February/March 2014 www.galleryandstudiomagazine.com Vol. 16 No. 3 New York

GALLERY&STUDIO

Revolutionizing Ink Art at the Met

pg. 6

Zhang Huan, Chinese, born 1965 Family Tree *2001 Nine chromogenic prints Sheet (each): 21 × 16½ in. (53.3 × 41.9 cm)*
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Mauro Masin | Stephen Von Mason | Brenda Ness-Cooper | Marife Nuñez
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Elemental Realms

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♥ A portion of the proceeds from the sales of work in these exhibitions will be donated to the Children's Heart Foundation, which brings health, hope, and happiness to children impacted by congenital heart defects.

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Anna Mueller | Jim Murphy | STAM | Javier Porras | Gloria Helena Rivera Briceño
Uribe Rivera | Loovan

March 28 - April 17, 2014
Reception: Thursday April 3, 2014 6-8 pm

Sensorial Perspectives

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Gabriele Tamburini | Alejandro Tejeda Mora | Luca Viapiana

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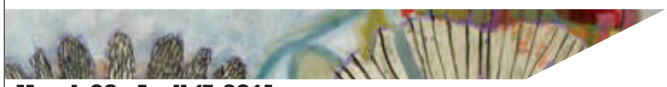

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East Meets West: An Exhibition of Fine Arts from Asia

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Yukihiro Murai | Takuya Sasaki | Ron Yue

Agora Gallery Suite 301
March 28 - April 17, 2014
Reception: Thursday April 3, 2014 6-8 pm

New York City 2014: Synchronicity

Nichole Bodin | Marianne Fernandez | Catherine Manchester
Etsuko Shida | Barbara Palka Winek | Mikhail Zhirmunsky

(from top to bottom)
Mary Dutra *Opposite View II* Mixed Media on Canvas 23.5" x 31.5"
STAM *Clouds over People* Mixed Media on Paper 22" x 27"
Luca Viapiana *Untitled 2* Oil, Acrylic, & Mixed Media on Canvas 47" x 31.5"
Soo Hong *Garden 1* Acrylic & Charcoal on Linen 59" x 39.5"

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Recent works

Ed Brodkin Bounces Back Stronger Than Ever

"Sing the Long Pond Beautiful"

Without invading a very private man's privacy too intrusively (one knew him for several years without learning that he was awarded a Purple Heart for his service in W.W.II), it seems relevant to mention that after going through a long period of personal grief following the death of his long time wife and fellow painter Kiki Brodkin, a sense of renewal has entered into the work of Ed Brodkin that was everywhere evident in his most recent solo exhibition in Chelsea.

This feeling comes across with special vibrancy in Brodkin's panoramic landscape, "Sing the Long Pond Beautiful." The Whitmanesque title alludes to Greenwood Lake, a nine mile long natural body of water bisected by the New York State and New Jersey State border line, once known by the Lenni Lenape native American people of the Delaware Nation as the "long pond."

On encountering this glowing visual interpretation of a site that has great personal meaning, past and present, for the artist, even one not often given to quoting Wordsworth is put in mind of that poet theologian's moving lines: "Though nothing can bring back the hour / Of splendour in the grass, of glory in the flower; We will grieve not, rather find / Strength in what remains behind; In the primal sympathy/ Which having been must ever be; In the soothing thoughts that spring / Out of human suffering; / In the faith that looks through death, / In years that bring the philosophic mind."

Newfound hope and joy in living, tempered by the lingering nuance of melancholy that never completely dissipates in those who have suffered profound loss, permeate this vision in collage and acrylic on Clayboard. For here, Brodkin, a virtuoso at achieving special effects with unusual materials, employs fragments of subtly colored paper to achieve a luminosity akin to stained glass, within beam-like stripes that create an atmospheric sense of light seeping through a somewhat moody morning sky.

Other fragments of paper mosaic down below create the reflective flow of water on the lake. Like the graceful trunks of the three slender trees and their bare branches in the foreground, the hills on the opposite shore are delineated by strong yet precise strokes of red acrylic over yet other intricate patterns of colored paper.

Characteristically of Brodkin's work, the immediacy of a specific sense of place is achieved more vividly through semiabstract means than would be possible within the limitations imposed by traditional realism. Indeed, Brodkin's paintings often engage in a dialogue with art historical sources, as well as with whatever in contemporary art happens to catch his fancy.

"Well Met," a work in acrylics and collage on burlap and wafer board, for example, references Sigmar Polk's use of various patterned fabrics in his paintings. In Brodkin's painting, a linear architectural rendering of the type of massive wooden portal seen in official public meeting halls where civic and political issues are debated dominates the center of the composition. All around it, on a field of homey floral patterns awash in a field of golden ocher, float reverse-silhouettes of ornate chairs from several different periods — as though tossed aside in the aftermath of negotiations in which nothing whatever was settled!

One might say that "Well Met" is Ed Brodkin's biting commentary on the long-winded but slow-moving pace of positive change.

In yet another recent painting, "A Tree's a Tree," Brodkin comments just as trenchantly on political buffoonery. The title is a quote uttered by Ronald Reagan in 1981, when he opposed expansion of Redwood National Park with the inane claim that "Trees cause more pollution than automobiles do." The then governor of California went on to add, "A tree's a tree. How many more do you need to look at?"

Brodkin's vigorous gestural composition suggests something between a tree and the fallout from a nuclear explosion, with a toxic-looking mass of pigment poured above a desolate terrain. The sense of apocalyptic upheaval in the picture makes a mockery of the future U.S. president's ecological dimwittedness.

The wanton disregard for nature endemic to our industrialized landscape is also tackled forcefully by the activist artist in his work in acrylic and collage on waferboard, "Millstone Valley." Here, Brodkin takes a saw to the surface of the composition to evoke an area of the country where the tops of mountains are sheared off for mining, and the wreckage is left to litter the valley. A big bold area of verdant green defaced by tarry black streaks with jaggedly sawed edges is juxtaposed with an equally bold area of visceral red, accented by delicate, weedlike twigs, in a rough, irregularly shaped composition, suggesting the violent rape of the virgin land.

Neo-Cubistic patches of earthy color, along with subdued green and orange hues, and strategically interspersed dark, shadowy areas, make up the formal armature for "Oak Bluffs Home." In this image of an old house with a big wraparound porch, one can sense, almost visualize, the ghosts of the many lives its rooms have sheltered over the generations; the decades of birth and death, joy and sorrow. For the dwelling itself has a phantasmal quality; its dark windows suggest empty eye-sockets, its porch-rails, the bony teeth in the broad grin of a skull.

Although there is almost always a conceptual trigger for Ed Brodkin's paintings — an idea or concern that spurs his creativity — the purely painterly pleasures of color, texture, and form in his work are many. Witness "Warriors," a dynamic composition

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Ed Brodkin, recently seen at Pleiades Gallery, 530 West 25th Street. Brodkin Studio: 551-804-1833 Kandebrodkin@aol.com www.gallerynow.com/brodkin edbrodkin.newyorkartists.net

G&S Highlights

On the Cover: Chinese Ink Art *in the postmodern era.* *–Page 6*

Ed McCormack remembers his lost friend ***Lou Reed.*** *–centerfold*

(To read the latest excerpt of Ed McCormack's memoir, google Lou Reed Ed McCormack Vanity Fair)

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Flora Jacobson's Insouciant Mixed Media Alchemy

The scarcity of exhibition venues for all but the most well known artists in this real estate capital of the world has given birth to all manner of imaginative alternative spaces outside the confines of the usual gallery scene. One recent solo shows in one of the liveliest of such environments was that of Flora Jacobson, at an upscale unisex salon called Alice Hair.

Here, as disco beats thumped from unseen speakers, one went through all sorts of contortions, practically amounting to an aerobic workout, to take notes on Jacobson's small, often intricate, mixed media compositions without colliding with the lithe and amiable fashionistas snipping, combing, and blow-drying their clients in the narrow aisles nearby. Somehow, the youthful, improvisatory energy of Jacobson's gemlike works appeared right at home on the other side of the looking glass at Alice Hair, just as the social realist paintings of her famously iconoclastic teacher at The Art Student League, Robert Cenedella, do in the elegant bohemian and society saloons he still favors over most galleries and museums.

In stylistic terms, Jacobson's pictures occupy a space somewhere between the fanciful miniatures of Paul Klee, the wildly inventive drawings of the great New Yorker draftsman Saul Steinberg, and such graphic masters of Art Nouveau as Gustav Klimt and Egon Schiele. Her kinship with the latter two artists is especially apparent in both "Shades of Brown," a work in pen and watercolor featuring a stately, stylized female figure in an elegant striped dress surrounded by intricate geometric patterns; as well as in "The Power of Thought," a pen, ink, and collage vision of a meditative figure in a cluttered neo-Nabi interior.

Jacobson's contemporary take on the formal vocabulary of Art Nouveau also enlivens her ornate mixed media composition "The Cardinal," where her use of gold and silver pigments also adds an ironic element of Christian iconography to the image, in keeping with its title. Another standout is "The Artist," a work in ink and watercolor in which the composition moves smoothly between the figurative and the abstract, with the female figure, perhaps a symbolic self-portrait, merging with shattered cubist planes in a manner that lends the image a layered ambiguity. Although the specificity of the figure anchors the composition in formal stasis, the surrounding colors and shapes appear to metamorphose before one's gaze from abstract paintings in a studio to an outer hallway where checkered patterns suggest a tiled floor and thick vertical lines evoke the wooden spokes and bannister of a staircase.

Jacobson's Steinbergian kinship can be seen not only in her reliance on a flowing line, interspersed with spare areas of unmodulated color, to carry most of her compositions, but also in her sly visual wit. It comes across with particular piquancy in "Alice at Tully Hall," her profile of a regal dowager in pearls, and a boldly patterned turban and dress ensconced on a sofa in a theater lobby at intermission time. Another tour de force by Jacobson, a little like Kurt Schwitters's "Merz" collages, is "Secretary," in which a simple pen and ink sketch of a young woman dressed for

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Flora Jacobson's "Meditative Thoughts" recently seen at Alice Hair, 1324 Second Avenue.

GALLERY&STUDIO
An International Art Journal
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217 East 85th Street, PMB 228, New York, NY 10028
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Basha Maryanska: A Poetic Solo Show at the Polish Institute of Arts and Sciences

Although the term is employed promiscuously in contemporary critical discourse, precious few painters can be accurately called "visual poets." One was the Chinese-American watercolorist Dong Kingman, who was not only represented in the Museum of Modern Art, The Metropolitan Museum of Art, and numerous other prestigious venues that lent official credibility to his reputation as an innovative modernist, but garnered a popular following in the 1950s to rival that of Norman Rockwell and Andrew Wyeth. Another was Loren MacIver, who made her debut in the exhibition "Fourteen Americans" at the Museum of American Art," which purchased her 1940 oil "Hopscotch," and went on to paint other glowing urban visions and gain a formidable art world following.

