viewer familiar with Sigal-Ibsen's career trajectory, cannot help but see this painting as a metaphor for the artist's own artistic blossoming.

Equally impressive in another manner is the diptych of dual scrolls hung side by side called "Bamboo," where the most traditional of subjects in Asian art, painted with an authoritativeness that is nothing short of amazing for an artist born in the West, takes on a new dimension by virtue of its untraditional presentation. Even more foreign to the Western sensibility, normally, not least of all because its message cannot be appreciated by those with no knowledge of Chinese, is calligraphy, which is regarded as an art form on a par with painting in Asia. Sigal-Ibsen, however, makes it accessible by including an English translation in a handwriting every bit as graceful as her calligraphy in the original language.

Another calligraphic work called "Become a Person of Love" is a particularly multicultural example, since it was inspired by a proverb that the artist discovered in a book of African proverbs: "Become a person of love — not one who seeks love but one who gives love." After copying out the saying in her exquisite Chinese calligraphy, the artist translates it into English at the bottom of the composition. But an aesthetically attuned viewer with no knowledge of either language can still appreciate the work visually, given the way the artist has employed several of the chops (the traditional red seals used for signing Asian paintings) as integral elements of the composition. Indeed, the chops appear to move the eye around the intricate lines bordering the calligraphy like fireflies flitting around foliage.

One suspects it is these subtle touches that make Rose Sigal-Ibsen's work appealing to the Eastern as well as the Western eye. For here is an artist who not only emulates the style of the culture that inspires her but makes her own unique and lasting contribution to it. Thus her approach to Chinese calligraphy and Japanese Sumi ink painting literally offers us the best of three w orlds. — Ed McCormack

Rose Sigal-Ibsen, Berkely College Gallery, 3 East 43rd St., May 2-31. Reception & Demo in calligraphy, Wed., May 11, 5:30-7:30pm

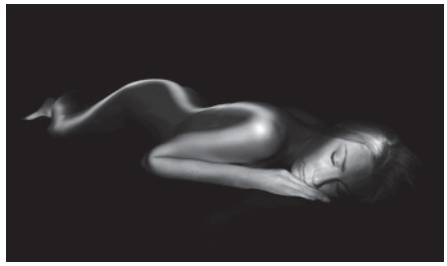
Out of Shadow: The Dramatic Digital Photography of Denis Palbiani

The use of chiaroscuro, starkly contrasting light and shadow in painting, was perfected by Caravaggio, the most powerful and original Italian artist of the 17th century. He had an enormous influence on other painters who came to be called "Caravaggesque," including the French artist Georges de La Tour, known for his nocturnal scenes with candles used as the source of light. Chiaroscuro has been employed ever since by numerous artists down through the centuries, but few contemporary artists working in the new media of today have exploited it as successfully as Caravaggio's fellow countryman Denis Palbiani.

Born in the province of Reggio Emilia, Italy, now exhibiting in New York City, Palbiani began his career as a successful marine photographer, winning major awards and competitions in that field in Italy, the United States, Russia, France, Turkey, Korea, and the Czech Republic, culminating in being awarded the World Championship of Underwater Photography.

Since taking up fine art digital photography, Palbiani has innovated a technique for which he is perhaps best designated as a "sculptor with light." For the distinguishing factor in his prints of the female nude is a highly contrasting, high definition use of light and shadow that lends palpable, almost three-dimensional depth and weight to two-dimensional form. To achieve this unique quality in his pictures, Palbiani does not rely on Photoshop filters or any other high tech means. Rather, he has devised a brand new method with which to create his own variation on Caravaggio's "tenebrism." Working in complete darkness, he holds a small hand-lamp next to the naked body of the model to illuminate the part of the anatomy that he wishes to photograph, while leaving the rest in shadow.

