

# G&S

Gallery & Studio

**It's 1971.**  
Jeannie & I  
are having  
dinner in  
our kitchen  
on 89<sup>th</sup> St.



SOME GUY NAMED  
MICHEL CHOQUETTE  
WHO GOT MY NUMBER  
FROM JANN WENNER  
AT ROLLING STONE  
CALLED TODAY. HE  
WANTS ME TO DO A  
COMIC STRIP ABOUT  
THE '60s.



SOUNDS  
LIKE FUN!  
YOU GONNA  
DO IT?

I DON'T KNOW.  
HE'S COMING  
OVER TOMORROW  
I GOT TA SEE...



I'M MAINLY A WRITER NOW. HAVEN'T  
DONE COMICS IN YEARS.

NEITHER HAVE WILLIAM S.  
BURROUGHS, FEDERICO  
FELLINI OR TOM  
WOLFE. BUT THEY  
AGREED. AND SO  
HAS FRANK ZAPPA.

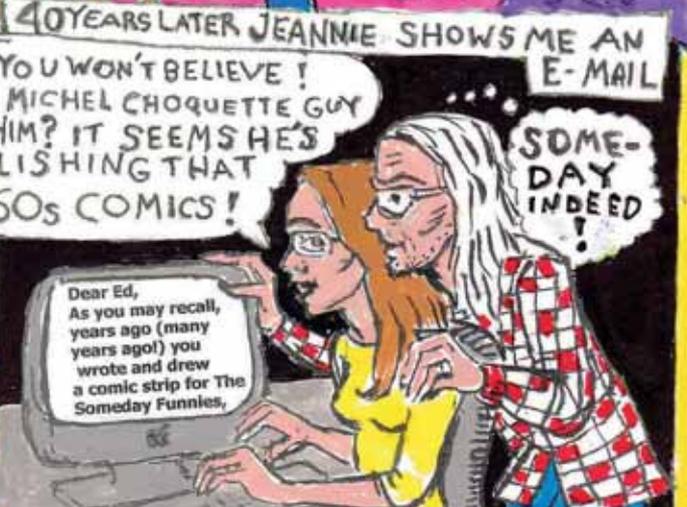
THE  
NEXT  
DAY



UM...  
ON SECOND  
THOUGHT  
MAN, COUNT  
ME IN, TOO!

COOL.

THE NEXT ONE YOU WON'T BELIEVE!  
IT'S FROM THAT MICHEL CHOQUETTE GUY  
--REMEMBER HIM? IT SEEMS HE'S  
FINALLY PUBLISHING THAT  
BOOK OF '60s COMICS!



40 YEARS LATER JEANNIE SHOWS ME AN  
E-MAIL

Dear Ed,  
As you may recall,  
years ago (many  
years ago!) you  
wrote and drew  
a comic strip for  
The Someday Funnies,

SOME-  
DAY  
INDEED  
!



READ ALL ABOUT IT  
INSIDE! ALSO "BLOOD  
IS THICKER THAN WATER"  
A NEW EXCERPT FROM  
MY SHAMELESS MEMOIR  
HOODLUM HEART.





*pat feeney murrell*  
*embodied*

*artist books and prints featuring body imprints and wrappings*  
*march 6 - 31, 2012 reception: march 10, 5 - 7 pm*



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LYNDON ROCHIN, MOSAIC ARTISAN

TUESDAY, FEBRUARY 14<sup>TH</sup> THROUGH SATURDAY, MARCH 3<sup>RD</sup>

MORNING RECEPTION: FRIDAY, FEBRUARY 17<sup>TH</sup> AT 11:30 A.M.

EVENING RECEPTION: FRIDAY, FEBRUARY 17<sup>TH</sup> FROM 4:30 P.M. - 7:30 P.M.

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NEW ART SHOW  
CONFIGURATIONS

Curated by Basha Maryanska  
at

NEW CENTURY ARTISTS  
Gallery

530 West 25th Street, NYC, 4th floor.

OPENING RECEPTION

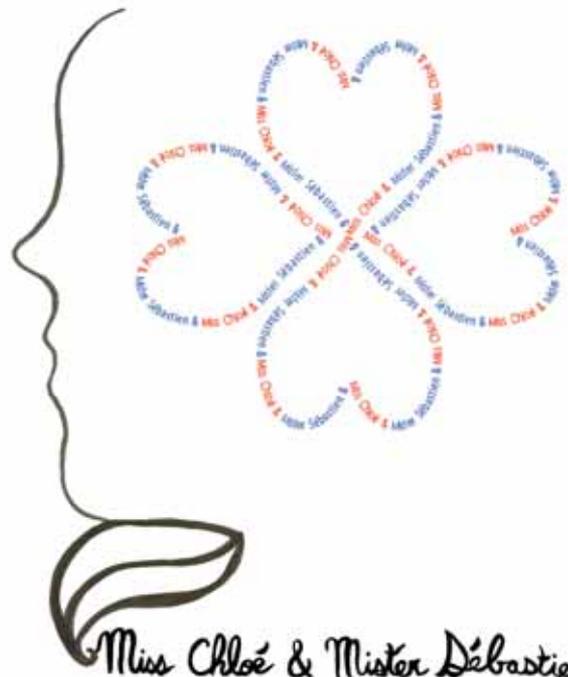
Saturday, March 10th 2012, 3-6 PM

March 06-24 2012. Tue-Sat  
11:00AM-6:00PM.

ARTISTS:

Alana Allan, Renee Chase, Virginia Donovan, David Green,  
Kathryn Hart, Maria Hegglin, Susan Holford, Malgorzata  
Kisielewska, Jim Lennox, Carol Loizides, Basha Maryanska,  
Cynthia McCusker, Wendy Norton, Lilya Pavlovic, Hank Rodina,  
Beata Sawicka, Bonnie Shanas, Agnieszka Szyfter,  
Veryl Zimmerman.

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# Home is Where the Art Is in WSAC Group Show

“Home” has to be one of the most evocative words in any language, as evidenced by a photo exhibition of that title featuring members of the West Side Arts Coalition, curated by participating artist Carolyn Reus.

To Cal Eagle, the word evokes the post-9/11 term “homeland security” and images of vigilant, grim-faced men, their eyes shadowed by the bills of baseball caps that they sport with paramilitary swagger. One carries a folded tabloid under the arm of his bulky denim jacket as he moves among fellow pedestrians like a man with a mission; another macho type with a mustache wears a whistle on a red, white, and blue ribbon around his neck, as he casts a suspicious glance at the photographer.

For Lucinda Prince, however, the term has a kinder, gentler connotation in “Home with Friends,” a picture of three sets of bare feet propped up in cozy proximity, presumably watching TV. Prince also evokes the comforts of suburban domesticity in “The Neighbors,” a nocturnal view of warmly lighted windows glowing through silhouetted tree limbs. And she shows us how small creatures warm up to the notion of home as well in a winning image of a squirrel poised possessively on the shingles of a tarred roof.

Jean Prytskacz, on the other hand, confronts a more impersonal urban reality

in “Apartments,” a vertiginous view of high-rise windows and terraces soaring skyward, as well as in “Townhouse,” a more horizontal vista of smaller semi-attached homes shrinking in vanishing perspective. By comparison, another digital print by Prytskacz of a backyard doll house in the style of a log cabin is a picture of graciously appointed individuality.

Elegance and emptiness appear easily equated in the Ultrachrome Archival Prints of Lester Blum, where sunlight streaming into a wood paneled room; a wet lounge chair on a luxurious verandah, its tiles shiny with rain, palm fronds blowing beyond the white railing; or a majestic billiard room suggest that all the warmth drains out of a home when it becomes little more than a status symbol, more like a museum than a refuge of peace and comfort.

“Thanksgiving at Paula’s” and “Alayna Preparing for her Debut on the Cooking Channel,” two digital prints by Dr. Barry Pinchefskey present images of a woman posing proudly with a turkey fresh from the oven and a little girl standing at a toy stove in her playroom. As in his equally engaging picture of a robin redbreast guarding its nest, both images exemplify Dr. Pinchefskey’s unique ability to bring out the poetry in everyday subjects and situations.

Vibrantly colored sea shells seem symbols

of enfoldment and enclosure, evoking homey sanctuaries, in JD Morrison’s “Vacancy 1” and “Vacancy 2.” More literally, however, Morrison conjures a sense of domestic serenity in “Still Life with Lamp and Still Life,” the second still life in the title referring to a small painting within the photograph of three fruits and a blue pitcher on the wall behind the stout-bodied lamp.

Curator Carolyn Reus takes a broader view than most in digital prints such as “Dead Horse Bay,” an expansive river view, and “Coney Island,” looking across the sand, toward Nathan’s and the crowds milling along the boardwalk outside Steeplechase Park. The implication here is that the term “home,” to paraphrase the song, includes “all the old familiar places that this heart embraces.”

And for Jack Cesareo, “home” obviously means anywhere that his giant cupcake touches down, as he continues his engaging conceit combining conceptualism and photography. Here, in keeping with the show’s theme, Cesareo places the monolithic confection right next door to a mobile home and a Native American teepee, upstaging each in its turn.

—Peter Wylie

WSAC, “Home”, recently seen at Broadway Community Center, Broadway and 96th Street (center island)

## NEW CENTURY ARTISTS GALLERY PRESENTS NEW EXPRESSIONS '12

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LINDA GANUS - MARK LERER

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- **Linda Dujack** is a painter and a printmaker who “likes to take a line for a walk.”
- **Fritz Erismann** presents individual and composite abstract oil paintings, rooted in numeric and linguistic gestures.
- **Linda Ganus** conjures up uncanny immersive environments of drawing, painting and sound.
- **Mark Lerer** applies his distinct style of ink drawing to contemporary political and social issues.

TUESDAY, MARCH 27<sup>TH</sup> THROUGH SATURDAY, APRIL 14<sup>TH</sup>  
TWO RECEPTIONS:

- SATURDAY AFTERNOON, MARCH 31<sup>ST</sup> FROM 3 P.M. UNTIL 6 P.M.
- THURSDAY EVENING, APRIL 5<sup>TH</sup> FROM 6 P.M. UNTIL 8 P.M.

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Catharine Lorillard Wolfe  
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The GALLERY & STUDIO

advertising deadline for  
the April/May issue is  
March 12 for color,  
March 19 for black/white.

# G&S Highlights

**On the Cover:**

*“Although he was hardly a devout family man (he often seemed unable to stand any of us), for some reason ‘Blood is Thicker Than Water’ was one of my father’s favorite expressions,” says Ed McCormack of the chapter of his memoir, HOODLUM HEART, excerpted in this issue. “It turned out to be one of the most painful chapters. I felt almost superstitious about it, as if I was betraying some deep familial taboo by writing about both my parents so candidly. And I’m still not sure that following my compulsion to do so anyway had nothing to do with ending up in the ER at Lenox Hill Hospital at 4 AM recently with a heart ailment I never knew I had.” –Page 14*



Pat Feeney Murrell, pg. 9



Danièle M. Marin, pg. 6



Namiyo Kubo, pg. 7

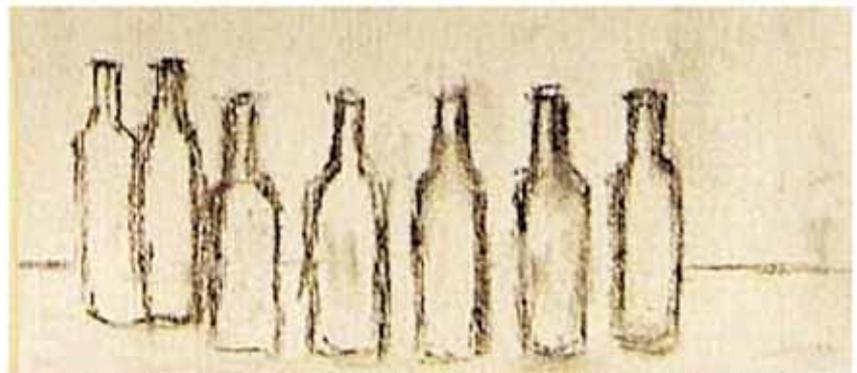


Rose Sigal-Ibsen, pg. 26



Ed Brodtkin, pg. 13

## Danièle M. Marin Ground line Mixed media paintings



*A ground line is a horizontal plane in which an object sits on.*

danielemarin.com

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## GALLERY&STUDIO

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www.galleryandstudiomagazine.com

# monkdogz urban art

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## CALVET - MIAMI

Invasion

Invasión

l'invasion



**Premiere** at Miami International Film Festival  
9:30 March 7th - 7:00 March 9th

**Exhibition** at MDC Freedom Tower  
March 9th - April 28th 2012



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# Configurations at New Century Artists

One of the prevalent tendencies in “Configurations,” an exhibition curated by participating artist Basha Maryanska, is a species of allusive semi-abstractness with referents in the visible world. It can be seen in the paintings of Lilya Pavlovic, whose exposure to different countries and cultures during a childhood that involved much travel lends her paintings a unique appeal, with fanciful figures in exotic costumes harmoniously enmeshed in vibrantly gorgeous landscape settings.

Although Carol Loizides’ paintings are more overtly abstract, they possess their own allusive characteristics, conjuring nature and a strong sense of place with richly layered pastel hues that evoke landscape while making use of the freeform drips and other techniques one normally associates with Abstract Expressionism. By contrast, Cynthia McCusker moves easily between overt representations of nature, as seen in “Perseverance” — an acrylic on canvas in which a body of water is illuminated by beams of blinding light pouring through masses of dark clouds to the somewhat more mystical mode of abstractions seen in her encaustic painting “Angelheart.”

Then there is artist/curator Basha Maryanska, who employs emotive color applied with a luminous glazing technique to capture how the mysteries of nature survive in the city as seen in her radiant painting “Walking Through Manhattan,” where the brightly lighted windows of buildings are juxtaposed with more abstract rectangular forms and explosions of verdant foliage and trees to highly poetic effect.

Four other artists in the show specialize in figurative sculpture and relief, each in her own distinct manner: Susan Holford combines handmade paper, wood, rusted metal, roots, bark, leaves, tea bags, tree limbs and other found objects to create evocative 3-D assemblages, such as “Sanctuary,” in which a partial female figure with realistically molded serenely benevolent facial features and gentle hands plays host to groups of stuffed birds, and another piece called “Wrapped,” with two faces, swathed within natural materials like a native American mother and her papoose, eloquently evoke traditional women’s roles.

Bonnie Shanas, on the other hand, lends the unusual material of industrial wire mesh an unaccustomed sensuality, in her artfully fragmented depictions of loving couples dancing or embracing, giving them a sense of the classical and the eternal that locates her work handily in a host of art historical and prehistorical precedents, even while it remains as immediately contemporary as the plaster people of George Segal.

Renée Weiss Chase, a fashion designer

turned sculptor had an epiphany during a ceramics class when the instructor used the term “dart,” inspiring her to create dresses in clay. The stately sculptural forms that resulted, however, go beyond those of ordinary dress forms, becoming glowing monuments to the feminine mystique, their graceful, slinky contours evoking visions of elegant filmic femmes fatale such as Jean Harlow and Marlene Dietrich.

Then there is David Green, who does something similar for the masculine physique in marble and alabaster pieces such as the powerful “Male Torso” and the gracefully arching “Male Dancer,” the latter charged with a sense of energy and movement rarely seen in contemporary sculpture.

The final sculptor Jim Lennox has a delightfully quirky way with aeronautical imagery, as seen in both his tall painted steel piece “Rocket # 1,” which has a “steampunk” quality, as well as in “In Memory of Flight,” a plane that appears to be morphing into a robotic bird. In “Red Shoes,” however, Lennox pays tribute to Saul Steinberg, transforming one of the great New Yorker illustrator’s drawings into an intriguing 3-D portrait.

Figurative painting as well makes an auspicious showing in this varied group show. Witness Agnieszka Szyfter’s large acrylic and oil on canvas, “The Last Supper, 2011” which outdoes even Andy Warhol’s late version of that great subject for Szyfter’s audacious inclusion of likenesses of Bill Clinton and Bill Gates at the table, as well the same artist’s erotically charge mixed media on canvas “A Kiss of Spring,” in which a couple embraces amid a plethora of sinuous Art Deco floral forms and hot colors. By contrast Alana Allan embraces quiet moments, as seen in her “Nicole on a Bench” and “Sunglasses Girl,” both of which capture thoughtful young women in public places, bracketed between colorful background shapes that lend a striking underlying tension to otherwise reposeful compositions in a manner akin to Richard Diebenkorn.

By contrast, a rare formal beauty enlivens a series of paintings centering on the elaborately costumed figure of a lone Japanese geisha by Maria Heggin, which are especially notable for their expressively simplified forms and subtle subdued colors.

Several other artists exhibit landscapes and cityscapes that emphasize the vitality of both genres. Virginia Donovan, an area resident, puts a more contemporary spin on the tradition of the Hudson Valley School with paintings that, rather than being panoramic, portray the local landscape and the famous river from a more intimate perspective in miniature (4x5 inch) canvases with light-filled colors

and invitingly creamy textures. By contrast, Wendy Norton captures the romance of New York City with vigorous bravura brushwork, moving from a sunny day in Washington Square Park; uptown to the skating rink in Rockefeller Center in a snow flurry; to a night scene showing a couple passing under the canopy of an elegant hotel or apartment building; imbuing each with its own distinctive atmosphere without sacrificing stylistic consistency.

For Beata Sawicka, Chiaroscuro, the play of light and shadow on shrubbery and foliage, is the unifying factor in compositions marked by a singular freshness of execution that comes across especially in her painting of shadows along a garden path, as well as in another composition where slender saplings, some already blooming, others still bare of limb, are set against a pale blue sky intersected by delicate wisps of cloud.

The light in the paintings of Malgorzata Kisieleska, on the other hand, appears to emanate from an emotional rather than natural source, lending her paintings an imaginative dimension that is most dramatic in “At Sunrise,” a painting of heavenly illumination streaming into the depths of a forest which sets Malgorzata apart as a spiritual descendent of the great German Romantic landscape painter David Casper Friedrich.

The three final painters can only be classified as pure abstractionists: Hank Rondina’s sprightly, brightly colored compositions in paint and collage share playful qualities with predecessors such as Paul Klee and Jean Miro, yet they have their unique slant, due to the artist’s relationship to musical composition, made evident in both his titles and the rhythmic movement of his forms.

By contrast, color is exquisitely refined in the collage paintings of Kathryn Hart, where the emphasis is on texture and line, as seen in compositions such as “Memory” and “Mind Mapping,” with their floating shapes and bits of string and other found elements tossed about in layers of monochromatic, liquified pigment like elements caught up in a blizzard.