Although Kingman and MacIver also painted occasional landscapes and other nature subjects, they both became known primarily as poets of the city, the former for bustling yet oddly melancholy scenes such as "Mott Street," 1953; the latter for atmospheric tours de force like "Taxi," 1952.

Among living artists today, few possess the gift to capture the particular tempo and magic of the city as poetically as Basha Maryanska, in her solo exhibition at the Polish Institute of Arts and Sciences.

"Adagio"

Maryanska earned her MFA at the Academy of Fine Arts at Gdansk in her native Poland and studied at the Ecole de Louvre in Paris before settling in the U.S. and establishing an international reputation as both an artist and a curator. She embraced New York City as an inspiration for many of her paintings, one of which in the present show, presumably painted after a trip abroad, is titled "Welcome Home."

It depicts a view of buildings, ranging from the brownstone tenements at the bottom of the composition to the glass and steel towers striving skyward at the top of the picture space. There is no illusion of traditional perspective; all the structures are arranged on the two dimensions of the picture plane in the modernist manner. Yet, despite the semiabstract style of the painting — indeed, even aided by the composition's strong formal attributes — the magic of a fairy tale realm of spires, steeples, and gables is evoked. It is also enhanced by virtue of the chromatic beauty that the artist creates with a palette ranging from silvery blues to vibrant orange and yellow hues, which capture the Christmas tree twinkle of the scene's many lighted windows in buildings both large and small.

Another city scene in the show, "Energy of Times Square," is a magical view of that much visited thoroughfare that goes far beyond the garish banality to which it is often subjected by artists catering to the tourist trade. With festive colors, fanciful forms, and a composition fully as engaging in purely formal terms as a work by Paul Klee, Maryanska paints "The Great White Way," as it is sometimes known for its glittering array of lights, billboards, and theater facades, predominantly in subtle shades of blue.

The buildings are rendered in a simplified semiabstract manner, as are the towering billboards with ads for "The Lion King," and other commercial theatrical productions, now replaced by lyrical abstractions in bright shades of pink orange and green, depicting gracefully swirling shapes that call to mind paintings by Picasso or de Kooning. Pedestrians, cars, and taxicabs down below are reduced to lively specks of bright primary hues that, for all their swiftly dashed brevity, evoke the swarming energy of the legendary boulevard that has been alternately dubbed "The Center of the Universe" and "The Devil's Playground" and been celebrated by writers ranging from Damon Runyon and A.J. Leibling to Jack Kerouac and Samuel R. Delany, among countless others.

In another manner, Maryanska's "Adagio" is a semiabstract mixed media cityscape that projects a topsy-turvy metaphysical effect with a mirror-like rectangle at the center of the composition. Within it is a luminous lunar orb, shadowed by bare silhouetted tree limbs, and other trees upside down, as though reflected in the waters of an icy nocturnal lake. In fact, the setting seems to be a place like Central Park after a winter storm, with semi-translucent neo-cubistic snow drifts surrounding a body of blue water and the lights of apartment buildings glowing in the middle distance. "Adagio," as its title suggests, is one of this visual poet's most moodily compelling pictures, with its atmosphere at once somber and beautiful.

Yet another unabashedly atmospheric, aesthetically appealing, work — itself a courageous thing to attempt, in a century that all too often glorifies ugliness as a necessary component of "serious" artistic expression — is the much larger acrylic on canvas that the artist calls "Connected." Here the massive rusted gold shore-anchorages that support the cables of a bridge carry the viewer's gaze across a river to the skyline of a city that appears as if carved in crystal. Its towers and spires rise triumphantly, majestically, against a sky that at first glance appears gray and overcast, yet on closer scrutiny, reveals a panoply of subtle pink tonalities.

Maryanska's skills as a consummate colorist also come across in " Blue New York," another large acrylic on canvas, depicting the New York skyline on the horizon in the middle distance, with some buildings shrouded in shadow while the taller towers glow with sunlight. Here again, the city takes on the quality of an enchanted realm, suspended between a spacious sky and the waters of the river, both luminously specked with delicate tones of purple and blue.

Like the aforementioned Dong Kingman and Loren MacIver, Basha Maryanska is a visual poet of the first rank. This exhibition is a must-see for anyone who has all but given up on finding the serenity and spiritual solace of a well-constructed sonnet in the raucous, often violent gladiatorial arena of contemporary painting.

— J. Sanders Eaton

Basha Maryanska, Polish Institute of Arts and Sciences, 208 East 30th St., through February 18, 2014

Lynne Friedman's "Shape Shifting"

In a conversation that I once had with him in Springs, East Hampton, Willem de Kooning stated in no uncertain terms, "All abstract painting comes from landscape."

I might have asked if he meant geometric abstraction, as well as the kind of gestural Abstract Expressionism he was famous for, but didn't want to be so crass as to contradict that by then elderly master, whose wife had told me that not long before, as they watched a film on an airplane, he had said, "This movie stinks, Elaine, let's get out of here!"

That conversation came to mind when Lynne Friedman, a painter once known for realist landscapes invariably informed by a strong sense of underlying abstraction, stated, "My work has evolved into an interest in man made and architectural structures verging on geometric abstraction ."

"Maroc Diptych," 30 x 60, oil on panels

In fact, ever since one first became aware of it over twenty years ago, different aspects of abstraction have been present in Friedman's work, ranging from the energetic echoes of Abstract Expressionism in the gestural force of her waterfall series, through the bold formal treatment of clouds and mountains and heightened hues of her New Mexico landscapes of a few years later. But the change in Friedman's newest solo exhibition "Shape Shifting" is the most radical and dramatic to date.

Painted in oil on canvas and panel and watercolor on Arches, her new compositions forego the bravura brushwork of her earlier landscapes for a meticulously smooth surface, reminiscent of the Precisionism of Charles Sheeler. But rather than the mechanical forms of a newly industrialized America that fascinated the earlier painter, for her present series Friedman finds inspiration in the terra cotta, Moorish tiles, mosaics, and timeless architecture of Spain and Morocco.

"My work is about shape shifting, loosely based upon the Navaho idea of one physical presence magically transforming into another," she says, a metamorphosis which she expresses through her use of tilted grids and overlapping angles that lend her geometric shapes saturated with pulsing color a vertiginous effect.

Friedman's interest in the spirituality of the Native American cultures of New Mexico has also inspired her to go beyond making painting what she calls "a window on the world," in much the same way that Kandinsky and his fellow abstract pioneers were moved by the popularity of Theosophy and other esoteric belief systems popular at the turn of their century to look inward. Yet her new work also possesses all the strong formal attributes (most particularly in relation to the sanctity of the two-dimensional picture plane) by which advanced modern painting came to be defined.

One of the most striking examples is "Maroc Diptych," a large oil on panels with a composition at once intricate in its multiple patterns and emblematic in its overall impact. Equally dynamic in another manner are her somewhat smaller oils such as "Kasbah" and "The Souk," in which more prominent architectural allusions appear. "Williamsburg Elevation," another impressive oil inspired by a less exotic locale, appears to pay tribute to both her Precisionist ancestors and the dark girder-like converging strokes of Franz Kline.

Similarly converging diagonals also animate "Constructiva," an oil on panel in which literally represented rust-colored girders figure prominently, set against a pale blue sky and gray concrete towers. Then there are "Mad Ave II," where starkly simplified sandy-hued old fashioned skyscrapers soar heavenward, shadowed on one side, buttered by sunlight on the other, against the softer contours of cottony clouds. By contrast, in a watercolor titled "Night Life II," shadowy nocturnal atmospheres and city lights dissolve solid forms in skillfully summoned chiaroscuro.

This splendid solo exhibition marks a dramatic but entirely consistent turning point in the career of Lynne Friedman, in that the abstract armature which long supported her pictorial sensibility has simply come to the forefront. One could call it a most auspicious case of shape shifting.

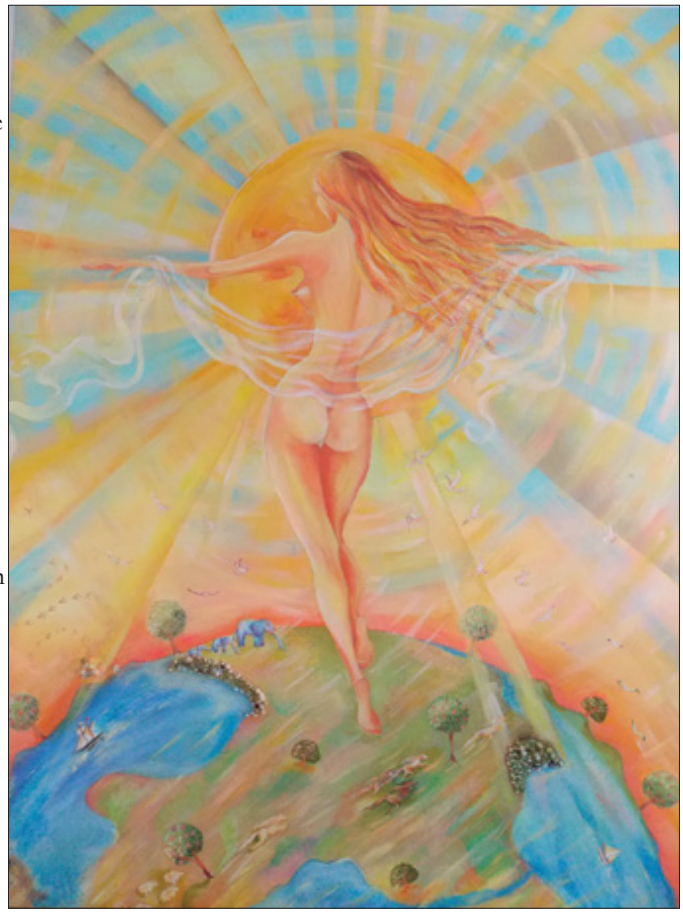
——Ed McCormack

Lynne Friedman, Artifact,
84 Orchard Street, March 5 - 23, 2014.

Teona Titvinidze-Kapon: Visions of a Dreamer

If Botticelli had painted his famous Venus from behind, strolling like one of Blake's naked terrestrial beings over the upper curve on the globe, directly into the beams of a vast solar orb, her tawny waist-length locks streaming over one shoulder to unveil the slender sway of her hips and the shapely swell of her buttocks, she could not have been more radiant than the goddess gracing Teona Titvinidze-Kapon's vibrant painting "Sunrise."

As J. Sanders Eaton noted in a previous review of one of her solo exhibitions at Gelabert Studios Gallery, Titvinidze-Kapon, who was born in the Former Soviet Republic of Georgia and relocated to the United States in 1995, is one of our most gifted contemporary heirs to the Neo-Romantic tradition of Pavel Tchelitchew, whose large canvas "Hide and Seek" was the most popular attraction at the Museum of Modern Art before the publicity explosion attending Abstract Expressionism upstaged figurative painting for decades. The more catholic climate of the postmodern era, however, seems the perfect moment to revive Neo-Romanticism, and there could be no more appropriate artist to spearhead such a movement than this accomplished painter and superb draftsperson, who appears to have a direct pipeline to her subconscious.