The Caravaggesque chiaroscuro that he achieves with this method is especially appealing in "S.L.," a twenty-four by forty inch digital print in which the linearly illuminated outer contours of a nude woman kneeling on all fours almost entirely engulfed by the surrounding blackness takes on the sleek, abbreviated grace and beauty of a Brancusi. In another print called "Body," the flowing form of a reclining nude model recedes in vanishing perspective, her shape defined by a golden aura suggesting a full-body halo. But perhaps the most startling



"Sensual Curves"

print of all is "Sensual Curves," in which only a thin line of light plays sinuously over only the outer contours of another reclining nude, creating the unsettlingly convincing impression of a snake with a human head, as in a synthesis of Eve and the Serpent of Biblical myth.

In other works, such as his "Opera" series, chiaroscuro is employed in a less radical manner to highlight the head and torso of the subject, as in "Opera 9," where just enough of the model's nude form emerges from the blackness, her golden tresses flowing behind her, to suggest the figurehead at the prow of a Viking ship. Then there is "Red Passion," where the model's lower face and

Continued on page 30

Denis Palbiani, Agora Gallery 530 West 25th Street, April 19 - May 10. Reception: Thursday, April 21, 6 - 8 pm.

Pansum Cheng: The Ineffable Grace of the Grotesque

A deliciously perverse combination of seductive and repellent elements enlivens the work of Pansum Cheng, an internationally exhibited artist from Fujian province, China. Someone once observed that innovative art often appears ugly at first encounter, and certainly this proved true of Cheng's first solo exhibition, an installation of works in latex, polyurethane, foam, and other unusual materials.

"Her As I Remember"

What was one to make, for example, of a piece that suggested a pair of feminine — if not clearly female — legs severed just inches below the top of their black stockings, their thighs tightly clasping what appeared to be a shiny turd shaped like a grotesquely long limp penis? Damned if this writer can even venture a guess! One could only liken it to Kiki Smith's equally unsettling sculpture of a nude woman on all fours trailing a long tail of excrement from her anus.

Also quite off-putting was a baggy, glisteningly visceral assemblage of Latex, polyurethane, foam and pigment, hanging like one of Soutine's bloody sides of beef, disturbingly titled: "Her as I remember." Could this be a fond artifact from Hannibal Lector's closet? At the same time, the morbidly haunting quality of Cheng's work forces even the most resistant viewer to realize that he or she is in the presence of a highly original artistic sensibility.

For even an audacious title like "Hold Me Tight," applied to a work in which two lengths of black thread are wound around nipple-like protuberances and sloppily stitched, as though by a drunken surgeon, to what appears to be a square of jaundiced flesh bubbling with festering boils, hints at a genius for wicked irony.

The ambiguity in Cheng's work springs from the fact that the very same patently unattractive materials — shiny, semi translucent synthetic plasticky stuff, often pocked with holes like those in a transvestite streetwalker's stockings — can take on an almost lyrical beauty in a work such as "Breather." For while, in the context of his oeuvre, this title might prepare us for some grotesque play on an oxygen tent, here, where the forms take on a botanical, rather than anatomical, allusiveness which is enhanced by luminous green and yellow pigments, as well as by networks of relief elements suggesting polyurethane-embalmed tree branches, in a sunny garden, the artist literally does provide the viewer with a welcome breather from the relentlessly visceral suggestiveness of his usual subject matter. Other works as well, such as the verdantly luminous color field piece poetically titled "Silent Breeze," and "Meet Me at the Horizon," its tiny photo transfer figures harking back to those minute sages dwarfed by mountains in traditional Chinese scroll paintings (even though they wear modern dress) also reveal a kinder gentler side of the artist.

Still, to come up with kindred spirits for Cheng, one would have to flash back to Bruce Conner, the 1960s junk/funk sculptor who rocked the placid, well-made boats of Pop and Minimalism with assemblages of charred baby dolls strapped to smoke-blackened high chairs — or maybe Sam Goodman, doyen of "No Art," who outraged even the supposedly unflappable downtown avant garde with his "shit sculptures."