Then there is Veryl Zimmerman, another artist enamored of monochromes, whose paintings of flowing, amorphous forms suggest unearthly things, such as phantoms and vortexes, as they swirl and turn in compositions possessed of a unique visual drama.

— Maureen Flynn

Configurations, New Century Artists,  
530 West 25th Street, March 6 - 24, 2012

## Nada Herman, Scion of an Australian Art Dynasty

The granddaughter of Sali Herman, one of Australia's most famous painters, Nada Herman grew up in an art nurturing atmosphere and started painting in oils at age eight, sharing a studio with both her grandfather and her father, "TED," also an accomplished and admired artist. Although her grandfather courted controversy by painting the slums of Sydney in the 1950s, when civic boosters disapproved of such subject matter, his work, as Robert Hughes pointed out in his definitive volume "The Art of Australia" was invariably upbeat.

"Is not happiness itself a philosophy?" Sali Herman famously declared, and his granddaughter, Nada Herman, continues the tradition of joyful exuberance in her landscapes, city scenes, marine scenes and floral studies, bursting with life, color, and movement.

"I believe nothing is static," she says. "A humble flower or piece of fruit has a life force."

Her beachscapes, with their surfers, sunbathers, bright blankets and umbrellas, however, are where she captures this life force most spectacularly. Employing a wet-into-wet oil technique, she uses both brush and palette knife, sometimes even squeezing pigment straight from the tube, to evoke a palpable sense of sweeping seaside vistas of sand and surf notable for their vigor and

vivacity.

Her oil on canvas "The Beach," for one splendid example, is an especially animated composition in which many tiny figures are seen reclining on colorful blankets on the sand or romping along the shoreline, as gulls soar overhead and sailboats grace the horizon. Here, Herman's painterly energy is especially apparent in the broad, free strokes of pigment depicting the curling white foam of the waves, and her coloristic boldness is just as evident in the streaks of luminous blue and pink hues that enliven the blue sky like runaway comets. The entire canvas evokes a festive sense of holiday pleasure that is contagious for the viewer.

The populous intricacy of Herman's compositions can remind one of the British faux-naive painter L.S. Lowry, although he employed a dingy palette influenced by the smoky atmosphere of England's industrial north, while her ruddy, sunsplashed colors are closer in spirit to those of her countryman Sidney Nolan.

Particularly vibrant is "Manly Beach," with its golden sand, shapely, curving surf, and green foliage in the background. Herman, however, can also delight us with more mellow blue hues reminiscent of Raoul Dufy when she so chooses, as seen in both "Lavender Bay Sydney, and "Neutral Bay Sydney." Especially lively is the latter, with



*"The Beach"*

its view of a bridge, the city skyline, and a procession of white sailboats evoking a sense of breezy excitement to the bay.

The large scale of Nada Herman's work invariably increases the impact of her paintings, lending them an expansiveness that is notable in her multi-figure beach and cityscapes, as well as in less busy outdoor compositions, such as "Studio View." In this

*Continued on pag 28*

Nada Herman, Agora Gallery,  
530 West 25th St., Feb. 10–March 1, 2012.  
Reception: Thurs. Feb. 16, 6–8

## "Free Expression," a Strong Group Show on the Upper West Side

Richard Carlson is an abstract artist who sometimes includes figures in his work, as seen in his "Subway" series, where a grid of several faces can be seen through the windows of a train. But of the three paintings by Carlson in "Free Expression," a group show curated by participating artist Sonia Barnett, the best is "Subway 1," in which the tiles and stripes of the station enable the artist to display his mastery of pure geometry.

Emily Rich is another abstract painter who works in a more gestural, spontaneous style. Here, however, Rich showed small, breezy watercolor studies of floral and landscape subjects that reveal the underlying structures that determine the compositions of her more Abstract Expressionist works on a larger scale.

By contrast, Robert Eckel is an adamantly figurative painter, here represented by acrylics on canvas. Although Eckel also showed paintings of a woman at an outdoor fruit stand, a small still life of a bunch of asparagus, and other subjects, his "Artist at Work," in which the artist is hidden behind the back of his easel and canvas was a wonderfully witty statement about how an artist gets lost in the creative process.

Monique Serres is another realist with an especially fine grasp of portraiture, as seen in one especially accomplished oil on linen in which a middle aged woman, posed in profile, holds a bouquet of pink and orange

flowers. Also quite impressive were a three quarter view of another woman, giving the viewer a slightly suspicious sidelong glance, as well as a tabletop arrangement, featuring yellow flowers reflected in a shiny metal vessel, in which Serres shows her skill in still-life painting.

Gail Comes showed two large heads, one in graphite on Strathmore paper, the other in acrylic on canvas, with expressively distorted forms that appear to pay homage to Picasso. Comes, however, also employs surreal details, such as the face within the ear of the main figure which makes her work unique, with its bold, almost Art Nouveau handling of anatomy and, in the painting, a highly individual way of juxtaposing dark and bright color areas.

Amy Rosenfeld is an abstract painter who lends new immediacy to compositions based on simple geometric forms, particularly boldly irregular squares and triangles. In both "Colors and Shapes" with its nocturnal blue hues, greens and earth colors, and "White Spaces," where brightly outlined shapes with white in the middle are clustered against a vibrant yellow ground, Rosenfeld displays the variety of moods she achieves with a severely limited vocabulary of forms laid down with a kind of deceptive simplicity that it can take a lifetime to achieve.

Another abstract painter, Herbert Evans,

has mastered a subtle calligraphic manner that can make one think of the great Seattle artist Mark Tobey's "white writing" — although Evans is also a consummate colorist. The latter gift is especially evident in "Perception Reflection," a somewhat less linear composition, in which Evans employs bits of collage and thick painterly impastos to create a composition more akin to Philip Guston's late figurative works.

Frequent exhibitor Nate Ladson makes an especially mysterious statement with a large oil on canvas called "Black Madonna," showing a woman in a white gown that looks like the kind of sheets Klu Klux Klanners wear, floating against a blue and violet color field; despite the title, however, there is no infant anywhere in sight. Ladson also makes a strong statement with an extreme close-up of another black woman's face called "Double Exposure."

Also quite fine was a single digital computer work by Nancy Johnson called "Summer Garden," with bright blues and greens that reminded one of certain works in the same medium by David Hockney. Then there was the curator Sonia Barnett, who

*Continued on pag 28*

WSAC, "Free Expression," recently seen  
at Broadway Mall Community Center,  
96th Street (Center island).

## Danièle M. Marin: Imbuing “Nature Morte” with New Life

For years Danièle M. Marin explored issues of feminine identity in her paintings and installations. Invariably, however, they differed from the work of other artists who dealt with feminist themes. For while references to significant women writers, such as Colette, Simone de Beauvoir, and Marguerite Duras, who have become feminist icons, were often present in her paintings, their real pièce de résistance was the intimate atmosphere that she brought to her evocation of the actual spaces in which women lived and worked: the home, the studio, the sewing room.

Indeed, a prominent motif, starting with Marin's first New York solo exhibition, “Reclaiming the Dress: A Journey,” several years ago, was the tailor's dummy, or dress form. It appeared in other shows by the artist over the years and recurs in at least one of the works in her sixth solo exhibition, “Ground Line.”

The title refers to the plane on which the objects sit in a still life composition, and the first work of Marin's to which I saw it applied was a simple drawing of seven bottles that at first glance called to mind Morandi. But on second glance it became clear that some of the bottles in Marin's drawing, unlike the very grounded vessels of Morandi, appeared to be floating in thin air, and that the artist's intention was to confound our expectations concerning space and gravity in the venerable artistic genre of still life.

For example, the work in which the dress form appears, “Ground line # 1,” consists of five connected panels of varying sizes. Their somewhat asymmetrical arrangement adds considerably to the vaguely unsettling experience of viewing them, which is also enhanced by the widely varying degrees of realism and abstraction within the individual panels.

The dress form, a prominent element of the first panel, contains a delicately delineated image of a slender, Asian-looking tree, suggesting a decorative element in Chinoiserie, and is divided into numbered sections like the charts in upscale butcher shops designating prime cuts of meat. One can't help being reminded of how we commodify women's bodies, and the meat reference (intended by the artist or not) is made all the more compelling by its juxtaposition with a nearby guitar — yet another shape often likened to curvaceous feminine anatomy.

In view of Marin's characteristic imagery, one can't help making such associations, just as one must acknowledge the phallic implications of the bottles, some upright, some inverted and stuck within circular shapes, propped atop adjoining cubes or cloth-draped pedestals in other panels of the combine composition. Here, too, a

green apple floats freely in space, amid clusters of gray triangular shapes, as a sensual pear and its transparent ghostly twin perform a sort of pendulum dance nearby, reminding one of Guy Davenport's meditation on the “persistence of apples and pears in the Western imagination” in his essay on still life “Objects on a Table.”

The last panel of “Ground line # 1,” is taller than the others (if not quite as tall as the third in this boldly asymmetrical configuration) and is perhaps most clearly indicative of the increasingly metaphysical element that one noted, in a review of her previous solo show in the same venue two years ago, developing in Marin's métier. It is also one of the most formally complex panels, referring directly to Cubism, the movement that rescued still life from “memento mori” (a Latin phrase that translates quite literally as “remember that you will die”) by virtue of its playful flattening of objects on the picture plane, and recasting them, as Davenport so felicitously puts it as “precious vestiges of harmony in a distracting and insane world.”

But don't expect Marin to divest her objects of their symbolic value, even as she toys with Cubist space, superimposing a linear version of the big blue pitcher that dominates the fifth and last panel of “Ground line # 1.” For what is one to make of that guitar with its neck decapitated and the transparent toy racing car perched like the naked skeleton of male aggression on the visceral red table cloth directly above it?

Although one chose to concentrate on only “Ground line # 1,” in order to dwell sufficiently on the complex relationships of its objects and the dialogues they conduct from one panel to the other, the show actually included six such groupings, all of equal power and interest. Indeed, what Marin has done in this series is to give new life to “nature morte,” a genre that, over the centuries, has tested the inventiveness of artists ranging from the Dutch masters to Cezanne, van Gogh, and the aforementioned Morandi, among many others.

For while the very name of the art form she practices here signifies something ostensibly static, she has imbued it, by virtue of her joined panels and the interaction of the objects that they encompass, with a dynamic sense of movement and sequential logic verging on the cinematic. And in doing so, savor the true breadth of her painterly gifts, ranging from the almost classical realism



“Ground line # 1” (First panel)

of the two-panel work “Ground line # 5,” with its solidly rendered vases and bottles, each shadow and reflection in place, to the vivacious combination of drawing and painting seen in “Ground Line # 6,” to the near abstract simplicity of “Ground Line # 2,” where the more free-floating forms and symbols take on a fanciful buoyancy that recalls Paul Klee.

Indeed, it should not take anything away from the consistent quality, seriousness, and dedication to feminist principles that she has demonstrated over the past several years of her exhibition career to declare that this exhibition was Danièle M. Marin's most virtuosic performance to date.

— Ed McCormack

Danièle M. Marin, solo show recently seen at Noho Gallery, 530 West 25th Street.

## Sailing Afloat on Namiyo Kubo's "Ocean of Light"

If certain subjects naturally inspire awe, the play of light on water is certainly high among them. One thinks of Monet's water lilies, as well as the marine paintings of the great Englishman, J.M.W. Turner — particularly those depicting nocturnal sea battles, in which cannon-fire reflected on the ocean, along with light from the moon and stars, heightens the dramatic voltage considerably.

The latest addition to the select company of artists who have mastered this elusive subject is the contemporary Japanese artist Namiyo Kubo, with her Water Series Vol. 19 "The Ocean of Light." For this Tokyo painter's one previous solo exhibition at Viridian Artists, in 2010, before it moved to its present space in Chelsea, she covered the walls, floor to ceiling, with tiny collages of camellia blossoms almost as densely configured as the red polka dots of her 1960s predecessor, the obsessive conceptual and performance artist Yayoi Kusama.

Between then and now, Kubo has been doing relief work with earthquake victims in Tohoku Prefecture, in Northern Japan, for whose children she has held drawing classes. And one can only imagine that such firsthand proximity to the devastation wreaked by the raw forces of nature somehow fed into the "terrible beauty," to appropriate Yeats' felicitous phrase, of her most recent exhibition. For this show, as well, Kubo covered the walls and even areas of the gallery's floor with her art. Only now, rather than of tiny collages, the show was comprised of paintings in Japanese mineral pigments on large expanses of paper that sometimes met at the corners of the room, installation-style, enfolding the viewer in a hushed nocturnal environment, illuminated by stars and sparkling lights, creating a sensation not unlike strolling along a riverfront promenade.

In this regard, Kubo's project differs from that of Monet, who within the finite confines of the pond in his garden at Giverny wished to create "the illusion of an endless whole, of water without horizon or bank." By contrast, entire urban skylines and the skies above loom within

Kubo's expansive nighttime compositions, although their shadowy structures appear, paradoxically, more ghostly than the palpably pigmented flurries of strokes, suggesting myriad points of light by virtue of the artist's alchemical ability to make ethereal elements manifest in the materiality of pigment.

Although some of the other cities depicted are apparently Tokyo, Shanghai,

the artist's skillful use of chiaroscuro.

The variegated quality of Kubo's palette also contributes to the vital effects she creates; for while the initial impression is of an all-pervading nocturnal blueness, on further perusal her paintings reveal an entire spectrum of hues, ranging from bright reds and yellows to pastel pinks, greens, and purples. Each color is distinct up close, like a blizzard of multicolored

confetti; yet they all coalesce and blend at a distance into the blue haze of the ground hue to suffuse the viewer in a radiant chromatic shower.

Up close, too, one sees the sparkling, palpitating surface effects that Kubo brings about through her handling of light, which renders nothing stagnant, but infuses each part and particle of the composition with an exultant sense of motion. In the works on the walls, the effect could suggest the speed of windblown rain sweeping across the



*Water Series Vol. 19, "The Ocean of Light"*

and London, this aspect of phantom architecture in Kubo's pictures strikes a particularly poignant note in a view of the New York skyline, where the ghosts of the Twin Towers are discernible through the painterly vortex.

Indeed, Kubo's technique would appear to have something in common with that of Jackson Pollock, given the densely layered look of her strokes, which appear spattered or dripped onto the mural-size sheets of heavy, durable Japanese paper rather than applied in the traditional manner with the tip of a brush. Indeed, when Vernita Nemeč, the director of Viridian Artists, asked her if she ever works with the paper spread out on the floor, as Pollock did, she replied in the affirmative.

Yet while her strokes have an animated life of their own, swirling autonomously over the surface of the composition in overall patterns energized by churning rhythms created via spontaneous "action painting," they are in another sense more akin to Georges Seurat's pointillism for their simultaneous descriptiveness — at least where the vaguely defined skylines are concerned, as well as the atmospheric impression of stars and harbor lights mirrored in the water which emanates from

vista of the picture plane; while the less panoramic paintings on the floor — and particularly one large piece hanging over the entryway to the gallery — evoked the more concentrated muscularity of beams of moonlight bouncing off choppy ocean waves running in rhythmic rivulets. Surrounded not only on all sides, but also from above and below by what the great British critic John Ruskin once referred to as "colour-light," one could almost experience a palpable sense of atmospheric succulence, as in a dewy night garden.

Few solo shows in recent memory have so successfully merged the eternal verities of painting with the newer qualities of installation art. In her aptly named "The Ocean of Light," Namiyo Kubo makes the each art form enhance the attributes of the other, achieving a fresh new synthesis. Immediately after completing its run at Viridian Artists, the entire exhibition was scheduled to travel to Havana, Cuba, for a stay at La Casa de Asia.

— Ed McCormack

Namiyo Kubo, Water Series Vol. 19, The Ocean of Light, recently seen at Viridian Artists, Inc. in its new location at 548 West 28th Street

## A Group Show Offers “The Gift that Keeps on Giving”

The phrase “something for everybody” applied neatly to “A Gift of Art,” a varied group show co-curated by Carole Barlowe and Ava Schonberg for the West Side Arts Coalition.

Abstraction was particularly well represented. Richard Carlson, in fact, gave us the best of two worlds in mixed media collage compositions incorporating photographic images and texts apparently derived from newspapers within austere geometrical grids. By contrast, Sonia Barnett’s acrylic painting “Silhouette in Motion,” with its vigorous black calligraphic strokes dancing with equally energetic areas of yellow against the white priming ground of the canvas, revealed just how much still remains to be explored in the gestural mode bequeathed to us by the Abstract Expressionist masters. Barnett also displayed her linear finesse, albeit in a more contained manner, in “Finish Line,” with its maze-like composition and vibrant blue and green hues.

Beatrice Rubel, another splendid colorist, trotted out an entire rainbow of pastel hues in “Rising Color # 6,” a radiant work in subtly blended colored pencils and oil pastels. Although titled to put the primary emphasis on its formal attributes, Rubel’s composition suggested a rhythmic approach to landscape imagery and natural essences akin to early American abstract pioneers such as Georgia

O’Keeffe and Arthur Dove.

Then there was Artur Pashkov, whose intriguingly named oil on canvas, “Third Eye Study,” had the hypnotic quality of a contemporary mandala. With its centralized composition and crystalline technique, complemented by a gold frame encrusted with jewel-like protuberances, Pashkov’s painting was itself a small gem, projecting an exotic sense of spiritual mystery.

Conversely, Robin Goodstein engages the viewer with the palpable presence of pigment itself in oils on canvas and mixed media paintings with thickly encrusted surfaces as lushly colorful as they are tactile. Indeed, these simple elements are all that is required to make Goodstein’s bold, patchy abstract compositions objects of sumptuous delight.

Ava Schonberg, on the other hand, lent new life and energy to the venerable traditions of still life painting in two tabletop arrangements that indicated a marked departure from her more familiar street scenes. Particularly pleasing was Schonberg’s “Sunflower in a Blue Vase,” in which the symmetry of the composition complemented its clear forms and coloristic harmony.

The bold, bright, meticulously executed paintings of Gail Comes have a dynamic, emblematic Pop impact reminiscent of trendy 1960s artist Richard Lindner. Comes, however, has a unique way of merging

anatomical and abstract elements, making gracefully distorted and strangely costumed figures come alive as contemporary icons.

Deborah Yaffe’s two watercolors of small boats were modest in scale but moody and emotionally affecting. Especially strong was Yaffe’s image of an empty rowboat afloat but tethered to a dock in a manner that seemed oddly symbolic.