"Sunrise"

Perhaps the fantastic untitled drawings displayed, along with her paintings on her website are the most intimate vehicles for familiarizing oneself with Teona Titvinidze-Kapon's complex psyche. One in particular boasts intricate eroto-surreal images worthy of Hieronymus Bosch, delineated with a precision reminiscent of Durer: a creature with a crab-claw for a head and the lower body of a human female with legs splayed to display her sex, next to a voluptuous dominatrix garbed in nothing but sleek leather thigh-boots; another nude woman being penetrated by a swordfish...

These and other anatomical anomalies and varied visions of depravity are scattered, like casualties on a battlefield, across a flat surrealistic terrain. Above it all, looms the large face of a full-lipped Slavic beauty resembling the artist's self-portraits. Her hair falls in waves that hide one half of her face; her forehead is encircled by a serpentine tiara with fangs that appear to sink into her scalp like troubling thoughts, causing tears to flow from her one visible eye, as a single airborne rose with pronounced labial folds floats before her woeful gaze, its long thorned stem defining the horizon line of the entire Boschian dreamscape of her own creation...

By contrast, other, gentler drawings by Titvinidze-Kapon are made up of more lyrical and less disturbing imagery. Usually centering on the winsome young women who appear to serve as the artist's alter-egos and point-of-view surrogates, their compositions juxtapose with cherubs, picturesque castles and other fairy tale architectural structures, broken hearts (of both the Valentine and anatomically correct variety), and elegantly hand scripted phrases ("loss of a loved one" ... "past-life memories...") suggesting fragments of thought jotted into journals, diaries, or sketchbooks, as the case may be here.

If Titvinidze-Kapon's drawings are the subconscious channels from which she derives imagery for her paintings, her more benign graphic excursions are most likely the ones that inspire compositions such as "Sunrise," and "Girls Picking Apples," an idyllic, sunny scene set in a rustic orchard, where five willowy young women in long gaily colored dresses are seen filling large, overflowing baskets with fruit from abundantly blooming trees. Similarly upbeat is another painting in which Chagall-like lovers embrace on a bridge above a picturesque little town, where quaint steeples and weather vanes tilt at topsy turvy angles like animated visions from an innocent young girl's daydreams.

By contras other paintings by Titvinidze-Kapon take a slightly more jaundiced view of romantic commitment, as seen in another composition called "Marriage," featuring a nude young couple marooned on an island of land afloat on thin air. Here is a stark image of Eden uprooted and torn asunder, the limbs of the tree now bare of leaves or fruit, with ghostly wedding garments aswirl instead on clothes hangers. As various phantasmal winged beings and windblown white veils encircle the tree, this latter-day Adam forlornly embraces its lower trunk, while Eve perches aloof and unapproachable on one of its upper branches in a striking image of estrangement.

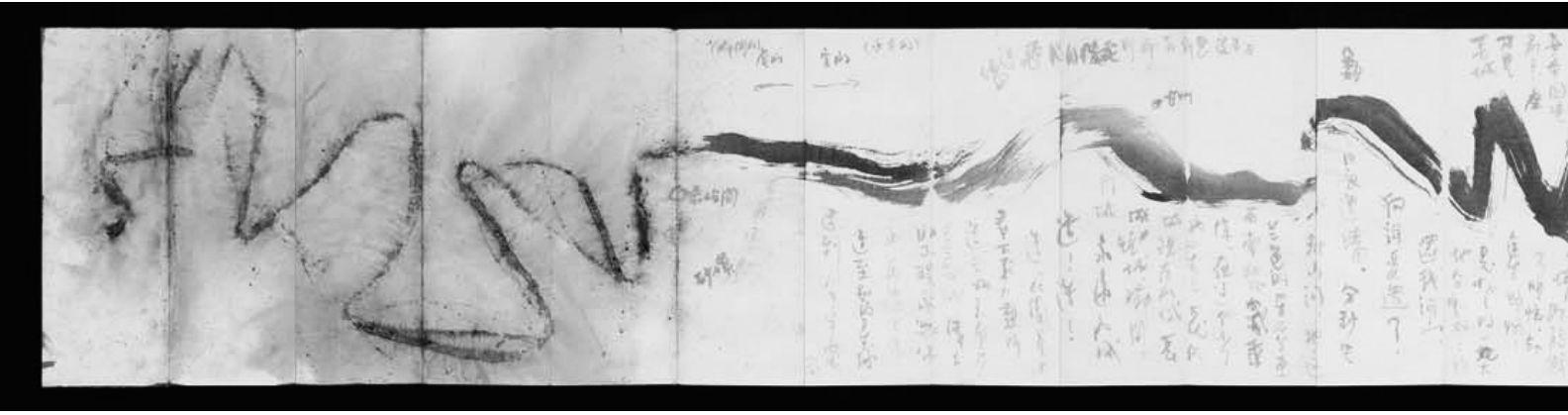
If pluralism is the defining characteristic of the postmodern era, then surely Titvinidze-Kapon must be one of its leading practitioners, given her gift for synthesizing a wide range of art historical references and inspirations within the context of her own highly personal aesthetic agenda. Along with aspects of Neo-Romanticism, Surrealism, and Symbolism, facets of Art Nouveau and Pointillism enter into some of her paintings. In "Girl on Horse," for example, a woman leading a tame white pony and the little girl astride its back merge with the sinuous swirls and ornate patterns, reminiscent of Gustav Klimt's Art Nouveau compositions, while the fields behind them come alive with sparkling sequins of Pointillist sunlight.

Elements of both Art Nouveau fluidity and Symbolism akin to that of Paul Ransom and Maurice Denis also enliven Titvinidze-Kapon's painting simply titled "Life," in which the graceful figures of several slender female nudes whirl like breeze-leaves, the tawny tones of their hair and bodies harmonizing with the palette of predominantly autumnal hues.

Along with folkloric elements particular to her origins in Georgia, all of the qualities that distinguish Teona Titvinidze-Kapon as a consummate postmodern Neo-Romantic painter come together in "Dreaming," a veritable cornucopia of a composition, its very title defining the essential essence of her aesthetic.

— Maurice Taplinger

To see more works by Teona Titvinidze-Kapon go to her website: artbyteona.com



Ink Art: Past as Present in Contemporary China at The Met

by Ed McCormack

Several years ago in a coffee shop in midtown, I was going on about my newfound enthusiasm for Chinese ink painting to the New York expressionist painter Peter Shwarzburg, when he admitted, "It's beautiful in its own way, but to be perfectly truthful, I don't understand the aesthetic."

If Peter were still alive today, I would urge him to see the exhibition "Ink Art: Past as Present in Contemporary China," at the Metropolitan Museum of Art. For this enlightening survey hammers the final nail into Kipling's racist axiom "East is East and West is West, and never the twain shall meet." It does so by featuring artists who retain the distinguishing characteristics, technique, and aesthetic of classical Chinese painting while incorporating elements of the most progressive Western art as well.

Of course, we've seen meetings of those twains once widely believed to be irreconcilable for some time now, in the many cross-cultural influences that have occurred over the past few decades between Eastern and Western artists. In fact, they began way back when the Impressionists and Post-Impressionists started looking at Japanese prints and Asian artists discovered oil paints. And they picked up speed when the Abstract Expressionists — particularly Franz Kline in his black and white period — went gaga over the splashy spontaneity of Zen literati painting, although Kline had to simulate it by enlarging and tracing small sketches with the help of an opaque projector!

"Ink Art," however, is not only the first survey of contemporary Chinese art at the Met, but the first that focuses on new approaches to the ancient art of ink painting. Fittingly, it has been mounted in the museum's Galleries for Chinese Painting and Calligraphy, which have heretofore been reserved for shows of classical scroll painting over several centuries and dynasties.

Some of the ink paintings, created by various artists from 1980 to the present, look very much at home in these muted rooms, where many works are exhibited under glass in vitrines to protect them from the harsh light and temperature conditions that can fade or deteriorate works in ink on silk or delicate rice paper. Scrutinizing them more closely, however, one discovers subject matter that departs radically from the traditional landscape, bird, and floral themes outlined in the Mustard Seed Manual of Chinese Painting, first printed in the 17th century.

Some of the most striking departures are in figure painting, aside from court portraits and the like, never before a significant feature of Chinese painting. When figures appeared, they were little more than minute inkblots, all but lost in the surrounding grandeur of nature. Finally, the human image is brought up close, given an almost unprecedented prominence. Rather than depicting solitary travelers dwarfed by mountainous vistas, or scholars sipping tea in remote pavilions in the old manner, Li Xiaoxuan evokes the bustling, funky, city streets of modern China. In his 1999 work in ink and light color on paper ranging over five panels, "Stocks! Stocks!" Li summons up a huge cast of contemporary types in a manner akin to the late Chinese-American painter Martin Wong's oils of the East Village.

Huang Yihan endeavors to usurp what he calls the "old geezers" of the medium with images of sleek, trendy young people who could have stepped out of a Japanese manga comic book. In Huang's composition in ink and color on paper, "The Cartoon Generation: Very Charming (2002)," teenagers dressed in Western fashions with punky hairstyles crowd to the foreground of the picture, posing, gesturing and waving as though vying to get on camera at some youth culture TV broadcast.

Then there is Liu Jin'an, who creates figure paintings in ink and color with more resemblance to German Expressionism than traditional Chinese painting with their dynamic anatomical distortion, strong lines, and stark shadows.