Indeed, if one may be permitted to extend the oxygenated conceit just a tad further, for all its refusal to ingratiate itself to the viewer, Cheng's similarly iconoclastic attitude actually comes across as a breath of fresh air at a time when major art schools have begun putting undue emphasis on business courses

Continued on page 30

Pansum Cheng recently seen at AGallery, 141 West 28th Street www.agallery.us

The CLWAC's Members Exhibition at the Salmagundi Club

Annette Hanna's realist oil, "The Waiting Game," depicts the apparent discontent of a well dressed couple in an affluent setting, he standing behind her with his arms folded, she at her desk browsing an art catalog and staring off distractedly. Apparently, like John Koch, Hanna is a stylish interpreter of upper middle-class angst.

This was just one of many intriguing works in the Annual Members Exhibition of the Catharine Wolfe Art Club, named for a prominent philanthropist who was the only woman among the founding board members of The Metropolitan Museum of Art. Another was "Lamenting Stability," a somewhat surreal sculpture by Susan Parker Faith of three people tending to a horse that appeared to be unraveling. Although Faith's skillful modeling of equine and human anatomy suggested a classical stone carving, the medium was actually paper sculpture, which gave wry meaning to the title.

In "Studio 7," an oil by Chung-Sun Oh, a skillful classical technique was employed by the artist to capture the Rubensesque figure of a young woman posing for an art class. Only the buxom model's dainty eyeglasses made clear that she was a contemporary person who did not spend her time being chased by satyrs through a wooded landscape.

Novel approaches to still-life were also in evidence: In Anne Chaddock's watercolor "Fruit Cocktail," vibrantly colorful whole and halved fruits appeared propelled by splashing water from an unseen source. Equally animated in another manner was Carol Brody's watercolor "Party Papers," in which shards of festive polka-dot wrappings and trailing ribbons projected a gestural energy akin to an abstract expressionist composition. And in "Hydrangeas and Quilt," an aquarelle by Eleanor Meier, the reflections in the vase holding the lush profusion of flowers and leaves, along with the patterns in the quilt amounted to an intricate visual feast. Then there was Sue Wall's more austere but no less striking acrylic painting "Feathers and Lace," in which pairing of incongruous elements makes for a highly unusual still-life composition, executed in a meticulous realist style, yet with strong abstract appeal.

Watercolor was employed with bold precision in Ann Pember's "Stormy Weather," a wonderfully atmospheric figurative work where the large forms of the deep blue umbrella, hat, and raincoat of the man with his back to us in the foreground and the umbrellas of the two men walking in front of him lent the composition a formal power that played off handsomely against the slightly blurred atmosphere of a busy city street in the rain. In its own way, Pember's picture seemed as quintessential a depiction of its subject as the Impressionist painter Gustave Caillebotte's classic "Paris Street, Rainy Day." And the aftermath of rain in the city was also captured with pleasing atmospheric accuracy in "Red Light," a pastel by Jane McGraw Teubner. Here, the newly brightened sky, mirrored along with streetlights, headlights and other crystalline reflections in the glistening gutter, gave magical auras to an everyday scene of pedestrians strolling past the grand facade of a museum with the trees of a park in the background.

After reading a review in the *New York Times Book Review* headlined "It Gets Worse," about a new book exploding the myth of happy aging, it was heartening to see that myth convincingly revived in Lynn Reardon's accomplished oil portrait of a clear-eyed sage with a long white beard. For the title, with its hint of wisdom rather than senility, that Reardon gave it, "Consider the Age of Poetry," was nothing if not reassuring.

And if one still has qualms about the wisdom of adults who ride bicycles in traffic with small, helpless children strapped to the back of them, at least the father in Andrea Placer's photorealist picture, "Caring Hands," appeared responsible, as he adjusted the strap on his little boy's helmut. But even more important, in artistic terms, was the artist's impressive drawing ability, particularly her handling of light and shadow in grisaille.

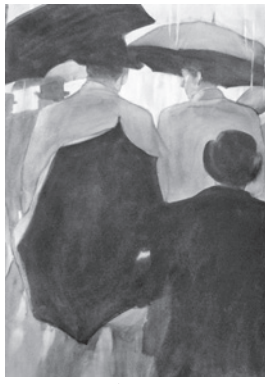
Florence Kaplan is a vivacious painter with a flair for capturing character, judging from her oil, "Man in Red Scarf." What struck one most about Kaplan's work was her ability to invest her painting with a subtle sense of the sophisticated sitter's worldy melancholy, without restraining the bravura brushstrokes that made the work compelling for its purely painterly attributes.