The two final painters both showed cityscapes viewed from contrasting personal perspectives:

Carole Barlowe’s “NYC” series of painted reliefs employ a clear, spare style (think Alex Katz with a wider lens) to capture the organic forms of pedestrians set against the geometric shapes of urban architecture with a sophisticated visual wit also akin to that of Saul Steinberg. This comes across especially well in one assemblage by Barlowe where a big sign that says “Going Out of Business” drains the color from the left half of the composition (not only the store on the ground floor but also the building above, as well as a man reaching into a trash basket) while the right side of the picture blooms in full color!

*Continued on page 10*

WSAC, “A Gift of Art 2011” recently seen at Broadway Mall Community Center, 96th Street Center (Center island).

## Yasuyuki Ito: The Miraculous Inner Vision of a Sight-Impaired Painter

In 2003, the Japanese artist Yasuyuki Ito experienced what he describes as a “serious deterioration of my eyesight” due to a loss of central vision.

“Since then the process of creation has been more challenging,” he says, “but I continue to depict my interior world and my perception of the outer world, using a variety of creative techniques.”

“I always work with oil paint, partly because I appreciate its solidity, which fits the image I have in mind,” Ito explains, and the power of his compositions, with their strong linear rhythms enclosing vibrantly colorful forms, makes that statement seem self-explanatory. Apparently calling upon a combination of sight-memory and intuition, Ito accomplishes the seemingly impossible task of creating paintings possessed of a clarity which almost enables one able to regard his severe visual handicap as no more daunting than the assumed astigmatism to which centuries of art historians have, either rightly or wrongly,



“Color 8”

attributed the unusual elongation of El Greco’s figures. But in the case of any serious artist, it is the work itself which counts above all else, including the handicaps he or she must overcome to create it, and fortunately Ito’s paintings can be judged on their own merits, which are more than considerable.

In the linearity of his compositions, there is just as much evidence of the Asian tradition as we see in the best Japanese brush painting and woodblock print masters of the past. Indeed, the forms of Ito’s oil on canvas “Color 8,” recall the energy of Hokusai’s famous woodblock print “The Wave.” Ito’s painting, however, is considerably more abstract, even while its regular patterns of surging forms suggest water flowing in a stream between two shores, one rocky, the other verdant green.

Perhaps owing to his fervent wish to combine his interior world with his perception of outer reality, Ito occupies the fertile realm between representation and

abstraction more convincingly than most other contemporary artists, resulting in compositions possessed of an emblematic power that transforms natural shapes into highly personal symbols.

In “Color 7, for example, it appears as though the artist has plumbed the desert for forms such as rocks and cacti, then rearranged them to conjure a counter-reality in which boulders clog the sky like massive clouds above a totemic plant form in a landscape with its own unique natural laws. Here, burnished, arid ochers and rich green and blue hues present a succulent counterpoint. By contrast, a strong central plant form is set like a blue claw against a background of intricate massed circles simultaneously suggesting pebbles and bubbles.

Among American artists, for the simple, ruddy strength of his compositions, as well as for his manner of transforming nature into a personal language, Ito seems most akin to Marsden Hartley. Ito, however, embraces a far greater range of subject matter than that pioneering homegrown nature painter, from a stylized depiction of windblown palm

*Continued on page 10*

Yasuyuki Ito, Agora Gallery,  
530 West 25th St., March 6–27, 2012.  
Reception: Thurs. March 8, 6–8

## Pat Feeney Murrell: Spirits, Valentines, and Vitriol

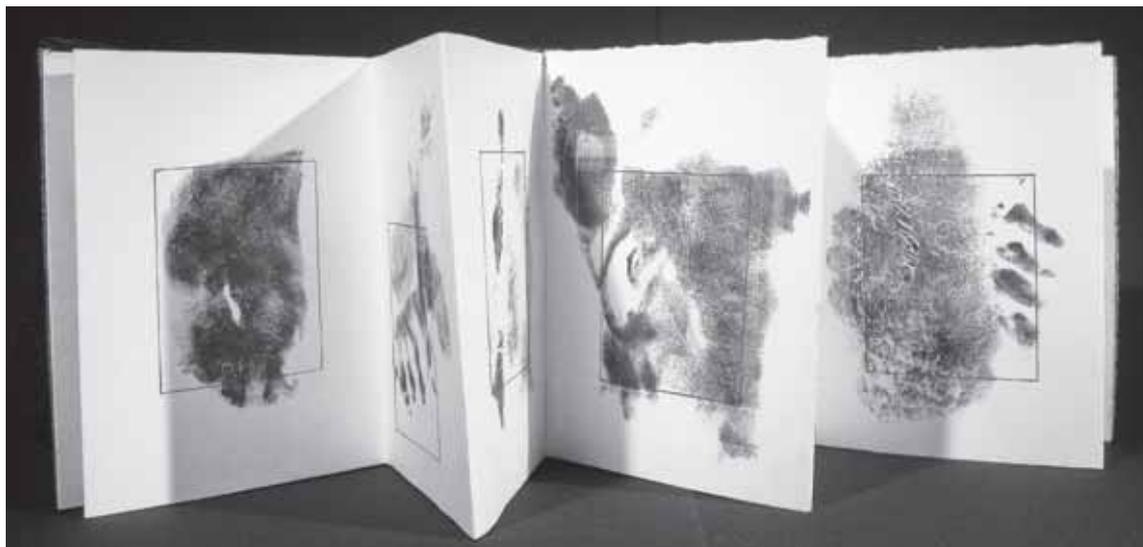
Pat Feeney Murrell has long been preoccupied in her own unique way with the subject of the human body. In previous exhibitions at Noho Gallery and the Interchurch Center on Riverside Drive, she has exhibited sculptures and wall reliefs of figures and anatomical fragments cast in handmade flax paper pulp colored with permanent pigments and pressed onto the bodies of living models. Her large pieces, which were sometimes suspended like puppets by strings from the gallery ceiling or propped up on slender bamboo poles, often suggested mummies with their wrappings coming undone, which the artist once described as “husks for the spirit.” These pieces commanded space with an eerie physical palpability that

employs such images makes them resemble fossils or x-rays, the term with which she describes them, “imprints,” also evokes a sense of how events and human lives move through time. Like lingering presences of beings that once inhabited a physical form but now move like shadows through a timeless space in which we leave mere traces of ourselves, they have a hauntingly ethereal quality that contrasts sharply with the physicality of Murrell’s previous cast paper reliefs.

Like Mary Frank, a sculptor with whom she seems a kindred spirit, Murrell is a mythmaker, and if her large pieces often suggest fragments from Antiquity, her book and prints evoke even more elusive elements, as seen in “Eternity Reserved,” a body imprint in lithograph and monoprint

two other works, titled respectively, “All Thy Tribes” and “Warrior’s Dream.”

In a somewhat lighter mode, “Hand Frolic” and “Footloose” are both accordion books, the former featuring four hand imprints, the latter the same number of foot imprints, presented panoramically, each within a handmade paper medallion. The imagery in “Hand Frolic” takes the form of spontaneous Abstract Expressionist markmaking executed in the literal manner of finger-painting, with the natural lines of the hand adding a tactile element to each individual composition. By contrast, “Footloose” presents something more reminiscent of a Rorschach test, in which the viewer can discern all manner of ghostly figurative allusions within the footprints on blue



*“Book of Soles” artist’s accordion book with handmade paper cover and cast foot*

could be unnerving — particularly when encountered in the dramatically lit gallery at the Interchurch Center.

In “Embodied,” however, her new solo show of more intimate artist books and prints featuring body imprints and wrappings, Feeney has moved from the tangible to the spectral without sacrificing the startling immediacy which has always made her work so compelling. For what her new bookworks and prints suggest is the transience of the spirit itself, having now escaped its mortal husk and inhabiting the space of phantoms.

Not that Murrell, in even whose most serious work there is invariably a place for wit, can resist the punning title, “Book of Soles,” for a volume in an accordion format with a handmade paper cover and cast foot containing imprints taken from digital copies of lithographic imprints of feet.

While the manner in which Murrell

on handmade black paper sprayed on board. The nude female body imprinted in red pigment resembling dry blood has the feeling of a contemporary take on cave painting on two tectonic plates put together in a diptych that divides the figure of a crouching, apparently covering nude woman, her hands raised as if to shield her head. Between her torso and her loins the photo-transfer of three men can be seen. Because they are much smaller in scale, they could suggest suckling offspring poised beneath the woman’s breasts. However, their garments appear military and their attitudes casually menacing in the jocular way of idle soldiers. Thus the image suggests instead the sexual atrocities often inflicted on women during wartime.

The combination of female body prints in litho and monoprint combined with military male figures of various periods and places recurs just as suggestively in

Canson paper, including what appears to be a claw-like form in the final medallion. Here, too, the verso of the accordion format boasts a flowing abstract composition created with digital imprints enlarged from Murrell’s own photo of an oil slick.

Murrell’s irrepressible visual wit again asserts itself in yet another piece called “Armed Candy.” Here, the title obviously refers to the term “arm candy” for the trophy wives and barely-past-puberty-

mistresses some successful older sports like to flaunt as social accessories. But the punning addition of the “end” to the first word suggests the payback exacted when the cunning arm candy finally presents the Viagra-crazed playboy with the bill for services rendered.

Here, too, Pat Feeney Murrell references her own earlier works by suspending an accordion book covered with images of hands and candy wrapper imagery from an arm cast from cast paper.

“Done with humor for a valentines to all those warriors out there,” pointedly quips this artist with a rare gift for lending both heavy and lighthearted subjects equal aesthetic vision.

—Ed McCormack

Pat Feeney Murrell, Noho Gallery,  
530 West 25th St., March 6–31, 2012  
Reception: March 10, 5–7pm

## “New Art for the New Year”: an Auspicious Forecast

Billed as “a celebratory showcase,” “New Art for the New Year,” curated by participating artist Margo Mead for the West Side Arts Coalition, presented a wide array of styles that already spoke well for the artistic vitality of 2012.

Prominent among them was a mode of symbolic abstraction practiced in different manners by two artists of impressive skill: Meg Boe Birns, whose “Candy Madonna” and other compositions encrusted with confectionery-colored impasto were sumptuous tactile treats boldly concocted in mixed media. Although somewhat more coloristically and texturally austere, Richard Carlson’s abstract grid paintings in cool blues, lemon yellows, and frosty whites boasted a compositional tautness akin to the best work of Richard Diebenkorn. Something of a diverting departure for Carlson, however, was an uncharacteristically Pop composition in which what appeared to be Pepperidge Farm goldfish crackers were outlined against squares of red, white, and blue. (Go figure!)

Jack Cesareo also surprised us with an abstract oil on canvas, in mostly subdued gray and earth hues with glints of golden orange/yellow glowing through, painted with a bravura finesse and a gestural panache more reminiscent of the School of Paris than the New York School. Then there were three long horizontal compositions in oil based etching ink on board by George Jellinek, respectively titled “Serenity,” “History I,” and “History II,” in which rugged paint quietly met coloristic lyricism in roiling compositions with the surging energy of crashing surf.

Among the figurative artists in the show, Nate Ladson distinguished himself for his ability to imbue a variety of subjects with presence and veracity, as seen in realist oils on canvas such as “Horn Blowers,” showing the kinship between musicians of different

cultures; “Leisure Time,” a sympathetic image of a matron in a straw hat and sun dress leaning against a brick wall; and “Sinatra,” an insightful portrait that cuts through celebrity artifice to capture a musical icon in a private, thoughtful moment.

Augmenting her recent monumental mode, juxtaposing idealized floating male and female figures within starry planetary settings in a manner akin to the symbolic humanistic woodcuts of Rockwell Kent (albeit in vibrant colors achieved with watercolor, ink, and oil crayon on rice paper), curator Margo Mead’s engaging new mixed media work, “Cherish the Earth” features 3-D putti with butterfly wings playfully orbiting a 3-D globe.

Patiencie Sundaesan also departs from orthodox rectangular pictorial tradition in “Heather and K-9,” a large cut-out wall relief of a young woman walking a small dog created with structoboard and metallic paint; although silhouetted, a strong sense of the personalities of both the pet owner and her pooch comes across in Sundaesan’s witty work.

Jesse Robinson’s humor is a bit more ironic in “The Arc of Europe,” a precisely rendered semi-abstract composition of a figure in a military uniform waving a conductor’s baton amid brilliant areas of hard-edge acrylic color in which a cross is clearly discernible.

Pastel is employed by Mary Hogan in “In The Garden” series to create floral forms that read as abstractions, at once sensual and muscular, even while taking scrupulous care to capture the shapes and colors of the specific blooms. By contrast Linda Lessner employs the same medium for its purely coloristic and formal qualities in “Autumn Abstract,” yet skillfully calls upon its more delicate capabilities in her breezy marine scene, “Summer Sails.”

Then there is Ida Marx, whose

atmospheric oils on canvas capture the nocturnal mystery of New York City — its myriad lit windows, neon-lit storefronts, and streaming traffic — with a visual poetry at once dark and fiery, that can make even the familiar “M” of the McDonald’s logo seem to glow in the distance like the gate to Hell.

— Maurice Taplinger

WSAC, “New Art for a New Year,” recently seen at Broadway Mall Community Center, 96th Street (Center island).

### A GIFT OF ART 2011

*Continued from page 8*

By contrast, Ida Marx’s nocturnal oils of empty city streets with street lights glowing incandescently, outdoor elevated train stations, and old tenements with fire-escapes hugging them like black window spiders and closed stores on the ground floor, are all about atmosphere. Think ashcan school and Edward Hopper filtered through film noir by a romantic postmodern sensibility and that may give you some idea of what Marx’s pictures evoke.

— J. Sanders Eaton

### YASUYUKI ITO

*Continued from page 8*

trees on adjoining hills, bracketing a body of stylized waves and a huge setting (or rising) sun; to a silhouette of a bird filled with blue sky and clouds as surreal as anything by Magritte; to visionary images of floating balloons containing fragments of landscape; to compositions in which the outer edges of large, vibrant floral forms are set dramatically against dark backgrounds; to a rainbow composed of flowing ribbons of light.

In all of these paintings Yasuyuki Ito teaches the sighted new ways of seeing.

— Peter Wylie

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Correction: The medium of Ilse Kahane’s sculpture in the ASCA group exhibition was mistakenly identified in the last issue as terra cotta; actually, it was marble.



# Through a Lens, Brightly: The Many Faces of Contemporary Photography

An exhibition with the word “open” in its title implies a wide variety of options, and Open 2011, a photo show curated for the West Side Art Coalition by participating artist Jonathan Morrison presents a veritable plethora. David Ruskin, for example, is known primarily for his exquisitely delicate hand-tinted photographs, which put a fresh, contemporary spin on an anachronistic technique. But Ruskin demonstrates that he can weave a comparable atmospheric spell with the newer medium of the C-print as well, in “Rooftops, Brussels, Belgium,” where picturesque architecture supplies the charm.

The digital archival prints of Cal Eagle, on the other hand, focus on a new generation enjoying the somewhat tawdry amusement park attractions of Coney Island. Yet some of Eagle’s youthful boardwalk strollers could have stepped out of a classical painting.

All the lively hubbub of the Feast of San Gennaro in the streets of Little Italy comes alive in the pictures of Jean Prytskacz. Gazing at Prytskacz’s prints, one can almost smell the savory sausages sizzling on a grill amid the formidable bellies of food stand vendors or anticipate the brassy sound of musicians in caps the colors of the Italian flag, even as they take a break, trumpets at the ready.

A painterly sense of color and texture comes across in Janice Wood Wetzel’s

“Building by Design,” a vibrant, tactile view of pocked and peeling urban walls. By contrast, Wetzel gives us an Elysian vision of phosphorescent poplar trees and lush gardens in another poetic digital archival print.

Curator Jonathan Morrison evokes his own unique photographic poetry with an image of a lone bird on a slender budding branch, harking back to ancient Chinese scroll paintings. Morrison also beguiles us with a close-up of lifelike stone fingers, belonging to figures in a Central Park fountain, linked eternally and beaded by the watery spray.

A world in microcosm is contained in the intimate digital prints of Brunie Feliciano, in which feathers, shells, and other small objects function as bright and sprightly visual metaphors. Feliciano elevates the ordinary, the everyday, lending it a rare beauty and significance.

Jane Hoffer’s “Penitentiary Series” affords us dramatic glimpses of an eerie realm of stone and steel — crumbling walls; beams of light filled with dust-motes streaming down onto a derelict barber-chair; a skeletal box spring; a distant empty guard-tower — seemingly haunted by the ghosts of the prison’s former inmates. Especially fascinating is Hoffer’s image of famous Mafia don Al Capone’s one-time cell, with its drop-leaf writing desk and chair, fringe-shaded table-lamps, large wooden radio console, and as

many other comforts of home as could be crammed into a cozy little cage.

Dr. Barry Pinchefsky’s digital archival print of a jelly fish afloat in a sea of blue is an otherworldly sight to behold, while his image of a lighthouse on a mountain in Oregon is engagingly picturesque. But our favorite was Pinchefsky’s charming shot of a tiny squirrel posed as if for a portrait amid lakeside weeds.

Thom Taylor also provided an amusing animal moment with his picture of a black house cat cat gazing yearningly through window-glass at a pigeon perched on the ledge of an apartment building. Taylor also showed a group of equally compelling landscape vistas and urban views.

Then there was a characteristically antic image called “The Cupcake and the Peace Bike with Laura and Nadette” by Jack Cesareo,” who seems to be making a career out of shlepping a giant pink replica of a cupcake around town and recording peoples’ reactions to it. At once conceptual and humanistic, Cesareo’s good-natured project takes art to the streets and seems to spread joy among the populace.

— Byron Coleman

WSAC, “Open 2011,” recently seen at Broadway Mall Community Center, 96th Street (Center island).

## 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- [wscany@wscany.org](mailto:wscany@wscany.org) or website- [www.wscany.org](http://www.wscany.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.

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**MONTSERRAT CONTEMPORARY ART GALLERY** is reviewing artist portfolios 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

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

**MANHATTAN ARTS INTERNATIONAL** announces its 7th “Celebrate The Healing Power of ART” juried online exhibition. The purpose is to promote artists who share our belief about art and its vital importance to healing individuals and the planet. We are seeking all styles of art that is positive and uplifting. All media except video/film. There are no size restrictions. Jurors: Nancy Reyner, artist and author; Edward Rubin, NY arts writer and curator; and Renée Phillips, author and director, Manhattan Arts International. For more information please visit <http://www.manhattanarts.com/Gallery/Healing-Power-of-ART/index.htm>

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## Ed Brodtkin Creates Enduring Symbols for the Spirit of Secular Humanism

In a wonderful appreciation titled “O Pioneer!” John Updike once wrote of Arthur Dove: “To him belongs the honor of being (after Navajo blanket-weavers and Amish quilt-makers) the first American abstract artist...”