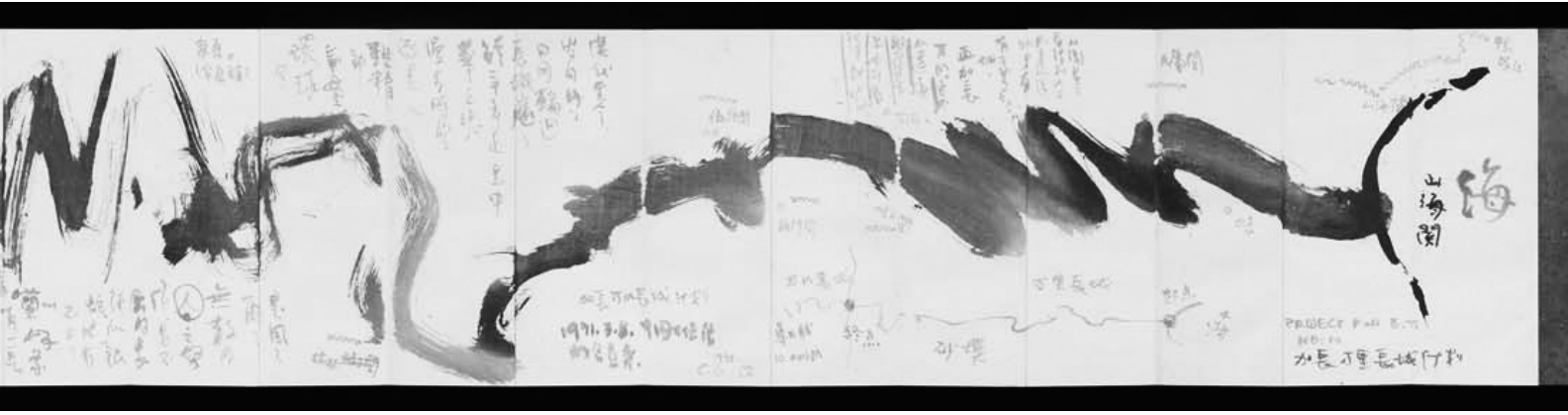
The more ubiquitous Asian genre of landscape also undergoes its own revolution in the pictures of Duan Jianyu, executed in ink on ordinary industrial cardboard rather than the usual rice paper. The exquisite visual and tactile tension in Duan's "Beautiful Dream" series (1970), owes to the contrast between her delicately silhouetted nature imagery and the crude, corrugated, often oddly-shaped, flattened packing boxes, subtly embossed with the imprint of the bottles or other products they once held. Implicit in her work is a wry criticism of the glut of detritus and pollution resulting from the ever-increasing industrialization of China's once pastoral rural provinces.

At the opposite extreme scale-wise, Ren Jian's monumental five-panel work in ink on polyester "Primeval Chaos" (1987-88) subjects traditional Chinese landscape motifs, enlarged far beyond the scale of a traditional handscroll, to an apocalypse of abstraction, in which natural elements and forms undergo an unearthly mutation, taking on an intricate, fantastic ornateness reminiscent of "psychedelic" paintings and posters of the 1960s.

Although he didn't use an opaque projector as Franz Kline did, another artist of the same generation, Liu Dan, used the Western method of enlargement, employed since the Renaissance, to square off a small pencil sketch for his "Ink Handscroll" (1990). Explaining his departure from the spontaneous techniques of classical Chinese painting to create this semiabstract landscape over fifty-eight feet long (a size, despite its title, that only a giant could unwind by hand!), Liu says, "First I must prepare the stage, then I can dance on it."

Created in the wake of the Tiananmen Square tragedy, "Ink Handscroll" presents a rolling vortex of a composition showing no signs of human life, suggesting the possible eventual consequences of the sort of "scorched earth" policy of military action used by the country's leaders to put down the pro democracy demonstrations in the square.

One can argue that the qualities of abstraction have always been present in Chinese art, with its absence of Western perspective and its concentration, even in its most detailed representation of specific subjects, on the quality of line as a discrete entity. However, in the 1980s, a more deliberate effort was, among certain painters, to challenge Western modernism by developing modes of abstraction incorporating aspects of Chinese ink painting and calligraphy.



Cai Guo-Qiang, Chinese, born 1957 **Project to Extend the Great Wall of China by 10,000 Meters: Project for Extraterrestrials No. 10** ***1990 Accordion album of twenty-four leaves; ink and gunpowder burn marks on paper Each leaf: 13¼ x 4¾ in. (33.7 x 12 cm) Lent by a private collection Photo: courtesy of The Metropolitan Museum of Art***

Gu Wenda, a former oil painter in the Western manner, started experimenting with new methods of ink application, such as "splashing," "washing," and "flushing," along with brushwork. Some of Gu's best known pieces from that period are his "Mythos of Lost Dynasties Series," juxtaposing "pseudo characters, recontexualized ideographs that are further subverted by being 'faked, modified, miswritten, dripped,' with areas of landscape imagery and abstract forms created with washes of diluted ink. Gu also erased all distinctions between ink painting, installation, performance, and conceptual art in works such as his "Book from the Sky," a response to the persecution of his intellectual parents during the Maoist era Cultural Revolution. Its centerpiece is a book of invented characters, none of which are decipherable, commenting on the trauma of growing up during an era in which "doctrine, news, and history were continually being rewritten and texts could no longer be trusted."

Sun Xun integrates the ages-old art form of ink painting with video art in works such as Sun's "Some Actions Which Haven't Been Defined Yet in the Revolution," which chronicles in surreal terms the life of a typical Chinese worker, starting off with a ringing alarm clock and climaxing with a bomb blast. The animation is close in technique to the films of the South African graphic artist William Kentridge, but are given a more fluid manner by Sun's use of ink rather, than charcoal, to create the animation drawings.

Wang Dongling, Chinese, born 1945 **Being Open and Empty** ***2005 Hanging scroll; ink on paper Image: 87¼ x 57 in. (221.6 × 144.8 cm) The Metropolitan Museum of Art, Gift of the artist, 2013 Photo: courtesy of The Metropolitan Museum of Art***

Other artists combine calligraphy with photography and "the human canvas," as Huang Yan refers to his own torso, onto which he enlists his wife and fellow artist Zhang Tiemei to paint detailed classical Chinese landscapes, before being photographed to suggest that "the Chinese everyman....cannot be separated from his cultural heritage, which, like his racial identity, is as indelible as a tattoo."

The human canvas for the performance artist Zhang Huan is his own face. After moving to the United States, his English limited, unable to define himself as an individual in the face of racial stereotyping, he staged a performance called "Family Tree," in which Chinese characters conveying biographical information were written on his skin. The performance is documented in the present exhibition with a grid of nine large chromogenic photos in which the ink gradually blackens his entire face and bald head.

Similarly, this inclusive survey at The Met thoroughly covers recent developments in Chinese ink art and does away with stereotypes. Happily, however, here saturation clarifies, rather than obscures, the subject at hand.

The Metropolitan Museum of Art, 1000 Fifth Avenue, through April 6, 2014

WSAC
West Side Arts Coalition 1979

Potluck

A photography exhibit

Curated by Carolyn Reus

Jan. 22 - Feb. 9, 2014

Opening reception: **Jan. 25, 2014, 2:30 pm- 5:30 pm**

Closing reception: **Feb. 9, 2014, 2:30- 5:30 pm**

Daniel Boyer • Silvia Soares Boyer • Arthur Cajigas • Celia Cruzado
Ronald Howe • J.D. Morrison • Jean Prytyskacz • David Reibman
Carolyn Reus • Harold Serban • George Strauss

Broadway Mall Community Center
Broadway@96 St. (NYC) Center Island
Gallery Hours: Wed 6-8pm, Sat/Sun. 12-6 pm
wsacny@wsacny.org 212-316-6024 www.wsacny.org

WSAC
West Side Arts Coalition 1979

EVERYWHERE

A photography exhibit

Curated by Jack Cesareo

March 5 - March 23, 2014

Opening reception:
March 8, 2014, 2:30 pm- 5:30 pm

Closing reception:
March 23, 2:30- 5:30 pm

Broadway Mall Community Center
Broadway@96 St. (NYC) Center Island
Gallery Hours: Wed 6-8pm, Sat/Sun. 12-6 pm
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Igor Kalinauskas: A Russian Artistic Cosmonaut Takes Off

In his iconoclastic essay "Asphysixiating Culture," the French painter Jean Dubuffet laments the influence of culture on contemporary art, in favor of "outsider art," or to use his own term, "Art Brut": the work of naive, unschooled artists or mental patients.

Igor Kalinauskas, the subject of a superb recent exhibition at Caelum Gallery in Chelsea, is neither naive or unschooled; nor is he a mental patient. Quite the contrary, he is a renowned Russian psychologist specializing in studying the creative process as well as a business coach, musician, theatrical director, lecturer, and author of thirty books published in several different languages. But when, at a relatively advanced age he took up painting in 1996, as a direct result of his working with visual and other kinds of artists in his clinical practice, he decided to educate himself rather than undergoing formal study. After taking a couple of lessons in classical painting from "one of the best teachers from St. Petersburg," he arrived independently at the same conclusion as Dubuffet: that further study could only serve to asphyixiate his own creative process.

Obviously, he was correct; for proceeding on his own, following his intuitive aesthetic instincts, he has emerged in a mere few years as a formidable figure in the international art scene. Among his best known projects was a newsmaking exhibition of his series of oils "The Last Supper: Spirit, Flesh, Blood," at the Leonardo Da Vinci National Science & Technology Museum, in Milan, Italy, in 2006. He also presented a multimedia project, in collaboration with Bond magazine, at the high-profile Saachi Gallery in London; and had exhibitions in similarly esteemed venues in Moscow, Lithuania, St Petersburg, Bratislava, Ukraine, and Zurich, Switzerland, where he debuted his "Wandering Stars" series of paintings at ArtConcept Gallery. (The latter series that highlighted his solo exhibition in Chelsea.)

If Igor Kalinauskas learned anything from his brief formal study of art, it was that what he calls "good loneliness," or creative solitude in the studio, could not only enhance artistic progress, but put the artist in touch with spiritual resources and energies hidden deep inside his inner self.

This concept seems to manifest visually in the oil on canvas "Alone," 2001, one of Kalinauskas' early landscapes, in which the branches and verdant leaves of a solitary tree, rising out of closely packed gray rocks, suggesting a quarry interrupted on both sides by a winding road, appear to bend in the same direction as a single cloud drifting in the blue sky above. Painted in a straightforward descriptive manner akin to that of Rene Magritte, but sans that famous Belgian surrealist's manipulation of obvious incongruities, Kalinauskas' "Alone" appears strikingly symbolic of creative transcendence.

Portraiture is another area in which Kalinauskas makes a rich contribution to contemporary painting. Superficially, his portraits, with their areas of flat, unmodulated color devoid of traditional modeling or shadow, as well as the impassive expressions of his sitters, can resemble those of Alex Katz. But where Katz is influenced by the two-dimensional imagery of Pop painting and the airbrushed slickness of advertising photography, Kalinauskas looks to the almost primitive simplicity of Russian icons for inspiration. In other words, Katz seeks a deliberate "emptiness," in its own way not unlike Warhol's emotionless vacuums, Kalinauskas endeavors to make his simplified likenesses mirror his subjects' souls, the very "energy core" of their individual personalities. Thus, while at first glance, with her off-white veil half covering her red hair, as she bathes the viewer in her clear blue gaze, "Barbara's Portrait" may resemble a Byzantine painting of a saint, yet prolonged contemplation of the picture reveals the sophisticated complexity of a contemporary woman.

The same goes for the two male subjects titled, respectvely, "Martin's Portrait" and "Roman's Portrait," which could resemble 2nd century Egyptian funeral portraits in the ancient wax-based medium of encaustic. But look closely at Martin, with his close cropped Jean Genet haircut, five o'clock shadow, and eyes that veer sideways to avoid meeting those of the viewer; Roman with his black hair curling down over his ears, his pointed beard and mustache surrounding his triangular face and full red lips, and large eyes that bore right through those of the onlooker; and notice, once again, subtle nuances of human character that belie the artist's simplicity of technique.