Two fine sculptors with distinctly different approaches rounded out the exhibition. In her bronze, "Song of the City," Gloria Spevacek expressed the musical theme with the swaying rhythms of the arms of her severely simplified semi-abstract figure. By contrast, Amy Unfried brought a considerable amount of detail to bear in her bronze, "Annunciation," where the figure of Mary was symbolized by a young woman in modern, rather than biblical dress, and the angel, suspended in midair from where the palms of the two figures touched, was depicted in a more abstract manner, as befits an ethereal being.

— J. Sanders Eaton

Chung-Sun Oh

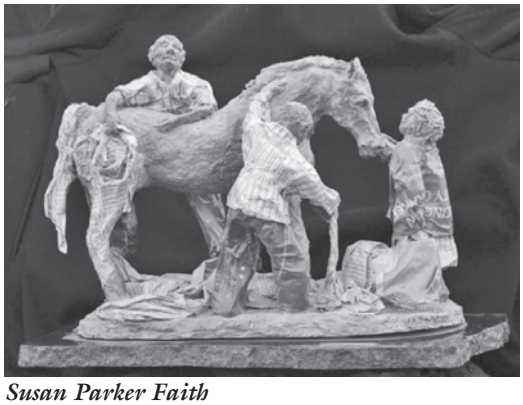
Amy Unfried



Ann Pember

Annette Hanna

Carol Brody



Susan Parker Faith

CLWAC Annual Members' Exhibition 2011 seen recently at The Salmagundi Art Club, 47 5th Avenue

Hedy O'Beil

Works on Paper

April 7 - 28

Gallery 307

307 7th Avenue, Suite 1401

New York, N.Y. 10001

Tues - Sat 11 - 5

646-400-5254

www.carterburdencenter.org

April Bending's Seamless Painterly Grafting of Myth to Belief

"Patina In Time"

For some reason, fish in art are almost always dead. From the 16th century Dutch masters to the present, they are the element in a still-life composition that puts a fine point on the French term nature morte. Yet fish have many vital meanings in early Christian iconography: Antony of Padua preached to the fishes, and they are a symbol of Baptism, as in the New Testament parable about how Christ ended The Drought of Fishes on Simon Peter's boat, and after the nets came up full, declared, "Fear not; from henceforth though shalt catch men."

Some pagan religions, as well, held fish to be sacred due to the close symbolic relationship between the Magna Mater, or Earth Mother, and the sea. Then there is the "cosmic fish," represented in the gold "Scythian Fish" in the Museum of Berlin, which symbolizes the whole of the formal, physical universe. And by virtue of the extraordinary number of eggs that they spawned, fish were seen in some ancient cultures as a symbol of fecundity.

Unbound by superstitious dogma, some of our best contemporary artists net new myths from the limitless depths of secular imagination. The Canadian painter April Bending, for example, sees fish as antediluvian symbols of "the fleeting nature of time and the fragility of life." In "Patina In Time," one of the latest in a series of paintings on that subject that has preoccupied Bending for the past several years, the very pigment seems an emulsion of eternity for the artist's marine creatures to traverse somnambulantly, like bloated, avuncular blimps in a nocturnal sky.

If one of the immutable assets of significant art is its capacity to carry meaning in a context of pure beauty, the dreamily hypnotic power of this canvas can be attributed, at least in part, to Bending's liberal use of the clear yet deep blue hue that permeates many of her recent paintings. Inspired by the sea surrounding the Cayman Islands, where the artist spends part of each year, it is a color that blends harmoniously with the woven quality of the brushstrokes that meld the elements of her compositions in a stasis as sublime as that in a still life by Braque or Klee — in particular, auspiciously, the latter's 1926 masterpiece, "Around the Fish" — even while Bending's lugubrious subterraneans continue to float through their murky element, rather than being laid out in state on a platter, surrounded by the array of fanciful symbols with which Klee garnished his.