Ed Brodtkin, the contemporary American artist one is gearing up to extol here, would undoubtedly appreciate the qualification embraced within Updike’s parenthesis, given the reverence for the art of indigenous peoples that has long been evident in Brodtkin’s own work.

Indeed Brodtkin is himself a particularly postmodern species of pioneer, mingling ancient multicultural symbols and state of the art science in compositions of a unique complexity, erudition, and intellectual rigor. The present exhibition at Pleiades Gallery in Chelsea, Brodtkin’s first following a hiatus occasioned by the death of his wife and fellow artist Kiki Brodtkin, is something of a mini-retrospective; thus the show’s title, “Mindscapes ... then and now.” However, the iconic quality of the works on view suggests that it could just as easily have been called “Ed Brodtkin’s Greatest Hits,” if not for the fact that it would have to be followed by several more installments in order to include all of the memorable images he has given us over the years.

When you come right down to it, what lends so many of his compositions their iconic quality is that Brodtkin is loathe to repeat himself. He abhors the consistent “look” that so many lesser artists cultivate as though designing a commercial logo. Rather, like a visual kin of the influential anti-academic poet Charles Olson, who believed that content should determine context instead of being squeezed into the constrictive conventions of the ballad, the sonnet, or the sestina, Brodtkin delights in departing from the traditional rectangular format of most Western painting.

In his work in mixed media and collage on shaped fiberboard “Multitudes,” for example, images of indigenous tribal masks are set afloat on a golden ocher field streaked on the left side of the composition with darker brown and orange hues. Here, too, the cut-out first letters for the scientific terms Adenine, Thymine, Cytosine, and Guanine — the four chemical bases that make up our DNA — enliven the left side of the composition. Not only do these cut-outs characteristically serrate the rectangle, but their out-of-the-box irregularity simultaneously suggests how each individual’s specific configurations of genes make her or him unique.

In another work called “Helios,” after the Greek god of the sun, Brodtkin similarly serrates another traditional art format, the tondo, by jigsawing shapes based on ancient sun and moon symbols into a bold

circular composition featuring a solar swirl as sumptuously tactile as it is chromatically vibrant. I once wrote of this painting, one of my personal favorites, that the flashes of white wall within the cut-out areas around the tondo seem to playfully suggest those “blind-spots” which can occur when the eye is exposed to direct sunlight. The *pièce de résistance* of the composition, however, is the emblematic impact the artist achieves via an exquisite balance between precise and painterly elements. For his ability to imbue his work with sensuous surfaces operates in tandem with his wide cultural scope to make Brodtkin, like Rauschenberg and Johns, one of those rare contemporary artists capable of achieving a successful synthesis of sensual and conceptual, formal and expressive, elements.



*Kiki...for as long as songbirds sing*

In another piece called T-R-E-E-S,” created with mixed media on spaced and shaped fiberboard, Brodtkin makes bare winter branches set against a vibrant orange sky advance as the viewer retreats, producing a 3-D effect to suggest the “illusions” that sometimes provide us with a dubious comfort amid the uncertainty of existence.

Indeed, much of Brodtkin’s work seems to be about debunking falsehood and superstition, even while honoring the ancient symbols with which our ancestors attempted to give meaning to their world. Especially dynamic in this regard is “Voices,” a spectacular 36" by 96" frieze of pictographic and petroglyphic figures within a grid that dominates an entire wall in the present exhibition.

Some of the “newest” works on view (if not in the strict chronological sense, at least for those of us heretofore unaware of Brodtkin’s earlier figurative period) are four oils and one acrylic painting. Like all of the pieces in the show, these are undated on the price list, as if to make the point that an artist’s works should ideally be viewed in a timeless continuum. The pointedly titled “Endangered Species” is a fiery apocalyptic landscape recalling the provincial capital of Ben Tre, Vietnam, of which one unnamed American major, speaking of the decision by allied commanders to rout the Vietcong by

bombing the village regardless of civilian casualties, notoriously stated: “It became necessary to destroy the town to save it.”

Of “The Day Before,” another painting, depicting



*Multitudes*

a tensely posed infantry soldier in full combat gear in equally frenzied expressionist strokes, Brodtkin, who was awarded a Purple Heart after being wounded during his own military service, simply says, “This one is kind of autobiographical.” Then there is the deeply affecting “Birmingham Sunday,” a canvas named for a song written by Richard Farina and recorded by Joan Baez,” memorializing the four little African-American girls killed in the bombing of a Baptist church in Alabama in 1963. ( Predictably, the bomb, which also injured twenty-three other people in the church, was planted by a white segregationist.) In Brodtkin’s oil on canvas, the cherubic-faced children’s clustered heads are lit by an eerie red glow, suggesting putti in an earthly Hell.

By contrast, the acrylic on canvas, “KIKI ... for as long as songbirds sing,” is limned in the most limpid, luminous hues of the Fauves. For it depicts the artist’s late, beloved wife comfortably ensconced in a red bucket chair at the charmed twilight hour when, their day’s work completed in their respective studios, they would meet in the livingroom of their house in New Jersey, for cocktails. For those of us more accustomed to his complex abstract and semiastract compositions, resonating with multicultural references and scientific allusions, this painting reveals yet another facet of Brodtkin’s art. Tender and elegiac, it fills Matisse’s prescription for “an art of balance, of purity and serenity devoid of troubling subject matter.”

Only an artist of the highest caliber could bring off such an affecting personal tour de force without descending to mawkish sentimentality. Once again, Ed Brodtkin reveals the sacred core of his secular humanism.

— Ed McCormack

Ed Brodtkin, recently seen at Pleiades Gallery,  
530 West 25th Street  
pleiadesgallery.com



# BLOOD IS THICKER THAN WATER

an excerpt from **HOODLUM HEART:**  
**Confessions of a Test Dummy for the Crash and Burn Generation**  
*— a memoir and drawings by Ed McCormack*

A fancy dancer was my old man; dancing like most of his tribe only from the knees down; jigging in stiff Irish socks across the kitchen linoleum; fishing that first blessed breakfast beer from the fridge; setting it soundlessly on the countertop; cupping the can with muffling palm; bringing the “church-key” to bear with a tremor that first cold one would calm; cutting into its shiny crown those two tiny triangles, to whose minute metallic clunks and faint sighs of gaseous air the pink plastic hair rollers of my mother (now opening one eye under the crucifix in the dawn bedroom down the hall) were as fine antennae, acutely attuned.



The only clue my father ever gave me to his solitary nature was at my uncle Charlie’s wake. By then we were all living on Staten Island, but out of habit, I suppose, we would come back to the Lower East Side, to Vanella’s, the old neighborhood funeral parlor, whenever anyone had to be laid out.

In the blue gabardine communion suit and black knitted tie he donned for all official occasions, my father motioned me aside, saying, “Let’s go get a beer.”

There was a bar a couple of doors down Madison Street, convenient to catch the spill-over from the wakes. We went and took a couple of stools. When I reached for my wallet my father gave me one of

his looks — as if to say, “Get a load of his nibs here: the last of the big-time spenders!” — and, pushing a ten toward the bartender, said, “Two Reingolds, Johnny.” (I always assumed it was one of his old Irish guy-isms; a general term for addressing Johnnies whose real names you didn’t know.)

Then, turning to me, he said, “How’re things with you, kid, got any girls on the side yet?”

The cynicism of the question stunned me. I had only been married a little over a year.

“Why would I need that?” I said, flustered. “I’m happily married.”

“We all were, once,” he said. “Things change.”

“I don’t need...”

“Don’t worry, you will,” he said, cutting me off abruptly and changing the subject: “That Charlie, Lord have mercy on him, that kid had a good heart — but what a joker! Jesus, that guy could get on my nerves when he lived with us! Like all the Colemans, great kidders every one of them. But you know your mother: all out for her family. She’d move the whole goddamn bunch of them in with us if it came to that...”

Draining his glass, he pushed a couple more bills across the bar, “Two more, Johnny. Then we’d better shove off, or they’ll be wondering where we went.”

The bartender smiled sympathetically, and thanked my father after he brought the beers over with the change and my old man pushed a soggy bill back across the bar to him.

As we finished the last two beers my father remarked that holding wakes in funeral parlors was a relatively new thing — at least for the Irish. When he was a kid they laid out the deceased at home, “right on the kitchen table, like a Thanksgiving turkey,” and the embalmers made house calls.

“As long as I live,” he said, “I’ll never forget the sound of my father’s blood gurgling down the kitchen drain.”

\* \* \*

On some Fridays, when my sister and I were little and we still lived on Henry Street, my mother would keep us home from school and take us uptown by subway to Grace Line Pier 57, at 17th Street on the North River, to collect my father’s pay envelope on his lunch hour before he had a chance to drink or gamble it away. Of course, when it got to the point where the shylocks and bookies who haunted the docks were already threatening to break his kneecaps, she would end up having to take another high interest loan from Household Finance Company to pay off his gambling debts all at once.

But none of that was real to Maureen and me. This was one of those occasions more appealing to children than adults, like being enlisted to ride sentimental shotgun when Mama escorted Daddy to the rectory of St. Mary’s to take The Pledge from Father Doughballs. The priest’s real name was Father Dougherty, but that was what Mama called him. She never stopped regretting having converted from Protestant to Catholic to placate her mother-in-law Delia, an “old biddy” from County Cork; although both my parents were born here, you might say “The Troubles” were alive and well in our household.

“That Doughballs is a shanty old whiskey-priest if I ever saw one,” Mama would say. And sure enough, the bottle of Jameson and the tumbler were right out in plain sight on the drop-leaf that came down from the book shelves, and the white-haired, red-faced padre looked like he couldn’t wait to get back into them as he listened solemnly to our father’s pledge not to touch a drop — at least until after Lent. (Even old Doughballs would have to agree that a man couldn’t be expected to bite the bullet indefinitely, could he?)

I seem to remember my father sealing the covenant by bending solemnly over the priest’s desk to affix his signature, which was unusually florid and of which

he was duly proud, to some sort of document or ledger. But I couldn't swear to it, distracted and transported as I always was by all the darkly gleaming mohogany in the rectory, which made me feel as if we were in a movie scene set in some place like Sherlock Holmes' study.

Visiting our father's job was just as atmospheric in another way. It felt festive to be off from school on a weekday and standing on that big bustling pier with the scent of fresh coffee beans permeating the air and the forklifts — "high-lows" the longshoremen called them — skittering around like robot crabs. And all the dockworkers making a fuss over Maureen and me, shaking our hands with their huge, rough mitts, saying things like, "Your old man is a real gent, kids, not like most of these bums around here!"

Whether it was throwing a sucker punch at him when he was too stewed to duck or showing up unexpectedly on his job, my mother always counted on the element of surprise when dealing with my father. Never as happy to see us there as his coworkers appeared to be, he would promptly spirit us off the pier to the bar across the street and buy us lunch from the big, heaping steam table.

My sister and I loved those thick, juicy corned beef sandwiches that went so well with the Cokes in beer glasses with ice cubes and swizzle sticks that they served kids in bars, which always tasted better than the ones in candy stores or luncheonettes. All business, my mother wouldn't order anything, and my father would have his usual liquid lunch of as many Rheingolds as he could get down while they negotiated. He always had to hold a certain amount back from his pay envelope to keep the shylocks at bay.

"After all, if they crippled me I couldn't work at all and you wouldn't get anything," he'd reason with my mother. "Even worse, God forbid, if I missed my payments long enough, they might have to fish my corpse out of the 'drink' — and then what would you and the kids do?"

Once, when things were especially bad between them, he rented a room in a fleabag hotel near the docks and phoned to tell my mother not to bother showing up on Fridays anymore; from then on, he'd be mailing her his pay by money order. That time, he almost made his escape. But my clever mother put my sister and me on the phone to weep and moan and beg him to please come back home. Only many years later, when I saw how he ended up, would I finally feel guilty for my part in pulling the poor bastard back by the heartstrings.

\* \* \*

After he drove a high-low off the pier and into the river, submerging an expensive piece of equipment and almost drowning ("Thank god I'm a strong swimmer and have a strong union," he self-congratulated, sopping wet), the doctors at the I.L.A. Medical Center privately diagnosed his condition to my mother as "disorientation and severe memory loss due to alcoholic brain damage." But being union doctors, "friends of the working man," they fixed the paperwork so he could take early retirement with a full pension.

Thereafter, apparently having forgotten even his insatiable thirst, he spent his days cold sober in their bedroom on Staten Island with the shades drawn, chain-smoking Lucky Strikes and staring at the TV, as he always had, even in his drinking days, whenever he was home. Still, what his fellow dockworkers had told my sister and me was true: Daddy always did have a certain gentlemanly dignity of bearing. Young as he was, my cousin George Junior couldn't help noticing that, even in his pajamas and bathrobe, sitting there in profile with his elbow propped on the armrest of his easy chair, Lucky Strike held elegantly aloft, Uncle Eddie bore a striking resemblance to Edward R. Murrow.

\* \* \*

The longest conversation I ever had with my father had to be approached in the context of an interview. True, he didn't take what I did seriously; for him, "freelance" was synonymous with unemployed. If I tried to impress him with my by-line on the cover of a national magazine, all he wanted to know was, "But do they pay you a regular salary for this, Eddie?"

So I guess it was to humor me that he agreed to reminisce for a magazine article I was writing about the changes on the New York Waterfront, now that most cargo was shipped in trailer-size containers that fit neatly on the back of a flatbed truck, rather than being unloaded piece by piece on men's backs, as it was in his day.

I knew before I wrote it that I was going to title the article with one of my father's favorite expressions: "That's All Water Under the Bridge, Kid." This was his invariable response over the years to any questions about his time as a trainer for the Brooklyn Dodgers and his bitter firing by the team's famously pugnacious manager Leo Durocher for being too hung over to show up for practice one morning too many.

I thought the saying would apply just as well to a subject about which I hoped he would be less reluctant to open up to me, insofar as he was able, given his memory

loss: By eliminating most of the heavy lifting "containerization," along with the advent of sexual politics, had changed the job beyond my father's comprehension. When I mentioned to him that there were now women working alongside men on the docks, he looked at me as if this might be something I had dreamt up while smoking marijuana.

In the published article, I would mention my talk with my father only briefly, while concentrating for the most part on the lives of "longshorepersons" today. Only recently, going through some old boxes of manuscript to get rid of some of the clutter in my workroom, did I happen again upon the notes I took that afternoon, as we sat on the enclosed porch of the heavily mortgaged little house that my mother, who was as thrifty as my father was profligate, had put a down-payment on, after several years of living upstairs from her brother George and his wife Delores in the two-family rental on Marine Way. I had scribbled them in pencil on a yellow legal pad while my father reminisced with one eye on the TV screen, where two welterweights were cautiously clutching each other like shy ballroom dancers in a poor excuse for a boxing match.

"What a couple of stiffies," he said, gesturing dismissively at the screen. "The only way anybody's gonna get hurt here is if one of them slips and falls on his face."



Eddie "Hurricane" McCormack, *"The Pride of the Lower East Side,"* age 10, before deciding that he'd "rather be a lover than a fighter."

When I was a kid in the '50s and we still lived on the Lower East Side, one of the few times my father ever had anything to say to me was when we watched the Friday Night Fights on the twelve-inch screen

of our black and white TV in the tiny livingroom of our apartment on Henry Street. Watching the fights, sponsored by Gillette Blue Blades, was as close as we ever came, in our uncomfortable self-conscious way, to having a male bonding ritual.

As we watched, my father would stress that pugilism was a manly art, governed by the Marquess of Queensberry Rules, in which “finesse” (by which he meant fast footwork and a good left jab) almost always triumphed over brute force.

Fondly he’d reminisce about classy boxers like Gene Tunney and Gentleman Jim Braddock, as two lesser latter-day stiff squared off on the small screen. And even after the slugger got serious and the fancy dancer landed on the canvas, my old man would insist that his guy got dumped only because he got careless. It seemed important to him to teach his cynical streetsmart son, growing up among thugs in a neighborhood to which my father invariably referred as “godforsaken,” that grace was superior to violence, even when the latter knocked the former flat on its ass.

I never watched the fights with my father again after I had my own experience in the ring when I was ten and joined the Police Athletic League. With my delicate “artistic” hands (actually I’m a brain surgeon” became my smartass answer years later, when asked if I played piano), I was hardly built to be a boxer. But ever since my grandfather showed up at my elementary school at three o’clock one afternoon and forced me to fight a kid who had bullied me at recess, I had always managed to overcome my fear and made sure to give as good as I got on the streets.

I had already been training and sparring in the gym for a couple of months, and felt I had my left jab and footwork down to a science, when some kids from another P.A.L. center in Brooklyn came to our center on Houston Street for a tournament one day. They matched me up with a colored kid so skinny he looked like he had rickets, which emboldened me to have myself announced from the ring as Eddie “Hurricane” McCormack. This, along with the fact that my trainer, a young Golden Gloves champion named Bobby St. John, had made a five-dollar bet with the colored kid’s manager, made it all the worse when they had to stop the fight after I was knocked down twice in the first round. Thoroughly humiliated, I cut school to sneak back to the gym early the next day, when no one else was around, and empty out my locker.

Some years later, I learned an even harder lesson: Punching your own father

is like kicking yourself in the balls. At the time, my parents were still living upstairs from my uncle Georgie and Aunt Delores in the two family house on Marine Way. Jeannie and I were married by then, and after living in the attic of the house until our son Holden was born, had moved to a bungalow a few blocks away, where my mother showed up unexpectedly one night.

It was a short walk from my parents’ house to ours, but she had called a car service because she was feverish and too weak to make it on foot.

“Your father came home from work with half a load on, ranting about his dinner not being ready, and I was too sick to stay there, I just had to leave,”



she told me, as Jeannie went to get the thermometer to check her temperature.

My father never raised a hand to my mother. Invariably, when they fought it was the opposite; she would tear into him, and more than once I saw her claw his face or bloody his nose. All he’d do was fend her off, saying, “I wish to Christ that you were a man, so I could knock your block off” — an unfunny, even more wistful real-life version of Jackie Gleason’s famous line, “Someday, Alice — pow! — right in the kisser.”

But even though she was invariably the aggressor, because of her heart condition Mama was our designated martyr. She had also won my undying loyalty by always encouraging my artistic ambitions and defending them against my father’s scorn. Add to this the guilt I still felt about my insensitivity during her most recent heart scare, shortly after Jeannie and I were married and were still living in her attic.

As I sat by her hospital bed during visiting hours rhapsodizing about how happy I was with my new bride, I may have been trying to express to Mama, without alarming her by seeming too morbidly sentimental, how much I appreciated all she had done to help bring

our marriage about as well as all she had always done to help me get whatever I wanted. Knowing that Mama was almost as crazy about her new daughter-in-law as I was, at first I was taken aback when her face clouded over. Then it occurred to me that to a woman like my mother, whose entire adult life had been defined by her children, it could have seemed like I was implying that I no longer needed her; that her maternal duty to me was done; now that I was happily married, she could just feel free to go ahead and die.