Preparing to describe another painting titled "The Self-Portrait," one previous reviewer quoted Bunin: "The soul of another is a dark place, our own is a much darker one." But, faced with the bearded, bearish yet genial, visage of Kalinauskas, as he sees himself, the same writer concluded: "The light blue eyes of the author are wide open to the world, the orange (not golden!—it could imply a shade of sainthood) background frames the figure without suppressing the viewer. As if the artist is looking out of the window into the street, towards the world, the sun and people."

Kalinauskas called his first abstraction, painted in 1999 in oil on cardboard (as though scrimping on materials for fear of wasting a good canvas on an experiment that could possibly meet with abject failure!) "Window To The Other World." But this

simple pairing of two embryonic shapes — one an oval resembling a blue eggplant, the other a vibrant ribbon of yellow that disappears off the edge of the composition, both floating quite near each other at the top of the picture space in a visceral red environment that could suggest the interior of the womb — did indeed open a new world of discovery for the artist.

Numerous and varied abstract works followed, each one enabling Kalinauskas to dig deeper into ideas and emotions that cannot be described in words, to express his inner reality more vividly, more deeply. The earliest of these works are possessed of an engaging "crudity," as if this autodidactic but intuitively brilliant neophyte were inventing nonobjective painting all over again, with a freshness of vision that eludes more self-consciously "sophisticated" artists. Indeed, these vibrant paintings possess an intrepidness of vision comparable to that other self-taught visionary modernist, the Texas fisherman Forrest Bess.

The circular shapes that dominate the "Wandering Stars" series appear in more tentative form as gestural linear swirls in single earlier abstractions such as "Soul," solidify here into full circles and gain a more precise presence without losing their ethereal quality. Indeed, their numinous effect is now enhanced by the artist's growing ability to evoke a sense of light through a newly developed chromatic refinement.

Placed at the center of the canvas within perfectly square formats that create a sense of unlimited space, and set against a complementary background hue, each cosmically suggestive floating orb is surrounded by a radiant linear nimbus that bathes it in its own unique aura. The "Wandering Stars" series appears to be a culmination of all that has come before in the already impressive oeuvre of Igor Kalinauskas, whose, artistic trajectory itself suggests a stellar journey. — Byron Coleman

Igor Kalinauskas, recently seen at Caelum Gallery, 526 West 26th Street

"Awakening" to the Work of Seven Simpatico Painters

In the recent group exhibition, "Awakening," curated by participating painter Basha Maryanska, a group of diverse talents interpreted an intriguing theme. And given that major art museums have in recent years been featuring fashion exhibitions, it doesn't seem at all incongruous that one of the artists with work on view was the costume designer Eva Lachur — particularly since Lachur, is also a fine painter.

Born in Katowice, Poland, the daughter of the renowned artist Zdzislaw Lachur, she started drawing and painting at an early age, and as a young woman studied art with Boleslaw Stawinski, cofounder of the "Krakow Group" of the 1930s. Since moving to the United States with her family in 1980s and becoming a U.S. citizen, she has become known as a costume designer, singled out by theater critics for her ability to capture the historical period of each play she dresses, even while interpreting its fashions innovatively.

On view in the gallery, along with some of her paintings, were photographs of Lachur's designs for "The Twelfth Night," "As You Like It," and "Hamlet," as well as actual costumes displayed on clothing mannequins. All of her work was quite beautiful, but of particular interest to those like myself, who can claim no special knowledge of period fashions, were Eva Lachur's paintings, which were especially impressive for their meticulous technique, intricate compositions, and her ability — akin to that of the American painter Charles Burchfield — to transform natural subjects into fantastically personalized visions.

Such are his skills as a realist landscape painter that Joseph Palmerio, born in Philadelphia but a resident of Sarasota, Florida, for the past two decades, was chosen in 2003 as the Everglades National Park Artist in Residence. He has also been commissioned to paint murals in several public venues, including the Orlando Airport.

In "Awakening," however, Palmerio showed a more intimate aspect of his work: abstract and semiabstract oils with vigorous, muscular, gestural compositions derived from the forms, colors, and rhythms of nature. His lyrical floral composition, "Sleeping Beauty," for example, could be easily mistaken from a distance for an Abstract Expressionist painting. But on closer perusal, quite specific plant imagery emerges from its bravura brushstrokes, as in the much larger oil he calls "Plantain Rhythm." Two of Palmierio's most vibrantly colorful works, are the large oils on linen "Flutterfly," and "Cataclysmic Burst," both taking the brilliantly sunny hues of butterflies as springboards for fanciful compositions worthy of Odilon Redon.

Veryal Zimmerman, born to a Polish mother and a father stationed in Germany with the U.S. military, has evolved her own way of combining aspects of abstraction with elements of allusiveness. Although paintings such as her "Awakening" and "Meditation View from Inside III" appear drawn from natural phenomena, they are actually derived from inner visions. The former oil combines filmy white swirls interspersed with vaguely figurative phantom forms in more fiery hues that could conjure up angels moving faster than the speed of light. The latter is a vortex-like composition suggesting windblown smoke. But both apparently allude to states of mind driven by strong emotions, rather than a physical sense of place.

Much darker in mood and color is a tall vertical oil called: "No Where." Here the viewer experiences a plummeting sensation, like falling off a deep brown cliff into frothing eddies of water below. Indeed, while "No Where" is one of Veryal Zimmerman's most naturally allusive compositions, (as suggested in the description above), it is also among her most emotional, and therefore one of her most abstract, as her telling title takes pains to express.

Kathryn Hart, on the other hand, transforms pictorial space with rugged mixed media compositions, such as "Veiled Attempt." This large work in burlap, wood and objects, like most of Hart's compositions, merges painting and sculpture with often unsettling subject matter in a manner that caused one viewer to comment, "She's like a more abstract Francis Bacon."

An astute insight; for Hart's compositions, if not as figuratively explicit in their imagery — or anywhere near as blatantly grotesque — as Bacon's, are similarly transgressive, with odd protrusions, such as the empty paint-smeared frame of canvas stretchers in "Veiled Attempt," jutting from the main body of the piece like bones through flesh.

"Midnight Diaries," a mixed media work on wood panel, in a predominantly black, white, and red palette, comes across as viscerally as one of Hannibal Lechter's nightmares. With its thick clots of tar-black pigment, splashes of white dripping over areas of red, and coils of wire springing from its craggy surface like exposed veins, it has a Grand Guignol violence, perhaps influenced by the fact that Hart grew up the daughter of a plastic surgeon who occasionally allowed her to watch his performances in the operating theater. In Hart's "Dialogue with a Madwoman," a cloth form resembling a dead chicken painted black and suspended upside down by its feet appears tethered like a spider to its web to a large open frame by a maze of knotted wire and thread. Casting its shadow eerily on the gallery wall, like all of Kathryn Hart's recent work this is strong stuff, not for the squeamish.

By contrast, in artist-curator Basha Maryanska's "Walking Shadows Series," the painter approaches human figures as ethereal manifestations of the soul. Like atmospheric specters from the afterlife, two of these fully formed but faceless beings, enveloped in luminous auras of yellow and purple, confront the viewer in a large mixed media painting called "Walking Shadows." In another work by Maryanska, "Walking Shadows II," four or five heads, also featureless, merge in the blue sky above what appears to be a phosphorescently glowing green, yellow, and orange hilltop. Around them staccato white dashes sparkle like fireworks in a nocturnal sky.

Then there is "Walking Shadows III," in which six full-length figures of various sizes and hues, suggesting a clique of kids of different ages in an urban playground, are seen standing in a row. Whether the artist intended this allusion or not, one is reminded by the eerie quality of the image of all the innocent youngsters in recent years who perished in big city drive-by gang shootings.

Maryanska is a versatile artist, capable of working in several techniques and manners, each suitable to the subject at hand. Here, she employs a swift expressionistic technique that enhances the ethereal nature of the figures. Are they indeed messengers from another reality?

"Where do these images come from?" the artist replies to such questions. "I have no idea. It comes from within." Indeed, both Maryanska's paintings and her creative approach to curating an exhibition appear to emanate from the same intuitive source.

One of her main criteria seems to be selecting artist with fertile imaginations and inexhaustible creative resources such as one sees in the work of the Abstract Expressionist painter Elaine Weiner-Reed. Although based in Annapolis, Maryland, Weiner-Reed works in the tradition of New York School "action painters" like Willem de Kooning and Grace Hartigan, applying her vigorous brushwork to nonobjective and figurative compositions with equal spontaneity and zest. Like Hartigan's famous painting "Delancey Street Brides," Weiner-Reed's "Red, Black, and Blond" achieves a successful synthesis of both, with a bold image of a voluptuous woman in a shoulderless red top and black slacks evoked in flowing, succulent strokes. Although the figures are not defined and her surroundings are indicated in a broad undetailed manner, the picture appears to be a self-portrait, depicting the artist in her studio, the manner in which she merges with her surroundings, suggesting her passionate engagement with her vocation. Here, Weiner-Reed's ability to suggest so much within the self-imposed limitations of a loose

Continued on page 23

"Awakening," recently seen at New Century Artists Gallery, 530 West 25th Street.

The French Connection: From Paris to New York

Two groups of French artists visiting from two leading Paris galleries recently brought a new infusion of vital energy to the New York art scene when they were featured at Montserrat Contemporary Art Gallery in Chelsea.

From Art You Galerie, selected by its chic, black leather clad Directrice Laurence Debois, came Julie Wallois, who puts the supple touch of the human hand back into Pop portraiture. In Wallois' painting, "Surface," a huge glamour girl face with the perfect features of a supermodel fills the entire canvas. A cigarette dangles from her glossy full lips, its smoke curling around one of her long-lashed, silvery-shadowed eyes like a baroque monocle. Superimposed over the face of this seductive billboard icon are stenciled words and phrases in many subtle pastel hues, little semiotic teasers such as "Love" and "Mind your own business," among others, sending out mixed signals thoroughly in keeping with the imperious attitude of this cool goddess.

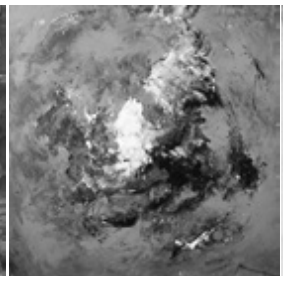
Quite aside from its provocative subject matter Wallois's picture possesses a painterly sensuality that calls to mind the vital period of "Handpainted Pop," before Andy Warhol discovered the silkscreen process. Indeed, the velvety sumptuousness of Julie Wallois' style tempts one to agree, however belatedly, with Walter Benjamin's lament about how art began to lose its "aura," in the age of mechanical reproduction.