In Bending's "Fish of Ishtar," however, a single such creature appears ossified like an entombed pharaoh in outline within a brick wall. The painting's title refers to Ishtar, the goddess of love, sex, and fertility in the polytheist religion of pagan Assyria. Sometimes synonymous for her fecundity with Nina, the fish goddess, Ishtar could have been a forerunner of the myth of the mermaid.

Although pigmented as palpably as those in Martin Wong's oils of East Village or Chinatown tenements, in Bending's paintings such walls represent the structures of ancient civilizations, now vanished to dust, as seen in another painting called "Once Great," where fish symbols appear amid esoteric hieroglyphs inscribed like chalked graffiti on faded brick. Bending has stated that in her work such walls are meant to "inspire critical thinking about the sustainability of our current first world lifestyle by juxtaposing those images against edifices of ancient, once great societies." Her ultimate hope is that by evoking "ancient societies that have risen to greatness and fallen through the conflict of their inimical natures," her paintings will "inspire inquisitive thinking about the sustainability of our current affluent lifestyle, seemingly on the decline, and stimulate concern for finding and adopting solutions" — a tall order for any artist.

What makes a painting persuasive, however, is the conviction with which the idea is embodied in the physical qualities of the art object itself. Bending's sumptuously tactile technique, with its radiant blues and rusty ochers often scumbled over a black priming coat that affords tantalizing glimpses of pentimento, as of an underlying mystery, both delights the eye and gives heft to her imaginative graftings of myth to belief. She is one of those rare painters that the brilliant critic John Ruskin, had he lived in our time, might have praised for the sublime synthesis of "finish and impetuosity" which painting must attain to possess the everlasting breath of life.

— Ed McCormack

April Bending, Affordable Art Fair, NYC, May 5 - 8, 2011 & Patrick International Fine Art, Ontario, Canada "Shakespearean Asides" show, May 1 - June 30, 2011. www.AprilBending.com.

CARROZZINI
Continued from page 6
Finally, there is Pierre Regis-Didés, a French painter with a rugged tachiste style, whose thickly impastoed paintings, created in the wake of a forty-day coma, celebrate the triumph of the human spirit. And what could be at once more serious yet playful, after all, than a virtual resurrection?— Ed McCormack

BLACK ART
Continued from page 7
Then there is Debra Holland, whose grasp of color and composition is such that she can move freely from realism, as seen in her pastel on paper of an African woman in a vibrantly patterned dress to a neo-primitive figure in marker tile entitled "Rukia" without sacrificing aesthetic consistency. Rosalie R. Scott is represented by a still life with an almost Braque-like formal simplicity. Robert N. Scott, on the other hand, displays impressive versatility, in works that range from the sensitive pastel portrait of an elderly woman to a tumultuous abstract acrylic.

All told, this splendid exhibition revealed the stylistic diversity of contemporary African-American art in a manner that makes all self-limiting labels and designations seem finally redundant. — Byron Coleman

ANN CHERNOW
Continued from page 9
"Blood for Oil" was recently included in a film by Manny Kirchheimer about how war has been depicted by artists down through the ages suggests that the artist's concerns range beyond her usual subject matter. But for the moment, it is her images of women as traditionally depicted in film, which are no less politically charged in a more subtle way, on which her reputation rests. For not only are her "Bad Girls" seductive and engaging, as well as technically accomplished, but Chernow demonstrates, as few other contemporary printmakers do, that the venerable medium of etching and aquatint can still make a make a vital and strikingly original contribution to the eclectic crazy quilt of postmodern art. — Ed McCormack

NEW CENTURY
Continued from page 10
textured composition "Windswept, Cuthel creates an atmospheric urban epiphany akin to the Loren MacIver's lyrical masterpiece "Hopscotch," inspired by seeing autumn leaves swirl around a sidewalk near her home in Brooklyn. And another collage by Cuthel called "Egrets," occasioned by a visit to the wetlands in Jamaica Bay, New York, evokes a page from an enchanted story book. Areas of pasted text are juxtaposed with a pastel image of the white waterbirds, the light of a full moon hanging low in a cerulean sky glowing through tall, swaying grasses that mirror the graceful curve of their long, swanlike necks.