That was not at all what I was trying to tell her. But I let the inborn reticence that had always inhibited displays of affection in our family, unless they were disguised as jibes or jokes, prevent me from reaching out to hug my mother. And now, as she lay feverish on our sofa, my failure to embrace her in the hospital that day was feeding into the fury I was feeling toward my father.

Granted, he was not a violent man, although “with half a load on,” as my mother put it, my father could rant and rave — sometimes to quite poetic effect. Once when he came home pissed to the gills and went straight to bed, and my mother asked him the next morning why he had left his dentures on the kitchen table, almost in the exact cadences of “The House That Jack Built,” he spluttered indignantly, “Why? Why? Why, those are the teeth that chew the food that gives me the strength to go to work and shape those godforsaken docks to support you — you barge!”

And sometimes ruminating at our kitchen table he would even wax Hamlet-like. With a can of Rheingold standing in for the skull, he would do his own version of “To be, or not to be,” bemoaning his passivity in putting up with the slings and arrows of outrageous marital misfortune, bleakly and repeatedly asking himself, “Am I a man or a mouse?”

When we were little, our father’s solitary soliloquies could be a source of amusement to my sister Maureen and me. With Mama’s encouragement, we’d crouch by the kitchen door, eavesdropping and gigglingly reporting his mutterings back to her. Certainly we never felt threatened or feared that she or we were in danger of being physically abused, when, with more than a few drinks in him, our normally silent father turned comically verbose. Mama encouraged us to see him as merely clown-like and, sadly, we did.

But there was nothing funny about this night. Although we didn’t know it yet, my mother was coming down with the first symptoms of a serious kidney infection that would eventually complicate her chronic heart condition. After Jeannie

settled her on our couch and took her temperature, finding it high, and started rubbing her down with alcohol, I took the house keys out of my mother's pocketbook and stormed out.

Seething with Oedipal rage, flushed with the testosterone-fueled self-righteousness of a foolish young man who now found himself a husband and father and felt holier than thou about it, I raced through the dark suburban streets as if I thought I could suddenly set right what had been wrong with my family all along by succumbing to the hotheadedness that was our natural birthright.

Turning the corner to Marine Way, letting myself into the house with my mother's keys, I rushed up the hall stairs, yelling, "Where are you, you filthy bastard?"

I found him in their room stretched out on the bed under the crucifix, his shoes off, a can of Rheingold on the night table beside him, watching TV.

"Get up, you bum," I said. "She's sick and you chase her out of her own house with your big mouth — the house she worked to buy with no help from you? I'm gonna kick your ass!"

"Gladly," he said, now on his feet in the narrow foyer, grinning and motioning me into the livingroom, where there was more space, "Come on bigshot, let's see what you can do."

By that time he was past his prime, his formal stance so ridiculous as he put up his hands, that I almost laughed when he came dancing at me across my mother's slippery waxed floor. But even with half a load on, he was still big back then; a man who worked with his hands among other strong men; who had once put a famous team of athletes through their paces at Spring Training in Havana Cuba and Clearwater Florida...

As he came toward me, I panicked, forgetting all he had taught me all those years ago. A cowardly boy who sat all day at a typewriter, playing with words, I fainted with a foot, as if to kick the balls that begot me. And when he dropped his guard, eyes wide at the audacity — the blasphemy! — I nailed him with a beautiful right cross and watched, amazed, as he went down.

"Cocksucker," he spat through bubbles of blood, groping blindly along the floor for his upper plate.

"Fuck you and your Marquis of Queensberry rules," I yelled over my shoulder, turning away so he wouldn't see the tears streaming from my eyes, starting for the door.

Truth be told, it wasn't much of a punch; the combination of his shiny black socks and my mother's floor-wax

probably had as much to do with decking him. For even as a young man, I was never physically powerful enough to allow myself to imagine that my feeble blow could have contributed to the brain damage my father was to suffer a couple of years later. I could only hope that our pathetic fight had fallen into one of the black holes in his memory.

But it all came back to haunt me that afternoon on the porch, along with the memory of how, lying awake in bed as a child, I'd sometimes hear my mother in their nearby room hissing, "Stay away from me, you old degenerate," and then my father's whispered retort: "Your problem is you're just frigid is all."

I also remembered my mother's surprisingly rabid reaction when, as a very young child, I asked her what "fuck" meant: "Never mind what it means, just don't let me ever hear you say that word again. All you have to know is it's very dirty — do you hear me?"

Thinking back, it seemed a wonder that my sister and I ever managed to be conceived. In fact, it once got back to my mother that one of my aunts, an inveterate gossip, had told someone that she and my father lived "like brother and sister." But this rumor was belied, at least once, by a childhood memory of waking up in the middle of the night to pee, passing through my parents' dark bedroom to the only bathroom in our apartment, and suddenly seeing my mother's naked body flash phosphorescently, as she jumped up off my father, both of them frantically scrambling to cover their nakedness and screaming me out of the room.

Freudians make much of the traumatic affects of witnessing the so-called "primal scene," but I don't remember it making much of an impression on me.

At the time I thought only of how my mother's whiteness had seemed suspended for a full second in midair, like a sun-splashed fish jerking on a line, before disappearing in a foamy flurry of sheets. Only years later, when I understood more of what goes on between men and women, would I wonder if she had been on top simply because she was always on top, or because she was actually angling to derive pleasure from the act.

\* \* \*

Rediscovering the notes from my interview with my father, I was surprised at how voluminous they were. It was so unusual for that stoic man to open up to me so much that I just kept scribbling away, even though I knew I wouldn't be able to use most of what he said in the article I had agreed to write.

He described how the longshoremen would form a circle on the street outside

the pier for the "shape-up," the men with seniority getting picked first. He admitted to being "scared stiff" as a "new mickey" on the docks when he had to climb a rope ladder down the side of a ship: "The first time you did it, you'd look over the side and it was like looking off a skyscraper. Geez, you'd be shaking like a leaf — you wouldn't know which leg to put over first! But after you did it a few times, it became second nature, you'd go up and down like a monkey."

Some of one's coworkers took some getting used to as well: "I'll never forget the first time I was lifting with a guy in the loft of a ship and a gun fell out of his pocket. I looked. He picked it up and said, 'I might have need for this.' Naturally, I never said anything to anybody about it."

There were lots of tough guys on the docks, my father told me, but a lot of them "would give you the shirt off their back. My friend Frenchie, a former boxer



*My father, center, on Pier 57, with fellow longshoreman "Frenchie" and "Little Jimmy" Flanagan.*

back in France, got picked on by some of them because he wasn't a West Sider. He was a foreigner, and lot of neighborhood guys had the feeling that they should get hired instead of him. But later, they learned to respect him, after he took two or three of them on ... Frenchie, Little Jimmy Flanagan — fellas there were a little on the rough side, yet basically good-natured. But if you didn't do your day's work they didn't care who you were. You wouldn't last long on the docks. When they heard I had been a trainer with the Brooklyn ball club that didn't mean anything. They were like, 'Who the hell are you?'"

Surprised that he mentioned his time with the Dodgers at all, I pushed my luck a little further and asked him if he had ever tried to get his old job back.

"Yeah, I tried to get back once for Spring Training, but Leo Durocher didn't want to put himself out. I went over to the Brooklyn offices of the ball club, left the pier to go over. Durocher said, 'Yeah, it could be a good idea,' but that was last I heard of it. He was a bum, all out for himself, didn't want to put himself out for nobody. You know what he said, 'Nice



he didn't even have a decent pair of work gloves, had to borrow a pair: "Handling slabs of copper, you'd get calluses. The copper was as sharp as razor blades; it would cut up your hands. And then there were slabs weighing a couple of hundred pounds that you had to straddle and pull up with a hook. And there's no place like the docks when it's cold. Guys would say, 'My asshole's sucking wind today.' At the end of the day, you'd almost be too tired to walk to the subway. You'd have to stop somewhere and fortify yourself with a few beers."



Little Italy in his bathrobe talking to himself to convince the Feds that he was too out of it to be running a Mafia family.

For a long time, she was always peeking through the slats of the Venetian blinds to see if those two shady-looking men she was sure were shylocks from the docks were back again, sitting in that black car parked right across the street.

\* \* \*

My father's son to the bitter end, I'd balk at buying his funeral flowers and think my sister irrelevant when she said, "Maybe we should get him some black socks so he doesn't have to be buried like a Polack in those white ones."

What I did think of doing, just for old times' sake, was putting a pack of Luckies and a six-pack of Rheingold in the coffin with him. Then I dismissed it as a sentimental gesture of which he'd have disapproved, as he always had of all I'd done. A pragmatist to the end, he would have thought me stupid to waste a six-pack on a "stiff."

"At least he'd approve of this," I told myself, tearing the pop-top off that first cold one.

\* \* \*

guys finish last.' I guess I was too nice a guy, according to him... But, hey, that's all water under the bridge. I was grateful that I had a job to go to..."

It wasn't an easy job, by any means. He remembered that in the beginning he and my mother were so hard-up for cash,

My father was so lucid that day as to almost give credence to what my mother used to say after he took early retirement: "I sometimes think that man remembers more than he lets on."

She would compare him to Vincent "Chin" Gigante, who was much in the news around that time for walking around



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# A Major Show of Woman Artists at the National Arts Club

Although most seasonal exhibitions are ephemeral events, recently one such exhibition made a memorable impression: The Holiday Show of The National League of American Pen Women, Inc., an organization founded in 1897 to promote “the creative talents of professional women in the arts.” For despite this group’s venerable history, its membership, far from being stuck in the past, exemplified many of the most forward-looking tendencies in recent visual art.

One fine case in point was Michele Bonelli, whose hard-edge paintings in gouache, ink on paper and oil on linen greeted the viewer on first entering the main gallery of The National Arts Club. For surely no painter since Stuart Davis has so successfully distilled the essence of urban architecture, traffic, and signage into as succinct an abstract vocabulary of animated abstract forms as Bonelli does in her bold, and buoyant compositions in bright comic strip colors. In the latter regard, however, Bonelli does even Roy Lichtenstein one better by departing from the irony of Pop and applying these brilliant cartoon primaries to a passionate, yet formally controlled, depiction of urban imagery and energy.

Indeed, various modes of abstraction made an especially impressive showing, as seen in the gracefully calligraphic watercolors of Holly Woodward, which put a contemporary western spin on a swift and spontaneous mode of expression akin to Zen literati painting. Titles such as “The Snail in his own Labyrinth” and “Whorled Wind” enhanced the lyrical quality of Woodward’s overall aesthetic.

Although modest of scale, three works in mixed media on canvas and panel by Jamie Tate stood out for their uncompromising formal integrity. Especially remarkable in this regard was Tate’s “Sketch with Graphite # 1,” an exquisitely simple work dominated by a floating gray square with an “X” scrawled through it in the manner of graffiti, which like some of the best works of Cy Twombly, leaves one paradoxically charmed by its raw refusal to ingratiate.

E. Janya Barlow, on the other hand, makes no secret of her desire to win the viewer over with jam-packed and coloristically uninhibited “maximalist” abstractions that fairly jump for joy. Eccentric, antic, and purposely awkward, Barlow’s acrylics on canvas celebrate the act of painting as an event and a process that carries its own light and life, rather than merely a means to a static aesthetic object.

Elinore Bucholtz, a frequent exhibitor in the New York gallery scene, works in the painterly-gestural tradition of the New York School. In this show, Bucholtz carries its rugged yet lyrical painterly spirit handsomely into the postmodern era in acrylics on canvas such as “Red Snow,” and “A Brighter

Dawn,” with their vibrant colors and streaked layers of pigment laid on upon the other to create richly tactile surfaces.

Eleanore Lauro O’Sullivan is another painter with roots in Abstract Expressionism. In the works from her “Swept Away Series” seen here, O’Sullivan also shows a kinship with the “new naturalist” painters like Gregory Amenoff, given how she infuses abstraction with a sense of landscape.

One of the distinguishing factors of postmodern abstraction, and of the abstractions of Nydia Preede in particular, is a willingness to embrace language — once a no-no back when “pure plastic qualities were valued above all others and the term “literary” was the critical kiss of death. Now, fragments of text mingle freely with geometric forms and sensuously brushed surfaces in Preede’s “Paint as Project” and “Memory and Time,” celebrating a new era of inclusiveness.

In both her paintings and her collage paintings, Miriam Wills deconstructs and reassembles the visual vernacular of Cubism. The forms in her compositions fit together like pieces in a particularly complex puzzle, often buffeted by black outlines suggesting the leading in stained-glass, always enhanced by Wills’ subdued but never somber color sense and muscular paint handling.

Quite an opposite approach is taken by yet another fine contemporary abstractionist, Leanne Martinson, whose buoyant forms float across the picture plane as freely as escaped balloons soaring skyward. Juicy daubs of straight-from-the-tube oil impasto and vigorously scrawl lines of charcoal applied to primed sheets of paper as joined diptychs create a synthesis of painting and drawing that lends Martinson’s process a unique freshness.

Two gifted photographic artists demonstrate splendidly why their medium, once generally segregated to photo shows alone, now enjoys pride of place right beside painting in major group exhibitions such as this one: Sharyn Bowman’s black and white photographs of beachscapes and other areas around waterways, seen under moody skies, have a somber purity akin to the surrealist bone yards of Yves Tanguy — particularly Bowman’s “Survivor,” in which a single tree blooms miraculously atop a monolithic boulder rising high out of a placid body of water. Also quite exquisite is Bowman’s “Rows of Pilings,” where the wooden structures suggest platoons of soldiers standing at attention knee-deep in water.

By contrast, Myrna Harrison Changar represents the tendency known as “painterly photography,” in which deliberate blurring, distortion, and reflections often evoke abstract effects, as seen in Changar’s atmospheric studies of pond water in a Hong Kong Park, with their artfully wrinkled surfaces suggesting the ink and watercolor

saturation of Chinese paintings on rice paper. Equally intriguing are Changar’s two “Shadow Tint” compositions, in which indistinct, vague figures, seen as though through smoked glass, swirl like spooky dancing spectres.

Figurative painting, in all its guises, also makes a strong showing, as evidenced by two large Expressionist oils from Barbara Yeterian’s “Dance Series.” Mentally merge Edvard Munch and Francis Bacon to get some idea of what Yeterian’s paintings are like, with their strident, visceral colors laid down in thick lumps of clotted impasto that often rise inches off the surface of the canvases upon which her clinging, clutching men and women turn terpsichore into a form of grotesquely gorgeous combat.

Where there is dance there must be music, and in this context no instrumentalists could fill the bill better than those created in mixed media by Roberta “Bird” Fabiano. Sculpted in ghostly white plaster, cloaked in chicken wire, Fabiano’s ruggedly wrought figures blow clarinets or strum electric guitars that protrude dynamically from their frames in 3-D.

Lisa Ferber, on the other hand, paints witty character-driven faux primitive, gently satirical visions of “the ladies who lunch,” as seen in one oil on board of two chic matrons posing as though for a snapshot holding a menu. Here as in all of Ferber’s pictures, the title is hand painted on the surface: “Undeterred by the boisterous businessmen, Linda and Lisa enjoyed a most Splendid Evening at the 21 Club.” Equally engaging is in another picture of yet another ditzzy sophisticate sporting a black shift and a Lucille Ball hairdo captioned “Alexandra reconsidered her teacup collection.”

Satire takes a more acidic turn in the charcoal and pastel drawings of Marsha E. Gold Gayer, which are every bit as exquisitely delineated as those of the great Mexican draftsman Jose Luis Cuevas. Especially striking is “Secrets,” Gayer’s image of a beautiful but obviously jaded young woman wearing nothing but a pair of silky black stockings reclining casually on a divan and radiating light like a full body halo, while an elderly male suitor leers from the dark shadows behind her.

By contrast, a more sympathetic image of old age is presented in Eleanor Capogrosso’s bronze, “Memory of a Man.” Here, the male figure slumps as though in a Turkish bath, his sagging nakedness partially covered by a towel, his expression bespeaking a certainly world weary nobility; he could be Willy Loman or Job.

Several other artists showed works in

*Continued on page 28*

National League of American Pen Women,  
The Holiday Show recently seen at The  
National Arts Club, 15 Gramercy Park South

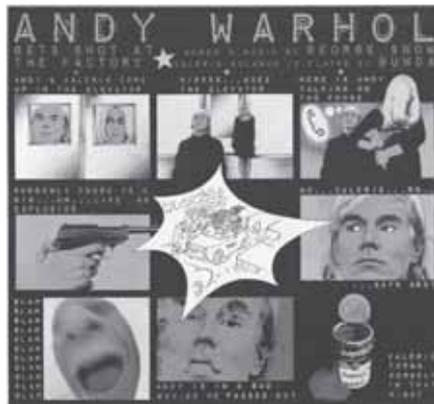
# Someday Funnies: A '60s Time-Capsule for a Generation That Was Never Supposed to Grow Up (Much Less Grow Old!)

by Ed McCormack

As a very young kid, I can't remember ever having wanted to be anything but a comic strip artist. In the 1950s, syndicated newspaper cartoonists like Al Capp, who wrote and drew Li'l Abner, and Chester Gould, the creator of Dick Tracy, were like movie stars. They hung out in nightclubs like Sardi's and The Stork Club and got written up in Earl Wilson's Walter Winchell's columns. They usually came from poor immigrant neighborhoods, but had ended up in penthouses uptown. It seemed the ideal future trajectory for a Lower East Side kid with a talent for drawing, like me.

But early in adolescence I saw Jack Kerouac on TV, started reading about Jackson Pollock, and got subverted into more pretentious visions of "serious" art and poetry. And while being a beatnik was a lot more exclusive than being a hippie, by the mid-60s, when I was in my early twenties, it was at least pleasing to imagine that my entire generation was finally catching up with me and all my hip friends.

One friend in particular was a fellow artist named Jim Hans who showed in the



"Andy Gets Shot at The Factory" by George Snow

same Tenth Street gallery that I did and reawakened my interest in comic strips. Although vestiges of that interest still remained in my antic drawings of street scenes, Jim's work was much more overtly Pop than my own, incorporating images of Buck Rogers and other actual comic strip characters. And since the hippie underground comics scene, spearheaded by Robert Crumb, Spain Rodriguez, S. Clay Wilson and others, was well underway by then, we ended up collaborating on a strange, somewhat futuristic comic strip called "Tom's Adventures in the Aquarian Age."