The elusive quality of "touch" is also a salient feature in the work of Nadine Chantreau, whose mixed media composition "Art Urbain," combines a host of diverse photographic imagery with vigorous painterly panache. Chantreau has a particularly sophisticated sense of color and texture, perhaps derived from her longtime love of Monet, her favorite Impressionist, as well as Matisse. Her appreciation for these earlier masters has taught her a certain refinement, a luscious finesse, which she merges with an Art Brut effect; an almost graffiti-like, roughness enhanced by her frequent use of corrugated cardboard collage interjections and other rugged additions to the variously painted surface.

But although Chantreau is self-taught, she is by no means primitive (unless one would also apply that same term to the style of Jean-Michel Basquiat, with whom she shares a certain rough elegance.). For only an accomplished artist could consistently summon up such a constantly engaging visual and tactile feast of colors, images, and painterly panache. There is a sense of process in her work, which lends it an irresistible immediacy. Her impressive variety of vigorous marks and brushstrokes, and deliberate drips, envelope her found photographic imagery in a web-like maze that fastens them to the picture plane. Often the photographic elements are derived from pinups and erotic magazines.


Laurence Debois


Julie Wallois


Roseline Al Oumami


MYP

Alternately, Nadine Chantreau outlines the voluptuous nude bodies with her brush or uses it in a more layered manner to edit or partially obscure them, teasing the viewer's eye with a kind of "hide and seek" effect, to which she wryly alludes by adding two photo-images of eyes to the intricate composition of "Art Urbain."

Another Art You painter, known only by the initials Myp, impressed one with a powerful work in muted pinks and grays, accented with small areas of green. Entitled "Le Cri." It depicts the face of a bald man, his face contorted, as if in a scream, his mouth agape, his white teeth showing, his eyes screwed shut, as if in pain. This emotionally intense image is set afloat in the center of a bare white expanse, amid areas of shadow created with dissolved, liquified gray pigment that drips in long rivulets down to the bottom edge of the composition. The colors recall Giacometti, while the realism of the face, seems more akin to Lucien Freud — particularly that British painter's portraits of performance artist Leigh Bowery.

Myp, however is a highly singular talent, for just this ability to tread a fine line between literal representation and expressive distortion — all the while maintaining a fluidity that lends the image a unique energy.

Also represented by ArtYou were a dynamic geometric abstraction "Abyssales," by Nellissa; "Captive," an emotionally wrenching monochromatic acrylic of a melancholy face behind barbed wire by Gedeon; "Portrait Rouge," a sublimely simplified large-scale close-up of a face by Joelle Troussier; "Triptique Aqua no, 3," a dazzling acrylic of a fanciful undersea scene in jewel-like colors by Sandrine Jouas; "Des Ténèbres à la Lumière," a darkly atmospheric arboreal landscape at dusk by Catherine Etraves-Le Heran; a vibrant three-panel floral explosion titled "Les Coquelicots Triptyque" by Yannick Bernard whose work was in the recent show at Montserrat Contemporary Art; four identical sculptures of a grinning face resembling a 3-D caricatures of U.S. President Obama in various candy-colors by Rachel whose work was also seen in the recent exhibition at Monserrat Contemporary Art; and "Silent," a winsome portrait of a shaggy blond by Kaki (mononyms appear to be "in" among French artists this season!); "Un Monde," a vigorous gestural abstraction in which "Tachisme," the Gallic cousin of Abstract Expressionism is brilliantly updated for the postmodern era by Roseline Al Oumami whose work appeared in the recent Montserrat exhibition; Chris Christopher's powerful "New Image" composition, "Sans Titre," depicting a stylized battle between two horned beasts in a technique as intricately dotted as Australian Aboriginal folk art; and Pauline Voge's abstract photo numerique composition "Déferlante," into which the imaginative (or simply observant) viewer can Rorschach fragmented details of nude human anatomy.

* * *

From Galleries Artitude, the second French venue included in the survey at Montserrat in Chelsea, the passionate collector and gallerist Jean Pierre Lorriaux presented several of his prize exhibitors. One of the most prominent was the painter and engraver J. Dann, who is also a writer, a poet, and musician in the true Renaissance tradition. An alumna of conservatories in Strasbourg and Paris, Dann's paintings and prints have been described by certain critics as a "lyrical abstractions." It would probably be more appropriate, however, to describe them as "baroque abstractions," given the diverse rang of formal vocabularies this artist's work embraces. Just as in art of the past the term "baroque" encompassed styles ranging from the restrained stillness of Poussin and Vermeer at one end of the spectrum to the emotional intensity and the animated forms of Caravagio and Rubens at the other, in the case of this gifted contemporary painter, it applies to the variety of qualities to be found within a single composition.

For in contrast to the stifled sameness in the work of many other abstract artists, who in their eagerness to evolve a so-called "signature style," limit themselves to repetitive forms, Dann appears able to generate a variety of approaches in each painting or engraving, even when restricting the palette to a brilliant orange hue, set against a dense black background. The most obvious association is with a nocturnal bonfire burning against the blackness of a moonless night sky in which not even a solitary star can be seen. For often the forms seem to leap like windblown flames. However, in other paintings the edges of Dann's shapes

take on a serrated sharpness, as in the blades of certain ancient Asian or Persian weaponry. Or else they may become liquidic in the manner of volcano lava, with curves and drips flowing freely and casting off swirling fragments. In these slightly more dispersed compositions there is an intriguing contrast between the meticulous quality of so-called "hard-edged abstraction and spontaneity which can only be compared to the Pop painter Roy Lichtenstein's carefully calculated and precise renderings of Abstract Expressionist brushstrokes. (One could also liken the sensuality in this aspect of Dann's oeuvre to the generous curves of the fleshy figures in the baroque paintings of the aforementioned Rubens.

Given the overall fluidity of this modern French painter's forms it seems no wonder that Dann is also an engraver, since line is at the very heart of these compositions. Indeed, linearity projects energy; yet in concert with shape and color, also suggests a host of diverse meanings in both the paintings and prints of the versatile J. Dann.

Also from Gallerie Artitude, Isabelle Morin, appears as fascinated with water and

J. Dann

waves as the great Japanese Uyiko-e master Hokusai. The foamy fluidity with which she delineates the rhythmic flow of the sea with lusciously thick impasto animates her compositions with life and immediacy. In her painting "Storm," her strokes capture the curvaceous energy of a white-peaked blue wave rolling towards an unseen shore. Morin makes the frothy white shape of the wave appear as alive as the curve of the neck and mane of a warrior's horse in a classical painting.

* * *

By contrast, in Morin's "Wave III," the drops of foam at the top of a wave at the edge of the shore where the sand begins, on what, judging from the light, must be a sunny day, sparkle rather than storms, breaking into drops as bright as stars. Indeed, one cannot remember seeing another artist who depicts so many different aspects of watery places ranging from "Spring Wave," in which the foam is as virgin white as carnations and the water itself as luminously green as newgrown grass; to "Trio," in which Morin steps further back from the subject of her obsession to depict an entire marinescape, with lower rolling waves in gently toward the foreground, and the late afternoon sun casting a path of blinding white light over the water just before sinking behind the pale blue mountains on the opposite shore.

In the only photograph one has seen of Isabelle Morin, she is cloaked in a white fur jacket in a folding chair on the wet deck of a tour boat intently sketching in a watercolor pad: an artist very much in her element.

Isabelle Morin

* * *

Another talented artist from Galeries Artitude, Marie Chardiny strikes one as a latter-day descendent of Pierre Bonnard and the Nabis for the way she incorporates patterns into her figurative paintings. Whether in the decorations within an interior or the distinctive light and dark markings in the bark of a tree, patterns often play an important role in the organization of her compositions.

Indeed the white and dark brown patterns in the bark of the large tree dominating the center of Chardiny's painting "dans le Platane" simultan-eously almost hides the figure of the woman in the white dress within its thick trunk, and creates the almost hallucinatory impression that the tree itself is a giant stylized running figure with one foot on the grass and the other in the air.

Marie Chardiny

The surroundings are quite domestic and seemingly safe in this pleasant suburban yard, where a child's swing hangs from a rope on one bare branch of the tree (or running figure). But the shadows cast on the grass from outside the composition and entering the picture space at the bottom of the painting create an ominous mood, as does the anxiety that emanates from the figure of the woman almost becoming lost in the bark of the anthropomorphically suggestive tree. Indeed, there is a similarly ominous note, suggesting an intriguing underlying narrative beneath the placidness of Chardiny's domestic scenes. This ominous note becomes quite explicit in "St. Machin," in which a bearded man is seen kneeling with his arms bound behind his back and his thighs encircled by a rope.

* * *

An accomplished sculptor known by the single name of Dotty is represented by an exquisite nude sculpture of a sprightly adolescent girl, striding along with one slender arm tossed behind her tousled head, and the other behind her back. Her pert mouth is agape in a big, unguarded yawn. Although it is titled "The Diva," this lovely bronze captures, as enduringly as any painting by Balthus, the becoming innocence of a girl who is still unaware of her own beauty.

Dotty

Indeed this and another sculpture of a slightly more mature but equally comely female nude, carved in stone by Dotty, make clear that unabashed beauty is still a highly prized quality in contemporary French art.

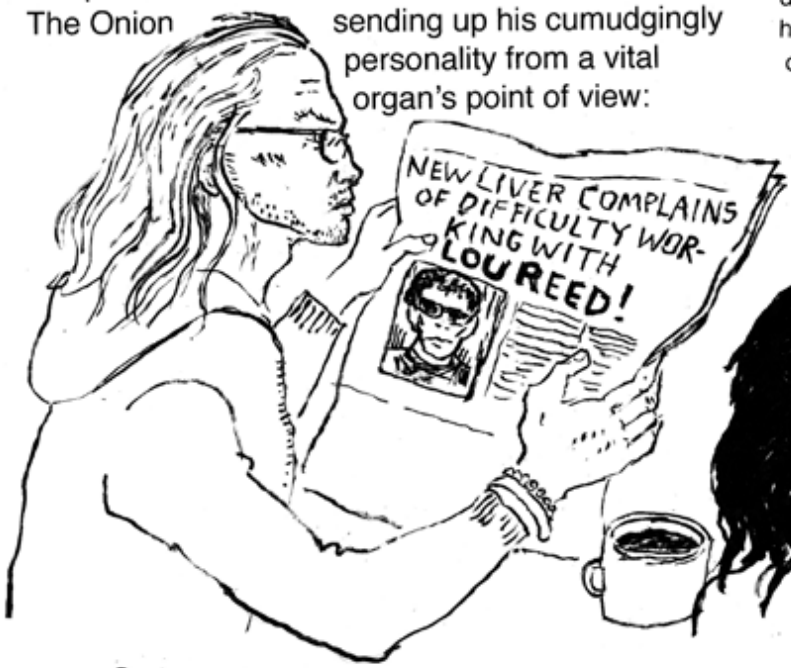
—— Maurice Taplinger

Galleries Artitude, opened in 1997 in the charming Swiss Village (dating back to the 1900 World's Fair) in the 15th arrondissement in Paris, represents a large and diverse number of leading contemporary artists, among them: Annabelblue, Yanni Arts, Claire-Lise Backes, Bernard Blandin,Catherine Burgues, Carmen, Lis Cate, Michele Cavanna, Chrisn, Ewa Dabrowska, Delboulle Berengere, Anne Di Crescenzo, Edith, Anne Grazi, Benoit Hofmann, Jimgoart, Natalia Karpova, Katie, Barbara Krajewska, Lydia Lefi, Severine Longevial, Celcile Louvel, Jean-Pierre Mosca, Marie Olivier, Camille Perrottet, Francois Ratoll, Fabienne Regnard, Reynald, Kristine Sretkova, TKY, Chrisophe Verdon, YOL.