Perhaps Cuthel's most impressive accomplishment to date, however, is a collage that translates lovely avian melodies into visual terms. A work of synesthesia comparable to Arthur Dove's famous "Foghorns," Cuthel's "Birdsong" sets overlapping rectangles of graduated deep-to-pale blue hues and delicate images of insects and butterflies against a soft pink ground. For here, Barbara Cuthel evokes the transcendent music that inspired her kindred spirit Dickinson to observe, "Hope is a thing with feathers/ That perches in the soul/And sings the tune without the words/And never stops at all..." — Ed McCormack

VAN DEN BERG
Continued from page 22
forms with a mysterious emblematic presence hovering against deep black backgrounds. All are equally compelling, given the ability of Lydia van den Berg to generate a seemingly inexhaustible range of imagery that radiates pleasure, making her joy in creation contagious for the viewer. Encountering her paintings, one is reminded of Picasso's famous statement to the effect that it takes an entire lifetime to learn to paint as freely as a child. — Maurice Taplinger

MEMORIES LINGER ON
Continued from page 22
relationships is especially sublime in her color film print of two Roosevelt Island trams traversing the cables in opposite directions, their cheery red forms set against the blue of the sky.

And Amy Rosenfeld contributes a single work combining drawing, writing, and family album photos in an irresistible manner. The unabashed sentiment and sincerity of Rosenfeld's "Mother Memories" projects a universal emotion with the most direct means. — Marie R. Pagano

DENIS PALBIANI
Continued from page 26
hand alone are visible and the only color in an otherwise monochromatic composition is the bright scarlet of her lipstick.

Although this internationally exhibited and widely collected artist has also done notable images of landscape and other subjects, these sensual, sculptural pictures of the female form are among his most remarkable accomplishments. — Wilson Wong

PANSUM CHENG
Continued from page 26
and some of their more successful former alumnae are regularly featured in the Style Section of The New York Times. For no one who has experienced the raw impact of his work, which is as gritty and alive as East Broadway, the Fujian immigrant beehive that has quickly gained a reputation as "the Wild West of Chinatown," could ever mistake Pansum Cheng for just another art yuppie on the make. — Byron Coleman

Art Contest Winners Forecast Trends to Come

Besides introducing us to possible art stars of tomorrow, juried exhibitions can be harbingers of trends to come. Work by five worthy winners in different categories with seemingly bright futures are on view in the Armadillo Fine Art Publishing New York International Juried Exhibition, at Agallery, a relatively new venue which has established itself in a remarkably short period of time as a promising presence in Chelsea.

The winner in the Conceptual category, a photographer from Dublin, Ireland, named Erin Quinn, measures up as a solid contender

Erin Quinn

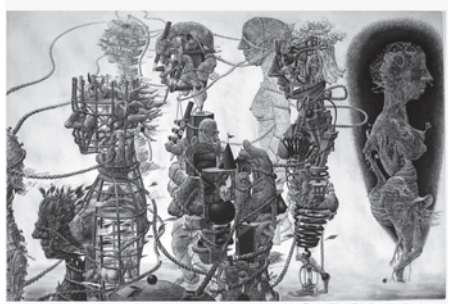
with a sequence of images that comment alarmingly on the invasive surveillance of their own citizens that the 9/11 terrorist attacks gave governments a blank-check to introduce in the name of so-called homeland security. Quinn spent over a year in an international airport, her own lens positioned at the same angle as the CCTV domestic spy cameras, adding yet one more unwitting photo-op to the estimated 300 or so to which the average law-abiding citizen is subjected daily. Viewed from above, isolated on a neutral background, her subjects look suspiciously dehumanized, like refugees from a wax museum.