By then, since Jim and his wife Beverly had moved to Hoboken and Jeannie and I were living in Manhattan, we worked by

mail, sending the pages back and forth. What made it exciting was that we proceeded blindly, never knowing what the other one would do. Jim worked mostly in collage, gluing down vintage line cuts, while I mainly drew. But since we both added bits of text independently, the story was constantly taking surprising turns.

Our method was influenced by the Mail Art Movement, in which we both participated around that time, sending spontaneous artworks that got altered as they traveled from one artist to the next back and forth with the movement's originator, Ray Johnson. It also owed something to the old Surrealist parlor game called Exquisite Corpse, in which André Breton, Man Ray, Tristan Tzara and others would sit around a café table, drawing on the same piece of paper, folded so that the next up could not see what the others had done. (For all our love of popular culture, we did think of ourselves as avant gardists, after all.)

Whenever we had a new strip done, we'd meet at the East Village storefront that housed The Stryke Gallery, where we both showed, and walk the few blocks over to the storefront office of The Gothic Blimp Works, comics supplement of the underground weekly *The East Village Other*. As I recall, the first editor that we dealt with was Kim Deitch and the second was Art Spiegelman. Both had long, successful careers in comics that survived the underground movement, Deitch with his smartass cat character Waldo, and Spiegelman, of course, with his Pulitzer Prize-winning memoir of his fathers' holocaust experience *Maus*.

The same can't be said for Jim and myself — at least in relation to comics. Indeed, our collaboration on "Tom's Adventures" was short-lived, since we each got too busy with other projects to keep it going. While continuing to create art, Jim (who loved the rivets on those tinny-looking Buck Rogers rocket ships and other aspects of antique modernity) published an eccentric prototype "steam punk" journal called the *Time Machine Magazine* and founded the Hoboken Historical Museum. Meanwhile I drifted from fine art, to illustration, to Pop journalism, first for *Changes*, an underground music and arts journal published by Susan Graham Mingus, wife of the great jazz bassist and composer Charles Mingus, and later for *Rolling Stone*.

It was Jann Wenner, the editor and publisher of *Rolling Stone*, who finally got me briefly back into cartooning, when he suggested that Michel Choquette, a young Canadian-born writer for *The National*



"The Spirit—The Soaring Sixties" by Will Eisner (detail)

*Lampoon* and comedy performer, contact me about creating a comic strip. In fact, I first met Jann after he saw a written and drawn commentary that I did for *Changes* (not a comic strip, exactly, but something more on the order of an old fashioned sports cartoon — only about a performance by Tina and Ike Turner at Fillmore East) and wrote to ask, "Could you do things like that for us?"

But the writing had quickly taken over, and aside from a single drawing to illustrate my first article in the publication, I got so busy writing for *Rolling Stone* that I never drew for it again.

Anyway, it was the early 1970s, a time when history was being recycled almost instantly, and Jann had commissioned Choquette to produce a twenty or so page comic strip supplement for *Rolling Stone* about the music, politics, and life-styles of the '60s, which he was already considering expanding to book length for his Straight Arrow press.

Since *Rolling Stone's* main office was still in San Francisco at that time, I functioned as its indigenous East Coast decadent, contributing a gossip column called "New York Confidential" and regular features on the downtown underground. Jann might have assumed I would do something on one of my regular haunts, such as Max's Kansas City, The Hotel Chelsea, or Andy Warhol's Factory. Instead, when Choquette, who would have resembled a pint-size Jesus if not for his big, round, mega John Lennon granny glasses, stopped by our apartment and dropped some of the names that had already agreed to be in the book — William S. Burroughs, Federico Fellini, Tom Wolfe, Frank Zappa — I was eager to join their company and proposed doing something on Nobody's, a lesser known rock and roll fetish bar which I thought would be newer and more novel than some of the trendy scenes I had already covered thoroughly in the magazine.

the **SIXTIES** by H. Kurtzman



"The Sixties" by Harvey Kurtzman

Thinly disguised in my strip as "Nowhere's," Nobody's was a rock and roll fetish bar in the Village where preening dudes sporting Rod Stewart shags and painted and tainted girl groupies in hot-pants and fishnet stockings came together to enact rituals of male aloofness and female aggressiveness, based on the relations of rock stars and their groupies, that radically reversed the mating dynamic of most other singles hangouts in the city. Aside from the occasional young Jimi Hendrix clone or hopeful soul sister aiming to emulate the divine chocolate courtesan called Devon, one-time arm candy of Bowie, Jagger, and numerous other pale Brit musicians, Nobody's was mostly a lily-white scene. So naturally I based the main protagonist of my strip, whom I dubbed "The Uscrewable Dr. Jive," on the dive's most out-of-place patron: a middle-aged black workingman who occupied the same bar stool near the door every weekend, uncoolly hitting on anything that looked even vaguely female.

"Shit, bro, from the back all I saw was your hair and I thought you was a chick," he said, blushing deep mahogany, when I turned around to face him after he tapped me on the back and asked suavely what "the young lady" I was drinking. "No offense intended." "No offense taken, man," I said. "The chicks in this place look a lot better than the dudes do anyway."

"Raht on, raht on!" he agreed and we

slapped palms.

Was it any wonder, then, that I chose to view all the alien life forms at Nobody's through the eyes of this "Brother From Another Planet" in the strip I gave Michel Choquette for *Someday Funnies*?

I also recommended that Choquette contact my friend and former comics collaborator Jim Hans, who came up with a characteristically brilliant collage strip called "Smoke: A Death Sentence," about the start of the 1960s environmental movement.

Then neither one of us heard from Michel Choquette for another four decades.

\* \* \*

"In '78, I probably should have said, 'Look, I tried my best, it didn't work,'"

Choquette told journalist Bob Levin in a front cover article headlined "How Michel Choquette (Almost) Assembled the Most Stupendous Comic Book in the World," featured in the August 2009 issue of *The Comics Journal*. "But so many people thought I'd burned them or tried to rip them off, I didn't know how to deal with it..."

And he didn't decide how until October of 2010, after Levin's article attracted the interest of several publishers and Choquette finally made a deal with Abrams, the well known art book company.

In his letter to me, and presumably all of the other "169 contributors from 15 countries" touted on the book's cover — or their heirs (fully a third of the contributors were now dead), Choquette breezed smoothly over his long silence as follows: "As you may recall, years ago (many years ago!) you wrote and drew a comic strip for *The Someday Funnies*, the comic book about the 1960s I was compiling at that time ... Unfortunately my publishers — first *Rolling Stone* (Straight Arrow Books), then Harper & Row — backed out on me in the end, and I was left holding the bag. For a few years I tried finding other publishers and even raising private money, but in the end I had to give up..."

"It had been a project that, so the stories went, bloomed more grandiose with each cycle of the moon," wrote Levin in his article, when it was still a foregone conclusion that

the book was destined to remain an "almost" in parenthesis — one of those great ideas that never see the light of day and live on only in rumor and legend.

"It had been funded by a matrix of publishers whose competing interests would have required a generation of attorneys to resolve. And it had resulted in feelings of betrayal and outrage among those who had faith in its promise, a group of people eerily akin to those who had believed in the age it sought to chronicle. In those Michel Choquette was a man who had squandered the money he had collected. Who with his book undone and the money spent, had disappeared, along with the art he had collected."

Levin quotes Batman illustrator Neal Adams, who also drew a superhero parody called *Son-O-God Comics*, written by Choquette, for *National Lampoon*, but was not among the book's contributors, saying, "Michel had too good a time. He went all over the world, used the money to travel... He was, I think you would have to say, flying high. And, in the end, he didn't have half the book done ... and he ran out of money. So what's he going to do? Well, he disappeared."

By 1978, when, unable to give up hope altogether, he finally stashed all the materials he had collected in storage lockers, rather than returning them to the artists and writers, Choquette had become something of a fugitive. So much so that when Levin finally tracked him down to do the article, he



"The Big Snooze" by Red Grooms (detail)

would only cooperate on the condition that the writer agree not try to contact any of the contributors for comment before the story appeared in print.

"Understandably," the Editor's Postscript that ran with Levin's article declared, "Choquette wanted to tell the whole story of the *Someday Funnies* in the pages of the *Journal* before opening a Pandora's box that he imagined to be filled with angry, unpaid cartoonists. Levin had recourse, therefore, to no sources other than Choquette and a handful of brief published references. (*Rolling Stone* Editor Jann Wenner did not respond to Levin's request for comment.)



“Smoke-Death Sentence” by Jim Hans (detail)

Luckily, Choquette was a meticulous note-taker and record-keeper, and it was possible to construct a detailed narrative of the book’s rise and fall.”

In the article, which ran from pages 30 to 81 of the issue, sparing less obsessed future journalists the necessity for much further research, Levin told how Choquette had spent seven years toting several bulging portfolios around the globe, compulsively recruiting new contributors all along the way, even as his deals with the publishers fell through.

In London, he commissioned a strip from the Pop painter Alan Jones and met with Charlie Watts, drummer for the Rolling Stones, who “proposed a strip about the beds he’d slept in around the world.” There, too, Choquette met with John Wilcock an old friend of mine, who had been the only Englishman among the five original founders of the Village Voice. John was the quintessential Transatlantic Man, knowing everyone there was to know in both London and New York. (Claiming to be “more of a reporter than a writer,” he wanted me to help him with a memoir all about his career in the underground press movement, but I was already too distracted by the misadventures that make up my own indiscreet confessions to oblige him.)

And although he told me the last time we met that he was going home to London because he couldn’t keep up with life in New York anymore (“I’m getting too old; the city belongs to you young guys now”), he obviously still liked keeping fast company. For in London it was John Wilcock who introduced Michel to Christine Keeler, the former model and tabloid femme fatale who caused a cold war scandal in the early ’60s by having simultaneous affairs with British Secretary of State for War John Profumo and Yevgeny “Eugene” Ivanov, a naval attaché at the Soviet Embassy.

It would have been a coup for Choquette to team Keeler up with an artist for a strip by one of decade’s earliest liberated women, but he found that Keeler had no interest in revisiting the era of her notoriety.

While using *Rolling Stone’s* London office

as his home base, Choquette also hung out with trendy mod fashion photographer David Bailey, on whom the main character of Antonioni’s ’60s cult film “Blow-up” was based. Bailey had promised him a fumetti (photo comic) for the book. Unfortunately, Bailey never got around to it between fashion shoots; but at least his supermodel girlfriend Penelope Tree came up with an idea of her own.

Through Jenny Fabian, who had co-authored a Pop novel based on her experiences as a rock and roll groupie, Choquette got to know Henrietta Garnett, the granddaughter of Virginia Wolfe’s sister, Vanessa Bell. She invited him to her family estate in Sussex, where he met her grandfather, painter Duncan Grant, the last living link to the Bloomsbury group. Hoping to convince the elderly artist to illustrate his first comic strip, Choquette and Henrietta then traveled to the South of France to visit her father, the writer David Garnett, in the hope that he would supply a text. This was yet another plan that never came off, but there was an unanticipated personal payoff when Henrietta became Choquette’s girlfriend and main research assistant.

Together, they traveled to Barcelona to meet with Spanish comics artists and, as he put it, “spent an afternoon with Salvador Dali and his wife, Gala, drinking champagne by his penis-shaped swimming pool, as he explained why he was too important to draw a strip for me but would gladly do a poster for the book if my publishers were rich enough.”

Earlier in New York, when he visited the Factory, he had better luck with Andy Warhol, but missed the opportunity to take advantage of it. Andy was willing but busy, as usual, and steered him to a set of drawers in a flat file to rummage through and find materials to use.

“I thought it was a cop out, so I didn’t take him up on it,” Michel said. Had he been around the Factory as often as I was when I was a contributing editor of *Interview* around that same time, he would have realized that rarely was a Warhol “original” touched by Andy’s hands anyway!

Another no-show was Robert Crumb,

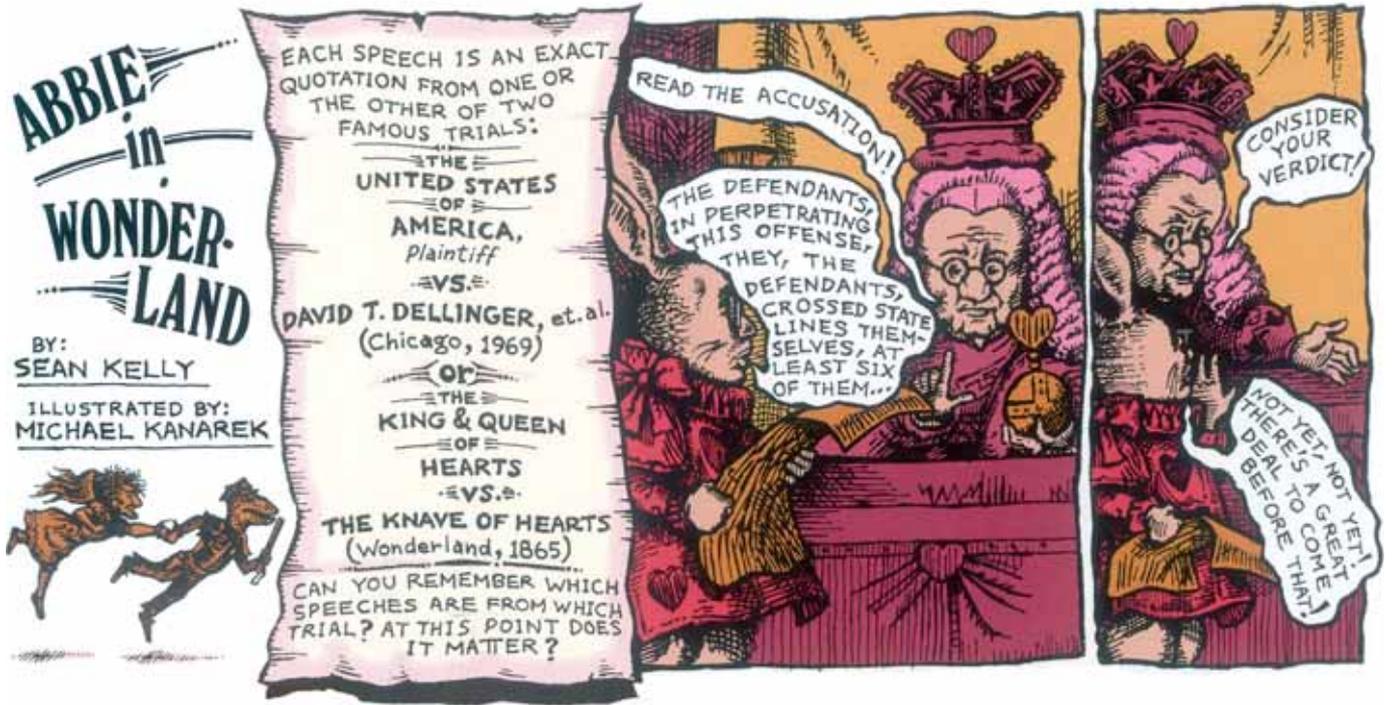
whose guru character “Mr. Natural” Choquette was hoping would serve as sort of an M.C. appearing throughout the book to connect different strips and subjects. But at their one meeting, Crumb sat and sketched, showing little interest in the project. So for the Abrams edition, Choquette substituted more than 90 insipidly cute brand new cartoon vignettes by fellow Canadian Michael Fog of himself as a young man on the go in the ’70s, roaming the world with several bulging portfolios of *Someday Funnies* materials that come cascading down from airplane luggage racks, slide across the ice at a skating rink in Holland, and cause other havoc. Unfortunately, Fog’s generic style intrudes incongruously on the more distinctive draftsmanship of several other contributors whose strips it literally invades. This seems especially inexplicable, since the editor makes a point of informing us, in a section of the book called “Translations of Foreign Strips” that “The decision not to re-letter the foreign strips in English was dictated partly by a desire to preserve the linguistic flavor of the originals, but mostly by a reluctance to tamper with the artists’ lettering, which in many cases is an integral component of the artwork.” One (whose own full page was mercifully spared the Fog invasion, by the way) would think that the same sensitivity to aesthetic integrity would apply to other components of the artwork, as well as to the sanctity of the individual artist’s style and space.

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One of the stories that Choquette tells most fondly is of a lunch at Gigi Fazzi in Rome with Federico Fellini at which the great Italian filmmaker “peeled a peach with astonishing virtuosity, prompting the maitre d’ to exclaim ‘Maestro!’”

The great Italian filmmaker was extraordinarily gracious for a man with so many demands on his time. When the strip he created for the book (titled “A Dream I Had Ten Years Ago,” it could only be called “Fellini-esque”) was lost in the mail, he took time out of a hectic film deadline to redraw it. Well, Fellini had always been a comics fan, as anyone might guess who has ever seen the costume sketches, character studies, and story-boards he creates for his films. But interest in the book also came from unexpected quarters:

At one point Pierre Elliot Trudeau — an old family friend, since besides being one of Canada’s best known poets and novelists Michel’s father, Robert Choquette, had served as the country’s ambassador to Uruguay, Paraguay, and Argentina — even considered making a contribution. Over dinner with his young wife Margaret and Michel, Trudeau proposed the idea of a strip about the ’60s art world phenomenon called “Happenings,” although Michel couldn’t be sure whether the Prime Minister



was serious or just trying to appear hip. How much more interesting it would have been had Mrs. Trudeau volunteered to do something about her much-publicized adventures with the Rolling Stones, of which Keith Richard, in his recent memoir, recalled: "She was a groupie, that's all she was, pure and simple. Nothing wrong with that. But you shouldn't be a prime minister's wife if you want to be a groupie."

For all his globe-trotting and networking by 1978, seven years into the project, Michel still had no publisher for his magnum opus and was now \$ 300, 000 in debt.

"It was awful," he told Levin, looking back in on it all those years later. "It was really awful. I felt worse than you can possibly imagine because I cared so much about those guys. You can't imagine how much I loved them for having gone on spec and taken a chance and done strips for me. I had kept going on not only because I was so devoted to Funnies, but because I felt I owed it to each of them to keep fighting, and what haunted me the most was the thought that so many people would feel disappointed in me . . . But I had to face the fact that, before I went nuts, I had to put it aside and get on to other things — like the rest of my life. That's why I buried it. Maybe for awhile. Maybe for forever. I didn't have a conclusion. What could the conclusion be?"