French artists were recently seen at Montserrat Contemporary Art Gallery, 547 West 27th Street.

In Memory of Lou Reed (1942 -2013 by Ed McCormack (with help from Jeannie McCormack)

Not having seen or spoken to him in many years, I wasn't aware of the health challenges my old drinking and drugging crony, Lou was facing until this past summer, when I saw a headline in The Onion sending up his cumudgingly personality from a vital organ's point of view:



Outrageous satire being invariably less mean spirited than crotchety self-righteousness, I wasn't half as amused by another headline that caught my eye on the old fart AARP blog: "How do you feel about an aging rock icon who spent his youth wrecking his liver with booze and drugs being able to get a new liver at age 71?" I for one felt it was just good karma, since Lou was the unlikely angel of mercy who intervened way back in 1974 when I was convinced I had already wrecked my own liver.

So it came as quite a shock not all that many months long after I first read about the transplant in The Onion, when my wife, Jeannie came into the room where I write and said:

From that moment on I dropped another part of my memoir that I was working on and started writing about my friendship with Lou: There was the time he and his new bride Bettye were at Jeannie's and my apartment on 89th Street and he said:

***For all his sardonic humor, Lou was a better friend to me than I was to him. To read more about my betrayal of our friendship, google: Lou Reed Ed McCormack Vanity Fair**

"Free Expression" Takes Many Forms in WSAC Group Show

Many of the most gratifying discoveries in today's art scene come sans all the hype that usually precedes the latest 90 day wonder, scooped up fresh out of some expensive and prestigious art school by a high-powered art dealer in search of a new product with long shelf life. One fine case in point is a mature African-American artist named Herb Evans three of whose painting we recently caught up with in the group show "Free Expression," curated by participating artist Sonia Barnett for the West Side Arts Coalition.

Evans's "Spirits" is a vigorous gestural abstraction in subtly burnished hues that conjure up a sense of the supernatural while reveling in the down-to-earth physicality of oil pigments. His mixed media work "Close Quarters" is a figuratively suggestive (albeit also abstract) composition that calls up the ghost of Bob Thompson; while Evans's oil and collage "After the Rains" merges a moody monochromatic photographic image of the city with a colorful procession of vigorously brushed semiabstract figures suggesting an African marketplace.

Robert N. Scott showed two oils on canvas respectively titled "Cosmos # 1" and "Moonshine." Both impressed us for their combination of mystical interplanetary imagery and purely aesthetic attributes, such as vibrant colors that emit a sense of line couched within strong compositions mostly comprised of floating orbs and flowing linear swirls.

Doubly gifted poet/artist Anne Rudder, who often illuminates her verse with watercolor imagery, was represented with a work called "To Remember Kelly—The Storm." Under an evocative vision of a yellow moon casting its white beams over nocturnal blue waves as rhythmically configured as in a marine scene by John Marin, Rudder inscribed the following prose poem: "In the quiet of the deep dark night the moon shone as bright as the sun. On the beach, in the outer banks of North Carolina sounds of waves crashed against the sand. I felt the wind blow through my hair. It was as soothing as a mother singing her baby to sleep..."

Along with two other evocative neo-expressionistic landscapes, Lula Ladson, another artist adept at weaving a spell, showed an idyllic oil on canvas called "Secret Garden," depicting a leafy oasis of serenity, where verdant foliage and lushly blooming pink and yellow flowers surround a welcoming white bench.

Versatile painter Emily Rich, who has a special gift for transforming everyday subjects into colorful, vigorous abstract contexts showed a group of graceful and airy watercolors of New York buildings and rooftops. Her most action filled composition, however, was "Fast Traffic," in which several sketchy figures are seen mysteriously clustered, as though either grappling or embracing, amid rooftops and water towers.

Sonia Barnett showed a totally abstract but formally symbolic acrylic on canvas titled "Reach Up," its energetic rising shapes in variegated hues as freely floating as the poured color field paintings of Paul Jenkins. Equally impressive were two mixed media works by Barnett featuring glued down ginkgo leaves forming mandala-like compositions on solid green and blue painted grounds.

Amy Rosenfeld, whose style varies greatly from show to show but is invariably characterized by a certain honesty and freshness, showed two lively overall gestural compositions "Pink Expression," and "Intertwine Shapes, the latter a bright acrylic on canvas featuring banner-like hard-edged yellow, orange, blue, green, and purple color areas.

Valerie T. Kirk eased gracefully between brilliantly colorful and antically wiggly biomorphic shapes in a precise but energetically animated abstraction titled "Dream On," and a calligraphic neo-Pop composition adopting ornate graffiti-like baroque lettering called "Purple Dream."

Also featuring Lynn Lieberman's meticulous maplike watercolors of specific Manhattan storefronts and street locations; "Planter #1", a delicate still life in watercolor by Arlene Finger; "Daisies," Pillar Malley's full-length sepia-toned pastel of a graceful kneeling girl, her

Continued on page 22

"Free Expression," Curated by Sonia Barnet 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- wsacny@wsacny.org or website- www.wsacny.org. Or send SASE to the West Side Arts Coalition, PO Box 527, Cathedral Station, New York, NY 10025. Visit our ground floor gallery at 96th Street & Broadway (on the center island) New York City. Open: Wed. 6-8pm, Sat. & Sun., 12-6pm.

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NOHO GALLERY is viewing portfolios in all media for our Chelsea location. Visit nohogallery.com <http://nohogallery.com> for application form, or send SASE to Noho Gallery, 530 West 25th Street, NY, NY 10011.

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

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Spanish Artist Sola: Neo-Constructivist Experiments in the Climate of Postmodernism

A professor of sculpture at the Art School in Seville, the Spanish artist Sola incorporates three-dimensional elements in her paintings that lend them a uniquely dynamic effect.

Especially striking in this regard is the collage and mixed media composition that Sola calls "Connection V," in which jaggedly elongated red shapes suggest stylized lightning bolts, as they protrude from the edges of the canvas. Given the formal stasis of the rest of the composition — a large black half circle at the top of the canvas, with various semitriangular blue shapes below it, set against an off-white ground speckled with pale tints of subtly modulated color — the total effect is like a Roy Lichtenstein comic strip explosion ignited within a Russian Neo-Constructivist painting.

Indeed, Sola invariably employs a strong formal armature as a launching pad for her imaginative flights of metaphysical fancy. Thus. as formal in design and austere in execution as it is, her work is also poetically allusive, as seen in the aptly named "Revelations I," in which a semicircular black form appears to deconstruct on the left side of the composition, shedding sharp shards afloat against a vibrant blue background. The perfectly square format of the wood panel on which it is painted suggests limitless dimensions, as though one is witnessing some profound event in outer space.

Although the title of the exhibition, "Elemental Realms," adds to the sense of unusual phenomena taking place before one's eyes, Sola speaks of her artistic mission in more down to earth terms. Or at least in terms of the global revolution brought about by the discovery of cyberspace:

"Each piece of work has its own individual value," she states. "However, they do make more sense as a whole series that displays the process of transformation. The transformation of the world due to new technology and communication amongst human beings, the social networks and the internet. These things are causing so many changes, that they are actually changing our world. Thus, I express this evolution and all of these changes in my new work. I use abstract language; the world is represented by a circle in the paintings at the beginning of the series. In the following paintings, this slowly transforms into an elongated pointed oval shape, similar to a chrysalis. The interconnected lines within the chrysalis represent communication. They evolve into lines breaking into terrible tears, expressed by vivid colors. At the end of the series a new order appears. There is a rebirth of a new, perhaps more harmonious, world. This series is called 'Chrysalis,' a metaphor for a changing world; the world is likened to a caterpillar that changes into a butterfly."

Sola has obviously evolved a unique formal vocabulary with which to symbolize such metamorphosis. In the first composition of the series, "Chrysalis I," the elongated sharp edged oval form of which she spoke, its pointed tip rising above the top of the wood panel, is sharply defined in areas of black and red. It appears to have a diamond-like solidity. In Chrysalis III the same elongated shape appears to be almost submerged in a red fluid-like background, perhaps to express the emergence of technology from earlier more mysterious belief systems. But we witness its dispersal in Chrysalis V," where the sharp-edged shards of the disassembled shape scatter like fiery stars over predominantly blue geometric areas of color within what appears to be a vast cosmic expanse.

"Chrysalis I"

Her paintings are electrically alive with the excitement of exploring a new global frontier.

— Byron Coleman

Sola, Agora Gallery, 530 West 25th Street, February 7–27, 2014.

"New Year, New Art" on the Upper West Side

In her large portrait "Ayrton," in the West Side Arts Coalition's recent exhibition, curated by Margo Mead, Gail Comes abandoned her usual semiabstract style of large-scale, often monochromatic, close-up portraiture for a more literal realist portrait in oil on canvas. Titled "Ayrton," and rendered in a full palette of colors, Comes' portrait head of a young man with mysteriously closed eyes had her characteristic impact, even without the surreal, robotic "bionic" features with which the artist often endows her big portrait heads.

Another realist, Peter Salwen, showed six small oils on canvas panel, depicting figures in city streets in a vigorous atmospheric manner. Salwen's "Twilight on Canal Street," with its moody dusk sky, and "Evening Rush Hour on Ninth Avenue," in which groups of pedestrians and passing traffic are rendered in breezy bravura strokes with snapshot immediacy, are both standouts.

Livia Monaco's photo etchings of floral arrangements tinted with soft blue or pink hues have an eerie, almost funereal feeling, akin to Ivan Albright's haunting oil on canvas of a wreath on a door, "That Which I Should Have Done, I Didn't Do."

Monaco's etching on chine-colle "Winter Snow," however, with its delicate tracery of raised intaglio weeds, express both fragility and strength.

Then there were the still lifes in watercolor of Clare Stokolosa, who employs the medium with the transparent freshness that suits it best, with no white pigment added, the white of the paper alone serving for all highlights. With sure strokes Stokolosa captures the glint of aluminum or silverware, the smooth surface of china, the way light is absorbed by the pink flesh of watermelon or glows on the pale green skin of grapes.