Prefacing his artist statement with a quote from Samuel Beckett ("There are many ways in which the thing I am trying in vain to say may be tried in vain to be said"), Illinois artist Brett Eberhardt, the winner of the Painting prize, proves himself a worthy visual counterpart to that enigmatic writer with a series of self-portraits in the form of still-lifes centered around a plaster dental cast of his own teeth. In Eberhardt's "Profile,"the cast is set sideways on the powder blue, formica-shiny top of what appears to be a beige kitchen counter riddled with bullet holes. The pastel-striped wallpaper behind the cast lends the juicily painted picture a confectionery quality akin to Wayne Thiebaud's oils of cakes and pies. In "My Teeth," however, the dental cast is engulfed entirely in tactile white pigment and propped atop a whitewashed cardboard box. Funky but formal, the effect is like a figurative take on Robert Ryman.

The mostly monochromatic intaglios of the Printmaking prizewinner,Tokyo artist Tomiyuki Sakuta, could come across like M.C. Escher on acid, with their permutations of anatomical and machine parts forming

Brett Eberhardt

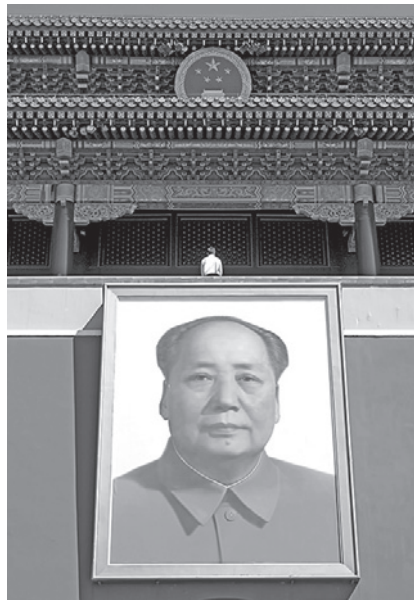
surreal humanoid figures. His work, however, is even more akin to that of Boris Artzybascheff, a wildly inventive Ukranian-born immigrant who, in the 1950s, became famous for equally Escher-like industrial illustrations for Fortune magazine. Much in the spirit of postmodern appropriation,



Tomiyuki Sakuta

Tomiyuki puts his own third-generation spin on bionic surrealism, and in a smaller number of vibrant full-color intaglios,creates floral tributes to the vegetable portraits of the 16th century Italian eccentric Giuseppe Arcimboldo.

In the pure Photography category, Brooklyn-born Richard Silver won his award for color pictures in which figures are generally seen from afar and dwarfed by their surroundings — or else are conspicuous by their absence from settings such as the cavernous main reading room of the



Richard Silver

42nd Street New York Public Library. Especially striking in this regard is Silver's "Big Mao," in which a lone man stands on the balcony of a pagoda with his back to a huge portrait of the late Chairman, who has been demoted posthumously from Ultimate

Richard Lund

Leader to a campy Pop icon in the confusing Communist-Capitalist hybrid called New China.

Richard Lund, the winner in the Mixed Media category, creates intricate assemblages with common household objects, such as buttons, bottle caps, cabinet knobs, drain covers, sink strainers, and so on. He combines them in a manner that makes one marvel at their cosmic allusiveness; yet his scrupulousness in naming the utilitarian purpose of each component of his pieces amounts to a kind of integrity, the nakedness of which makes Lund seem an even more deserving exemplar of his genre.

— Peter Wiley

Critics Top Picks, May 3 - May 19, Armadillo Fine Art Publishing, AGallery, 141 West 28th Street, www.agallery.us

monkdogz urban art

monkdogz.com

(516) 655-1000

Joyce DiBona

"Voyage to Consciousness"

Pen and ink on acrylic
epoxy on Fiberglass
40" x 23"

Jean Marc Calvet

"No Tengo Nada que Esconder"

Acrylic on canvas
39" x 39"

Lisa Lichtenfels

Realism in Fabric

April 2011

CFM Gallery

236 West 27th Street, 4th Floor, Chelsea, New York City 10001
(212) 966-3864 info@cfmgallery.com Fax (212) 226-1041
Tuesday thru Saturday 10am to 6pm
www.cfmgallery.com