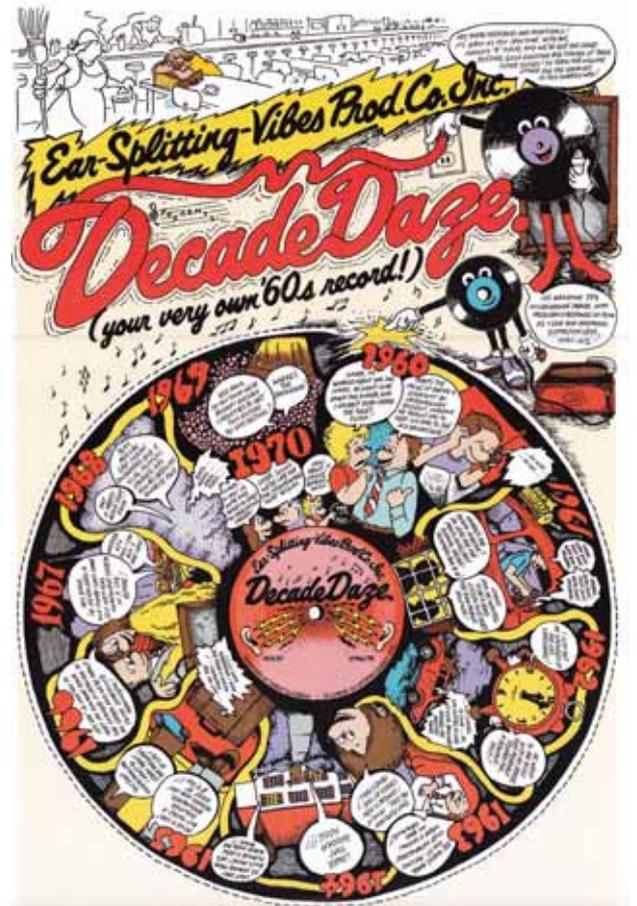
Although Choquette had a new, more contemporary-looking jacket designed for 2011 Abrams edition of *The Someday Funnies*, the original artwork for the 1973 presentation dummy still graces the hard cover beneath it. Painted by the illustrator Richard Hess, it depicts a family of four in their living room, watching the live shooting

of Lee Harvey Oswald by Jack Ruby on their television screen. As they take in this early example of reality TV, the father, sitting in an easy chair in his undershirt with a newspaper headline about JFK's assassination in his lap, is saying in a comic strip balloon, "Someday we'll look back at all this and laugh."

Originally a seeming reference to an old definition of comedy — tragedy plus time — the title takes on a new irony in relation to the book's belated publication date. Yet it still holds up as a vital time capsule of a turbulent era. And although one wouldn't want to go quite so far as a writer for *The International Times*, who called it "the most intriguing collection of writers and cartoonists since the monks illuminated bibles," it seems safe to venture that it is arguably the most star-studded comics cavalcade ever published. Not only because of all the famous amateurs — the writers, painters, models, and rock stars moonlighting as cartoonists — but for Choquette's innovative inclusion of both underground and mainstream comics stars for the big companies like Marvel and DC in a single volume.

In fact, in the '70s, when like most other aspects of

the culture, the field was divided by an "us" and "them" mentality, such inclusiveness may have worked against the project in marketing terms: was its target audience supposed to be to be hippie freaks or teenage geeks? This, after all, was decades before *Maus* won its



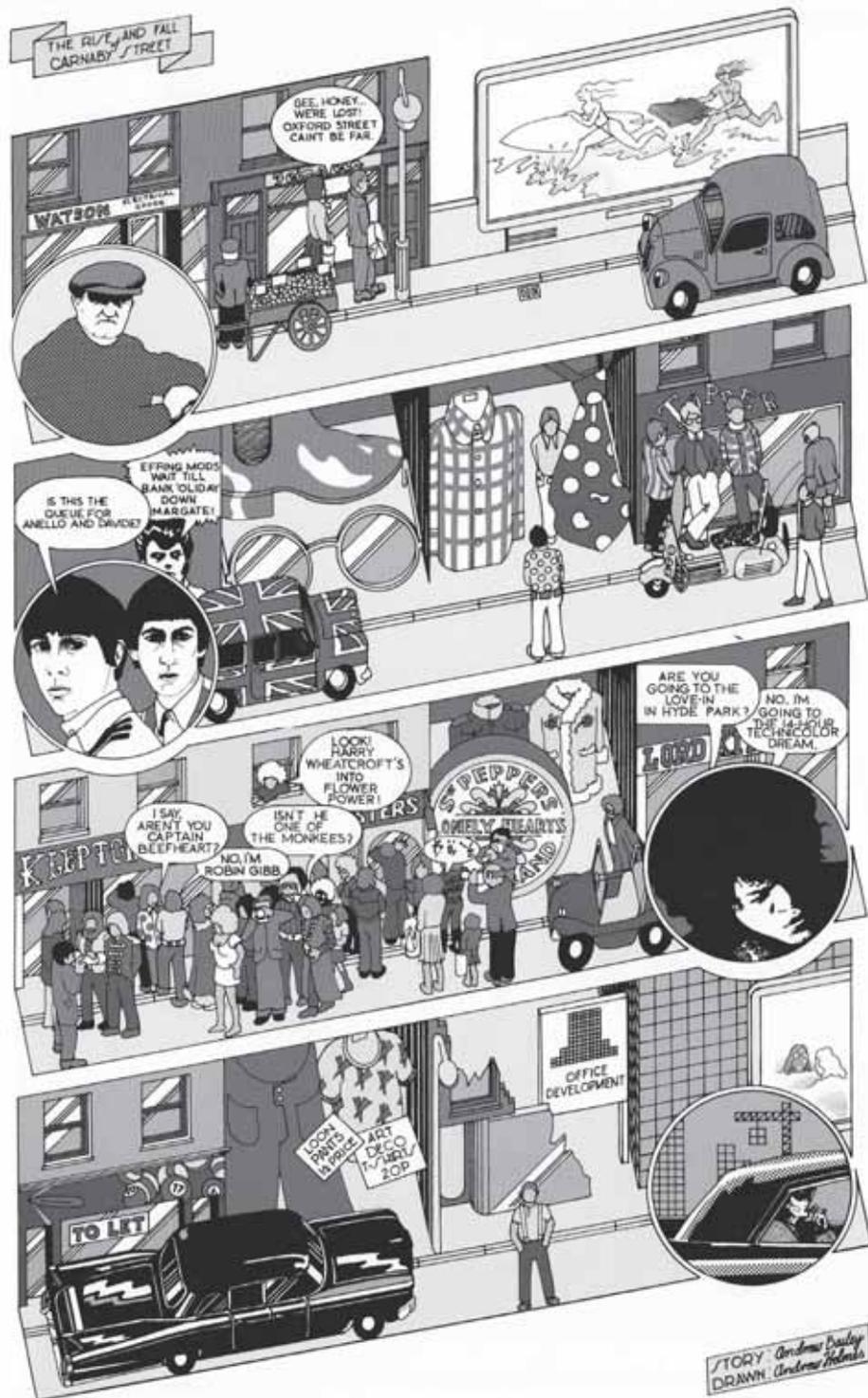
"Decade Daze" by Barbara Shubeck

Pulitzer and graphic novels were routinely covered in *The New York Times Book Review*; when not even a comics visionary like Choquette could have predicted the degree to which this once-scorned popular art form would be culturally legitimized. Add to this the retro appeal of 1960s nostalgia and the legend of a lost masterpiece of the era propagated by Levin's article in *The Comics Journal*, and it's easy to fathom why the book had less trouble seeing the light of print today than in the '70s.

One of its crowning glories is a double page spread by Will Eisner. Creator of the legendary newspaper and comic book strip *The Spirit*, Eisner was the man who adopted the atmospheric techniques of movies to comics in panels animated by the vertiginous angles and dark shadows of film noir. As important to future comic strip artists and graphic novelists as Muddy Waters and Chuck Berry were to The Rolling Stones, Eisner updated his detective character with a sequence beginning in 1962, when crime boss "Lucky" Luciano died of a heart attack in an airport in Naples. Having influenced many of the underground (as well as aboveground) cartoonists in the book, here Eisner seemed to delight in following their lead for a change, letting the low-cut neckline of a characteristically vampy gun moll slip so one of her pert breasts does a Janet Jackson peek-a-boo.

However belatedly and posthumously, Wallace Wood, another old master, also seemed to enjoy rubbing the blue nose of 1950s shrink and censor Frederick Werthem, who, in his rabid bestseller "Seduction of the Innocent," called comics "one of the leading causes of juvenile delinquency," in the freedom Michel Choquette offered him. One of the stars of the great E.C. comics series that I and the other little hoods I hung out with so loved, Wood contributed a strip called "Brave Nude World." It is introduced by a text box extolling the '60s as the era when "bodily functions and organs were described in print for the first time" by Henry Miller, Kinsey and others who "helped cast off the shackles of ignorance and shame that our puritan heritage had imposed on us." And it goes on, with Wood's distinctive visual wit, to give graphic examples of all the "group, hetero, homo, bi-, oral, anal and various assorted combinations, variations, perversions, and deviations" that became commonplace once "America had discovered sex at last."

William Burroughs, on the other hand, who fought and won his first battles with the censors in the "Naked Lunch" trial of 1959, needed no permission to include a "chick with a dick" in the comic strip that he wrote for the book. Illustrated by a young protégé named Malcolm McNeill, with whom Burroughs first collaborated on a strip for an underground



"The Rise and Fall of Carnaby Street" by Andrew Bailey (text), Andrew Holmes (art)

paper Cyclops, the Beat icon's "Don't Blow a Fuse" was inspired by the Spanish physiologist Manuel Rodriguez Delgado, who in the 1960s, implanted electrodes in the brains of animals to alter their behavior and in one case stepped into a ring to prove the effectiveness of his experiment by stopping a charging bull in its tracks.

Some artists and writers sought to revise the history of the '60s. Stephen Battaglia, who later went on to write for the Daily News and become the business editor for

TV Guide, was 13 years old in 1972, when he drew a strip in which a quintet of masked and costumed super heroes go through a pile of old newspapers and try to reverse the headlines about the assassinations of JFK, RFK, and Martin Luther King. Published with its youthful spelling errors uncorrected, Battaglia's strip has the raw quality that grown up artists like Gary Panter and Richard Pettibon, influenced by the punk sensibility, would attempt to emulate from a less authentic perspective decades later.

Somewhat more ironically, “It Was All a Clever Ruse Comics,” a strip written by Chris Miller, the screenwriter for “Animal House,” and drawn by Greg Morrow, an artist and writer for both Marvel and DC, on some of the same events. Taking off from the premise “The media fooled you pretty good about the Sixties,” it purports to give “the straight poop” about the era: In Selma, as “blacks marched to protest the few forms of discrimination still prevalent, sympathetic whites called encouragement from the sidelines” and “Bull Connor and the boys served grits and cold lemonade.” The late great underground star Vaughn Bode, who put Pogo through a psychedelic lens with his character “Cheech Wizard,” is represented by an antiwar strip in which lizard infantrymen demonstrate the dehumanizing language of war: “Listen, anyone who ain’t one of us is a gook.”

In “Tarzan’s Chicago Adventure” written by journalist Mike Olshan and drawn by former Dr. Strange illustrator Frank Brunner, the king of the apes and his primate army



“Barbarella” by Jean-Claude Forest (detail)

end up sharing a paddy wagon with Abbie Hoffman and Jerry Rubin’s Yippie troops.

Since, even in the ’60s, Abbie and Jerry had never struck me as anything more than publicity-hungry clowns, I was reminded of traveling around on the college lecture circuit with them in the ’80s, after Jerry had become a networking entrepreneur and they staged their “Yippie Vs. Yuppie” debates. It was the next best thing to professional wrestling, as they savaged each other for big bucks from the podium — Abbie denouncing Jerry as “a sellout,” Jerry calling Abbie “a dinosaur stuck in the past” — then communed like old cronies all the way home in the Lincoln Town Car.

Jean-Claude Forest, creator of one of the great French comic strips, “Barbarella,” may have been sending up Jane Fonda, who played his heroine on the screen and was briefly married to activist Tom Hayden when he teamed his up with “Danny the Red,” one of the leaders of the student

riots at the University of Paris in 1968. Was Forest hinting at the radically posturing movie star’s actual political cluelessness when, as paving bricks flew around them, he had Barbarella say to her companion, “Oh tell me, redhead...is this a dream, or reality?”

All I know for certain is that the left-leaning labor unions in Paris backed the student revolt, just the opposite of the reactionary hardhats who attacked antiwar protesters on Wall Street a couple of years later, prompting me to create a cartoon parody for Changes called “Construction Man: America’s New Superhero.”

Drawn in a style influenced by Krazy Kat but based on Groucho Marx, underground cartoonist Bobby London’s cigar chomping fowl “Dirty Duck” reads “Andy Waterhole” the riot act when the underground filmmaker suggests he appear naked on the screen: “Andy — I didn’t spend 50 years knockin’ around Broadway and Hollywood, just so I could take my clothes off in one o’ yer sex education films!” (But that some of the



“The Curtain Comes Up” by Frank Zappa and Cal Schenkel (detail)

Other contributions by international artists and writers as diverse as Sergio Aragones, R.O. Blechman, Guido Crepax, Kim Deitch, Harlan Ellison, Shary Flenniken, Red Grooms, Jack Kirby, Harvey Kurtzman, Jay Lynch, Stan Mack, Don Martin, Arnold Roth, Ralph Steadman, Peter Townshend, Gahan Wilson, Tom Wolfe and Frank Zappa, on subjects ranging from Woodstock to Altamont, from the Berlin Wall to Carnaby Street, from the Beatles to the Chicago 7, from the Cuban Missile Crisis to feminism, from JFK’s assassination to the shooting of Andy Warhol, from the birth control pill to LSD, reminded me how naive and arrogant we were; how slaphappy, with our steady diet of sex drugs and rock and roll; how smug in our belief that we alone could change the



“The Ballad of Bearbsley Bullfeather or Tune-In-Cop-Out and Drop-up!” by Jack Kirby (text and art) and Joe Sinnott (art) (detail)

superstar hopefuls I knew in the ’60s, who were only too willing to strip not only their bodies but their fragile psyches, for the real Andy’s cameras, only to be promptly dropped when their 15 minutes was up, had been half as wise!)

Even without her boyfriend Bailey’s fumetti, ’60s supermodel Penelope Tree, who, when she outgrew being a rival for Twiggy, would turn to writing and charity work, came up with a strip that will resonate with anyone who was a young, attractive girl in the ’60s. Called “Cosmic Conversation,” it consists of dialogue balloons drawn by Richard Adams set against a starry constellation, filled with trite period pickup lines likes, “Hey baby, I feel I know you from somewhere, what sign are you?” Going on ad absurdum for several panels with astrological clichés, Tree’s strip illuminates what Vladimir Nobokov must have meant when he said that the word “cosmic” invariably tempts him to delete the “s.”

ways of the world.

The first generation with a “youth culture” all our own, “Never trust anyone over 30,” we liked to say, as we laughed superiorly, along with the Beatles, to the lyrics of “When I’m 64,” because we were the Peter Pan generation and could never imagine it happening to us.

Someday Funnies, indeed.

\* \* \*

# Rose Sigal-Ibsen: Western Innovator in an Eastern Art Form

Much has been written, particularly in Michael Sullivan's definitive history, "The Meeting of Eastern and Western Art," about the influence of Japanese art on the Impressionists and the post Impressionists. Other writers, myself included, have belabored the debt owed by the Abstract Expressionists to the ancient "action painters" of Zen literati ink painting. Less has been said, however, about the contributions made by non Asian artists to Japanese and Chinese painting, particularly in the present multicultural era of ongoing art history.

One of the most dedicated of such artists is Romanian-born Rose Sigal-Ibsen, who has lived and worked in New York City since 1957. Originally, like her late husband Albert Dov Sigal and her son Daniel M. Sigal, Sigal-Ibsen was an enamel artist.

But she felt that she had finally discovered her true artistic vocation after starting to study Sumi-e brush techniques with her beloved "sensei" Koho Yamamoto, a well known painter and teacher who worked out of a storefront studio and school in Soho, and whose student she was for nine years.

In the years since, Sigal-Ibsen has become well known in China and Japan, as well as in her adopted country, for being one of the most proficient and respected Western exponents of this exacting art form. But one suspects that this petite woman, who still retains traces of her Romanian accent, has won the admiration and endorsement of C.C. Wang and Wang Fangyu among other esteemed Asian painters as much for the uniquely European inflections she brings to Japanese and Chinese brush painting as for her reverence toward its traditions. This point is well made in the auspicious choices that Frank De Gregorio, the curator of The Interchurch Center, has made for Sigal-Ibsen's splendid solo exhibition of painting and calligraphy at the center's elegant Upper West Side gallery.

Perhaps one of the most striking examples is the large horizontal scroll in ink and watercolor entitled "Wisteria," in which while the subject matter is quintessentially Asian, the artist's coloristic lyricism and staccato brush technique — particularly in her pointillistic handling of the delicate purple blossoms suspended from the gracefully curving limbs — appears equally beholden to Impressionism. Here, the fluidity of the artist's technique, even in the less palpably pigmented medium of aquarelle, evokes

comparison to Monet's famous water lilies, just as the delicate yellow in the portion of sky bordering the dangling blossoms along the bottom of the composition, evokes the Impressionist ideal of "color as light."

An even more overtly Western "overall" approach to color can be seen in the richly mottled mixture of hues — especially yellows, pinks, and blues — of another composition called "In Summer



"Wisteria"

Children..." These bright colors are mingled with sumptuously translucent, subtly varied tones of gray ink wash and overlaid with simplified figurative linear forms adapted from the primitive pictographs of ancient calligraphy. These pictographic shapes, so like the joyously scrawled little personages of Klee or Miro, provide a sharp contrast to the more fluidly abstract modern characters in which the picture's whimsically evocative title is inscribed on the composition.

Here, too, are tiny floating orbs in red, blue, green, yellow, red, and purple, that become greatly enlarged in yet another composition called "In Summer Balloons are Flying High in the Sky." These circular shapes, each with a fine stroke indicating a balloon-string dangling down, are solidly filled in with color in a manner more usual to Western than Eastern painting. Yet they harmonize quite compatibly with a flowing mass of diluted ink washes that deepens toward the bottom of the composition, literally suggesting balloons "flying high in the sky," above the clouds.

Sigal-Ibsen is particularly imaginative when it comes to translating and adapting the forms of ancient calligraphy to her own visual vocabulary, as seen in two other works titled, respectively, "Rooster" and "Horses on Parade." In both, the characters become perfect foils for her spontaneous brushwork, as she emphasizes their pictorial aspects by virtue of lines that can thicken or thin on the turn of a dime.

Indeed, such facility may explain why Sigal-Ibsen has earned an acceptance quite rarely shown for a foreigner among

traditional Asian painters. For as Michael Sullivan points out, many among them, while acknowledging the realism of Western art, "could not take it seriously as painting since it showed so little skill and feeling in the use of the brush." Since cultural chauvinism dies hard, and since it happens to be true that few non Asian artists possess the manual dexterity that comes with practicing brush calligraphy

in school — and even manipulating chopsticks from an early age! — one can only assume that this attitude still prevails in some quarters (at least among those Chinese and Japanese artists who have not succumbed to the fashion for all things Western).

Perhaps where Sigal-Ibsen's extraordinary skill with the brush is most obvious, is in her practice of calligraphy, an art that is fully as esteemed as painting in Asian culture. Indeed, in his classic text, "Chinese

Calligraphy," originally published in 1938, the Chinese scholar Chiang Yee, was already making analogies between the aesthetics of calligraphy and those of modern abstract art. And, an artist such as Rose Sigal-Ibsen, who is not fluent in the Chinese language — aside from studying the visual qualities of the specific characters that she has learned to paint so fluidly — may be in the best position to put a fine point on this idea.

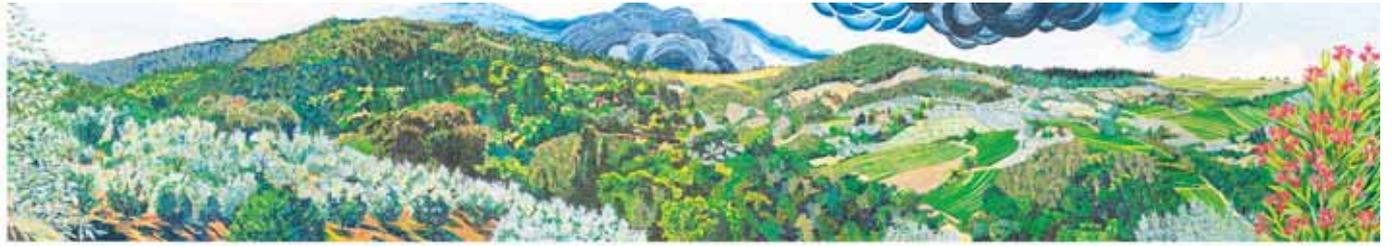
For that Sigal-Ibsen sees these calligraphic forms with a fresh eye, as purely visual / aesthetic phenomena, is especially apparent in works such as "Snake," where the character for the word is transformed into the most sinuously serpentine swirl, or "Dancing," where a simple twist of the wrist holding the brush is sufficient to imbue the composition with a sense of terpsichorean movement.

Rose Sigal-Ibsen recently stated that she is not planning other New York solo exhibitions in the foreseeable future, since she hopes to concentrate on participating in more group shows abroad. Thus this splendidly curated survey offers what may be the last opportunity for awhile to encounter a substantial number of works by a Western artist who, like Mark Tobey, Morris Graves, Norman Bluhm and a select company of others, takes inspiration from Eastern art to forge her own unique mode of expression.

— Ed McCormack

Rose Sigal-Ibsen, Treasure Room Gallery,  
The Interchurch Center, 475 Riverside Drive,  
March 15 - April 13, 2012

# Paper Mosaics of the Sublime: the Unique Art of Mary Wells



*"Summer Tempest"*

"From my first glance at the Italian countryside," says Mary Wells, an artist who lives and works in Portland, Oregon, "seen as I gazed through the train window sipping a complimentary espresso served in a china cup with accompanying biscotti, I have been smitten with the Italian landscape, its hospitable people, impressive architecture, and broad appreciation of art that resonates strongly with my own aesthetic."

In fact, it was during a visit to Rome that Wells was first inspired by the meticulous Italian craft of *mosaico minuto*, a variation of the venerable art of mosaic in which the traditional tiles are replaced by miniscule slivers of broken glass. Although *mosaico minuto* was used for centuries in Rome to create portraits, religious imagery, miniature landscapes and brooches, Wells has adapted



*"Summer Tempest" close detail*

the technique to contemporary fine art collage practice by replacing the bits of glass with either tiny fragments of printed paper or with colorful fragments from her own discarded acrylic paintings.

The resulting "paper mosaics," as the artist calls them are technical tours de force in which, while the individual components which make up the imagery remain minute, the large overall scale of the compositions rivals abstract expressionism, color field painting, and other schools of art for which the renowned formalist critic Clement Greenberg once coined the umbrella term "American-Type Painting."

Wells, however, is a confirmed realist who states, "My paper mosaics are a visual journal of my life, graphic souvenirs of memories stretching from my New England childhood to my present-day life in Oregon. Each serves as a journal entry marking a

moment and containing a story from my life. Viewed together the mosaics form a personal narrative with each tied to a sense of place and a specific part of my life experience. Some of my mosaics are transitory glimpses of places seen during my travels; others are places I've lived or visited over time. Using images primarily derived from my photographs I incorporate some aspect of landscape, memory and journey into all of my work."

In Wells' present show, that first enamored glimpse of the Italian landscape from a train window to which she alluded at the beginning of this review provided the epiphany that served as the impetus for her unique interpretation of two specific locations: The countryside and gardens surrounding the Tuscan Villa Vignamaggio, (purported birthplace of Mona Lisa in 1479); and Mantua, the setting for Virgil's great poem "Georgics"; the 14th century home of Isabella d'Este, and the setting for Verdi's opera "Rigoletto."

Also intended by Wells as visual interpretations of the sonnets that the classical composer Antonio Vivaldi used as the basis for "The Four Seasons," the focal point of the exhibition is a series of rhapsodic pastoral panoramas. Each is composed of over 70,000 individual pieces of paper and measures 8 1/2 by 48 inches.

In "Summer Tempest," the most bucolic of the seasonal pictures, owing to the ripe, verdant lushness of the season it depicts, low-lying rain-clouds roll like steely blue steam engine wheels (here, one can't resist evoking those very steel wheels that transported the artist to her inspiration!) over a vista of rhythmic hills, the silken tan ribbons of tilled fields, and stately stucco architecture half veiled by rich green curtains of foliage. Although the approaching storm ushers in a pregnant hush (and one can almost feel the red blooms on the far right side of the sweeping composition tremble on their tall stems), Wells' luminous palette of sunny glued patches persists in celebrating what Dylan Thomas so eloquently called "the force that through the green fuse drives the flower."

Indeed, Mary Wells seems to share with the immortal Welsh poet a sense of the underlying mysteries of nature, those that go far deeper than the lay of the land. This lends her pictures a transcendent air which,

in purely visual terms, can only be compared to those of the great American watercolorist Charles Burchfield. And that Wells achieves her similarly fluid atmospheric alchemy with scissors and glue rather than brush and makes her accomplishment all the more technically astounding.

But that she is a fine painter as well when the occasion calls for it comes across in her Mantua triptych "Autumn's Fitful Mood," where Wells combines the two mediums, setting three distinctly different paper mosaic landscape views within a skillfully painted trompe l'oeil rendering of the archways and ornate columns of the 15th century stone cortile connecting one section of Isabella d'Este's Palazzo Ducale to another.

The artist describes arriving one autumn day in 2007 in Mantua, a place she was previously reluctant to visit because of its "dank and foggy reputation," and being surprised to find it warm and sunny. She stood before one of the archways, looking "out on the lake that Virgil immortalized around 40 BC in his pastoral poem the *Georgics* and [imagined] Verdi's *Rigoletto* hurrying along this same passageway on a dark, stormy night only to discover his beloved daughter drowned in this same lake."

Wells notes that on the day she visited, the lake was "calm and blue." This serenity is reflected in the the placid ripples of the lake, as well as in the chiaroscuro of the sun-dappled forest foliage on its opposite shore, as depicted in Wells' luminous paper mosaic. It seems just the sort of day for a lone bird to alight on the sill of the archway. Then again... how does that superstitious old saying go: "When a wild bird flies in the window, death knocks at the door?"

While it can often be counterproductive for a viewer to search for symbols in an artist's work where none were intended — at least not consciously — nothing ever appears accidental or random in the meticulously detailed paper mosaics of Mary Wells. Filled with literary allusions that enhance the composition's own visual poetry, every minute fragment of paper seems precisely placed to serve this extraordinary artist's search for sublimity.

— Ed McCormack

Mary Wells, "Ensemble: Paper Mosaics,"  
Viridian Artists, 548 West 28th Street,  
February 21 - March 10, 2012

## NADA HERMAN

*Continued from page 5*

relatively serene canvas, capturing sailboats on a lake, bracketed between gracefully curving trees, her subtle blending of pinks, yellows and blues suggests echoes of Cezanne.

Yet Nada Herman's most constant inspiration is the memory of painting alongside her grandfather and father as a child, a formative experience that was celebrated last year in a three-generation retrospective at the Manly Art Gallery Museum and continues in the present exhibition by the sole surviving member of that gifted trio.

— Maureen Flynn

## WSAC

*Continued from page 5*

showed one of her distinctive mixed media works, predominantly in red with black outlines and small areas of yellow, called "Let It Be." Although Sonia Barnett's works are abstract, they are invariably allusive in a manner that makes them suggest a great many things.

The entire exhibition was beautifully selected with works that, for all their variety, complemented each other.

— Maureen Flynn



# Desserts

*A Photography Exhibit*

**March 21 - April 8, 2012**

*Reception:*

**March 24, 2:30 - 5:30 pm**

**Broadway Mall Community Center**

Broadway@96St. (NYC) Center Island

Gallery Hours: Wed 6-8pm, Sat/Sun. 12-6 pm

wsacny@wsacny.org 212-316-6024 www.wsacny.org

## NATIONAL ARTS CLUB

*Continued from page 19*

mixed media, some of the most spectacular among them being Anastasia Teper's large semiabstract cityscapes, densely encrusted in the manner of Bruce Connor's funk art assemblage of the 1960s with a variety of objects and images (the latter often of chic urban women clipped from glamour and fashion magazines), then spattered with skeins of tactile paint and wrapped as though by Christo and Jeanne-Claude with tape and string.

Equally baroque in their own manner are the richly layered photo collages of Arlene Egelberg, which appear to draw upon influences as diverse as Kurt Schwitters, Joseph Cornell and Romare Bearden. Egelberg, however, has her own unique and exotic vision, best seen in one untitled image juxtaposing a regal female head sporting what appears to be a rhinestone tiara and a transparent automobile containing silhouetted figures.

Then there is Marilee Cooper, who appears to have the unique ability to imbue the most unlikely detritus — an old stove grate, a clipboard clamp on a paint spattered rag, broken shards of furniture — with unaccustomed visual elegance by virtue of some visual alchemy all her own.

Three other artists put their own unique twists on floral subjects: Rhoda Greif with neo-primitive still life paintings that evoke folk art while displaying a sophisticated grasp of abstract form; Vicki Bloye Gainsourg with precise watercolors that employ the technique of horticultural illustration, albeit toward more poetic ends; and Lisa Hermanson, with atmospheric, chiaroscuro photographs of floral subjects, shimmering ponds and sun-dappled forest scenes — particularly one called "Apparition," its title apparently referring to a white bush that appears incandescent.

In a show where landscapes are scarce, Julia A. Rogge is an excellent choice to represent the genre, with her luminous plein air scenes of marshes, creeks and falls in Pennsylvania. And the subject of cityscapes is transformed by Jacqueline Sferra Rada, a consummate colorist whose recent paintings in her "City Clouds" series are pregnant with mystery. The radiant clouds, often wedged like trapped blimps between severely simplified, earth-colored buildings, seem to symbolize the indignities to which nature is subjected in the urban setting.

Nancy Miller is a buoyant painter of landscapes with a rare Fauvist intensity that amplifies the effects of nature. Then there was Marla Lipkin another astute interpreter of nature whose scenes are distinguished by sense of "touch" that brings every inch of the composition alive with subtle textural strokes that suggest a more serene take on the swirls of van Gogh.

— Byron Coleman



# Black Renaissance 2012

*A Fine Arts Exhibit*

**Feb. 8 - 26, 2012**

*Reception: Feb. 11, 2:30 - 5:30 pm*

Sonia Barnett • Aberto Bassat • Joyce Bolden  
Sandra Brannon • Gail Comes • Herbert Evans  
Debra Holland • William Hunt • Dariel James  
Nate Ladson • Robert N. Scott • Gloria Shepherd • Ida Marx

*Co-curators: Sonia Barnett, Robert Scott*

**Broadway Mall Community Center**

Broadway@96St. (NYC) Center Island

Gallery Hours: Wed 6-8pm, Sat/Sun. 12-6 pm

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# Seasons of the Mind

*A Fine Arts Exhibit*

**Feb. 29 - March 18, 2012**

**Reception: March 3, 2:30 - 5:30 pm**

Curator: Linda Lessner

Richard Carlson • Marvin Gettleman  
Barbara Hughes • Linda Lessner  
Pilar Malley • Marianne McNamara  
Emily Rich • Amy Rosenfeld

**Broadway Mall Community Center**

Broadway@96St. (NYC) Center Island

Gallery Hours: Wed 6-8pm, Sat/Sun. 12-6 pm

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## Saugy's Exquisitely Refined Aesthetic Sensibility

An artist's works on paper are almost always the armature, the foundation, on which her or his aesthetic rests. Certainly this seems true of the Swiss-French artist Catherine de Saugy, even though "Saugy," as she is known internationally, employs a complex process, involving multiple layers of Plexiglas and blocks of Perspex, to create many of the works for which she is most widely celebrated.

It is in her works on paper, however, that we see Saugy's forms stripped down to their bare essence and are able to marvel at her superb draftspersonship. Indeed, her spare graceful forms and the mostly monochromatic palette she employs to realize them remind one of the masters of Asian ink painting. For while, unlike those great scroll painters



*"Sand and Dreams" on paper, 33 x 64 cm*

of ancient China and Japan, Saugy's compositions are adamantly abstract, in contrast to the flattening of form on the "picture plane" that we see in much nonobjective contemporary art, Saugy's forms inhabit a spatially complex realm that suggests "rivers and mountains without end," to borrow a felicitous phrase from Gary Snyder's epic poem about the grandeur of Chinese landscape painting, particularly.

Certainly, the artist herself hints that she is well aware of the Asian inspiration in her work, judging from the title "Samourai," that she has given to one of her most ethereal monochromatic compositions on paper, with its flowing, cloud-like forms — albeit floating amid shapes more astringently geometrical than even the sharpest mountain peaks.

The suggestion of literal landscape space is more overt in "Tempest," where the pull of a low-lying full moon appears to be influencing the flow of the aqueous forms below. Yet here again, the artist reveals her faithfulness to the language of modern abstraction, as well as her metaphysical imagination, by setting the pale blue cloud at the right of the composition, directly opposite the lunar orb, against a sharply defined gray rectangle unlike anything to be found in an actual landscape.

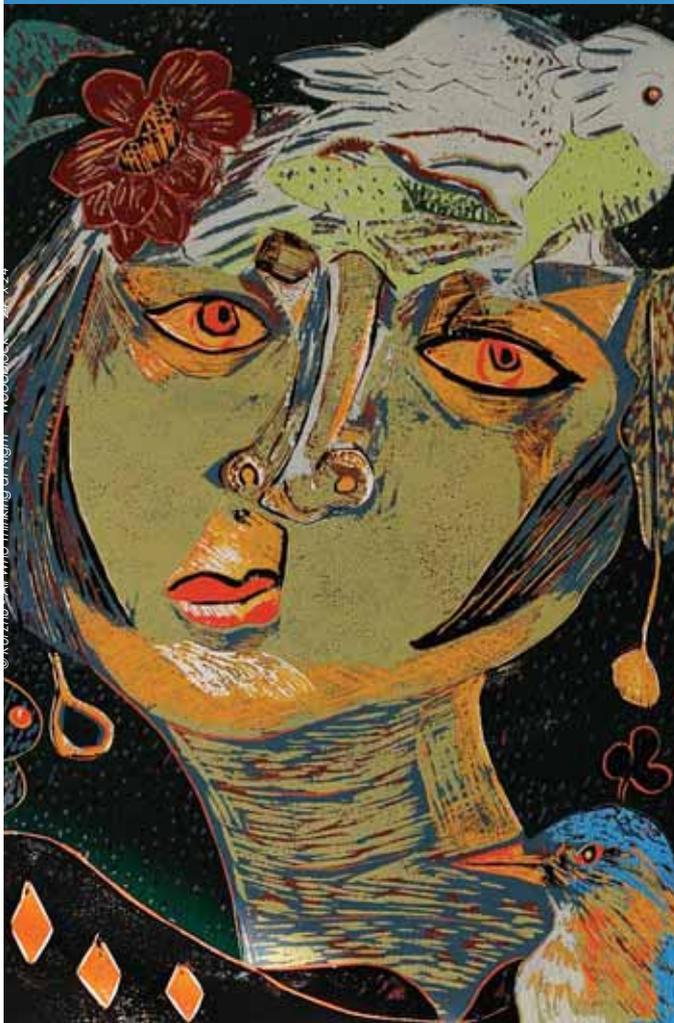
Abstraction, after all, enables Saugy to convey inner states, as well as outer reality. In the sinuously linear composition that she calls "Sand and Dreams," for example, the somewhat distorted forms of musical notation suggest the pleasure of listening to a classical composition by Ravel and daydreaming about an exotic caravan making its way through a desert sandstorm. And in "L' Ange I," another work in which the forms of musical notation figure prominently, a more tumultuous composition evokes the excitement of Beethoven, with staff lines filled with notes swirling in graceful arcs interspersed with freely flowing washes of gray and blue.

It is in these compositions particularly that one sees the influence that music has had on the life of the artist, who as a young woman, studied piano at the Conservatoire de Musique and design at the École des Arts Appliqués in Geneva. Indeed, it was her first art form, before beginning her career as a visual artist in 1992. And one can see its influence, not only in her musically based compositions, but in the rhythmical flow of all of her works on paper, which are among the most spontaneous and direct expressions of the exquisitely refined aesthetic sensibility underlying all of the works of Catherine de Saugy. — Maureen Flynn

Saugy, [www.catherine-de-saugy.com](http://www.catherine-de-saugy.com)

## EAST MEETS WEST

AN EXHIBITION OF FINE ART FROM ASIA



March 6 - March 27, 2012  
Reception: March 8 2012 6-8 pm

Hiroe Dazai / Susumu Hasegawa  
Cauro Hige / Soojin Hong  
Tutomu Hoshitani / Toshio Ishikawa  
Yasuyuki Ito / Noriko Kinouchi  
Takako Kodani / Takashi Kogawa  
Hung Yi / Rui Zhu

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# ROSE SIGAL-IBSEN PAINTINGS & CALLIGRAPHY ON SCROLLS

"IN SUMMER BALLOONS ARE FLYING HIGH IN THE SKY."



**MARCH 15 - APRIL 13, 2012**

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THURSDAY, MARCH 22, 4 - 7 PM

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