Richard Carlson, best known for his restrained mixed abstractions within the format of a grid showed a real departure here with an acrylic painting called "Pugs vs. Wolverines." Surely there must be an interesting story behind this witty painting, also in a grid of 16 squares, juxtaposing the heads of pug dogs with those of wide-eyed, slack-jawed wolverines and other less identifiable (one might as well go ahead and say abstract) shapes arranged in more or less identical rows. But the painting, in its own antic way, speaks for itself; which is to say: what you see is what you get!

What Carlson does for canines, domestic and wild, Meg Boe Birns does for felines in acrylics such as "The Cheddar Cat," "Silver Cat and Green Clock," and "Cat with the Blues." Known for her luscious color, impasto as thick as cake frosting, combined with a light touch akin to Ludwig Bemelmans, Birns outdoes herself for charm in these engaging pictures.

Jack Cesareo, on the other hand, a conceptual photographer known for his pictures of a giant inflatable cupcake that he totes to different locations, plays it straight this time around with a Turneresque atmospheric acrylic marinescape, titled "Hudson River Marsh Cold Spring." Although his painterly skills are quite respectable, longtime followers of this wry talent will be watching closely to see if this indicates a brand new direction for Cesareo or yet another conceptual conceit.

Margot Mead's contribution "Hoping for Time Squared" also is something of a departure for this frequent exhibitor, with its luminously colorful gridded abstract composition encompassing both freeform

Continued on page 23

"New Year, New Art 2014," recently seen at Broadway Mall Community Center, 96th Street (center island.)

Campillo's Combination of Conceptual and Painterly Attributes

Although the Spanish artist Joan Campillo Ferre, who prefers to be known only as "Campillo, is what is normally called "a painter's painter," he prefers not to be known primarily as a painter, because, as he puts it, "My creativity has found its way into other areas of interest besides just my art. I like to solve problems and invent solutions. I possess several patents that are under development. And I also have developed designs for building projects."

One of the most impressive of these was a building that Campillo designed for the World Trade Center Memorial project. Unfortunately, the artist missed the deadline for submitting proposals for consideration, but says, "I hope one day to see this idea actually built by an interested developer."

In the meantime, the plans he designed are compelling unto themselves, when viewed as a conceptual art creation; specifically, the huge futuristic conical metallic structure that Campillo envisions situated on a vast green lawn in downtown Manhattan to pay tribute to the rescuers who rushed, at great risk to themselves, to aid those trapped in the rubble of the fallen Twin Towers.

The paintings by Campillo on view in the year-round salon exhibition at Montserrat Contemporary Art are similarly striking for the monumental simplicity of their forms, as well as for the sensuous coloristic and textural qualities that prompted one to term him a "painter's painter" in the lead paragraph of the present review.

In some of his more adamantly abstract compositions, vibrant areas of color are laid down either with a brush or palette knife in layers of acrylic that alternate between thick impasto and semitransparent glazes. Particularly striking in this regard is a boldly gestural composition in which one roughly square form within another blazes like an open furnace at its center with fiery red and golden yellow hues.

Other paintings by Campillo, although abstract overall, offer what Willem de Kooning once referred to, in relation to his own abstractions, as "slippery glimpses" of descriptive imagery: a hauntingly monochromatic vision of the Twin Towers standing like pale ghosts in a white mist; three severely simplified vertical forms, resembling inverted exclamation points with red dots for heads, simultaneously suggesting a row of figures lined up as before a firing squad against a wall of variegated greens and yellows...

In yet another acrylic on canvas, rhythmical red lines leap against the white primer coat above a simple streak of vibrant green pigment, evoking mountains in a verdant landscape with elegant formal economy and grace. To another eye, in another mood, however, those leaping lines could just as easily suggest the vital fluctuations of a hospital heart monitor.

Which is why it may be unwise to "Rorschach" overly subjective interpretations onto Campillo's abstract compositions, when one can simply relish them for their considerable abstract attributes.

At the same time, however, how can one resist doing so with an artist who combines the spontaneous gestural energy of a pure "action painter," such as the flamboyant Frenchman Georges Mathieu, and the sober compositional power and tactility of his fellow countryman Antoni Tapies, with the subtle conceptual sensibility that belongs to Joan Campillo Ferre alone?

— Byron Coleman

Campillo, recently seen at Montserrat Contemporary Art Gallery, 547 West 27th Street, is also in the year-round salon.
www.artcampillo.com

A Group Show "Open" to New Photo Approaches

"Open 2013," curated by Robyn Gecht for the West Side Arts Coalition, presented a varied survey of trends in contemporary art photography. Gecht, also one of the participating artists, showed large digital prints of the Coney Island Mermaid Parade, an annual event that rivals the Halloween Parade in the Village for garish spectacle. Our favorite was Gecht's picture of a zaftig mermaid queen with two large seashells clamped over her ample breasts, strutting bodaciously along the boardwalk in a tight blue gown and matching elbow gloves, flanked by two other buxom contenders in similarly flamboyant get-ups holding banners declaring "I Love Coney Island," with the cheering crowds of spectators in the background.

Just as festive, if not as gaudy, were Celia Aguiar Cruzado's color prints of a male and female Latin-American folk troupe in immaculate white costumes striking theatrical poses against an ornate stucco-colored backdrop. Equally stagey in yet another manner were two black and white silver gelatin prints by Paul Margolis: In "The Juggler," a virtuoso in a white dress shirt and polka-dot tie was captured with several objects in the air; In "Two Performers," one man balances on a large ball while playing an accordion, while another gestures and sings as though in a musical adaptation of Beckett's Waiting for Godot."

JD Morrison imparts still life subjects with an unaccustomed mystery in a half dozen prints revealing technical mastery. Especially unusual were "Dried Roses," a compelling study in tone and texture accomplished with pinhole photography, and "Arch, Central Park," in which a technique transparency film backed with aluminum foil imbued a rough old stone structure with a ghostly quality.

Mystery in another key emanates from "Hooded Figure in Snow," a black and white inkjet print by Len Speier, notable for its surreal atmosphere, as the spooky figure in black strolls over the white mounds between bare black trees. Speier also scores with "Lady in Red," a contrastingly colorful inkjet print of a transvestite in a peacock feathered headdress gesturing broadly with a cigarette.

Jean Prytyskacz encapsulated the holiday season with a group of glitteringly bejeweled cityscapes, as well as a succulent color image of a Thanksgiving turkey fresh from the oven. But perhaps Prytyskacz's most affecting picture was "The Village Halloween Parade," focusing harrowingly upon an effigy of a human skeleton calculated to get under the viewer's skin.

Arthur Cajigas was represented by a group of varied travel images ranging from the densely populated, bustling East Indian street scene "The Cabbies," to a transcendent vision of The Taj Mahal, its spire rising against a clear blue sky. Perhaps Cajigas' most visionary picture, however was "The Doorway," a serene view of sunlight streaming through and the arched portal of an elaborately tiled temple.

Sondra Weiner's "Sun Simplicity (After Sandy-Finding Self)," is a sort of self-portrait, in which we see the silhouetted figure of the photographer, reflected in a puddle that she straddles, camera raised to her eye. The building to one side of her soars skyward in radical perspective lending the picture a sense of dislocation that the title suggests.

Nature and floral studies are eternal subjects to which two of the artists featured in this exhibition bring the sensibility of contemporary photography: Deena Weintraub's series of black and white lith print "Les Fleurs du Mal" makes sensually shadowed, erotically suggestive black and white plant forms a visual metaphors for Baudelaire's famous poem sequence of that title, which translates from the French as "Flowers of Evil." Thom Taylor, on the other hand, employs lyrical pastel tints with a slightly Day-Glo quality to enhance the lyrical effect of his nature study "Maple Tree," and employs an infrared technique which infuses his digital print "Bannerman's Castle" with a ghostly quality. Then there is Carolyn Reus, who employs fiery digital hues to "outshine" nature in her color print "Sunset," and evokes a retro 1950s teenage rock and roll fantasy with her image of a sleek convertible "Pink Cadillac."

— Byron Coleman

"Open 2013,' recently seen at Broadway Mall Community Center, 96th St. (center island).

Danièle M. Marin's Glowing Visual Essay on Still Life

Although the featured works in Danièle M. Martin's most recent exhibition were groupings of several artfully juxtaposed paintings, meant to be viewed as overall works, that the artist calls "Interactions," let's begin by contemplating the only composition on a single canvas in the show, which hung apart from the others on the rear wall of Noho M55 Gallery. It is titled "Reflection on a Still Life," presumably both because it contains a self-portrait by the artist, reflected as in a mirror within the picture, as well as because it is a reflection, in the more cerebral sense of the term, on the subject of still life itself.

The self-portrait shows a slender, elegant, serious-looking woman who bears a certain incidental resemblance to Elaine de Kooning, in the process of photographing herself with a cable operated remote switch. Unlike the inanimate objects in the composition, which are rendered in a full palette of colors, this self-portrait is painted in grisaille. Since nothing appears to happen by accident in the work of an artist as thoughtful as Marin, one can only assume that she deliberately chose to depict herself in black and white, not so much as an act of self-effacement, as to create the sense of a somewhat phantom presence, altogether subservient to the objects to which she surrenders her full attention in the solitude of her studio.

At the center of the same composition is a torso-length dress-form: a headless, limbless symbol of femininity that has been a powerful component in Marin's work since the first solo installation by her that caught our eye some years ago in the same Chelsea venue.

From the bare neck of this decapitated multiple amputee mannequin — which is propped up on its own tall pole-pedestal atop a long-legged table, which, in turn stands on a platform of the type on which nude models pose in life drawing art classes — flows a long salmon-pink scarf, draped in the distinctive manner peculiar to chic, sophisticated Parisian women such as the artist herself.

This eerie centerpiece is flanked by two long-handled brooms leaning against the studio wall. Except when they are as obvious as the human skulls in 16th century Flemish *nature morte* "vanitas" compositions (invariably alluding to the brevity and meaninglessness of earthly life), before trying to second-guess the intended meanings behind simple objects in a still life, it is wise to remind oneself of what Sigmund Freud (or was it Groucho Marx?) is said to have famously said: "Sometimes a cigar is just a cigar!"

Still, these two brooms immediately struck one, admittedly in a fanciful way, as competing symbols of captive domestic drudgery and the freedom of flying witches — or else of independent female artists, if you please!

Next to a large silver pitcher in the lower part of the composition are four aluminum industrial lampshades. While one rests face-down on the floor of the model's platform, the other three apparently defy gravity, taking flight, like orbiting planets, between the long thin legs of the little table that supports the dress form.

"Interaction 5"

This metaphysically-suggestive detail, as well as several others — particularly the ghostly bowling-pin and colorful circles, floating around shadowy bottles and vases in one of the panels that makes up "Interaction # 5" — indicate how far Marin has evolved, from the overt feminist themes of her early paintings and installations to the subtle, multileveled semiotics of the present series.

Viewed from the bottom up, the vaguely cruciform arrangement (except for the window on the wall at its center, where no panels meet, a common feature of the entire series) in the seven-panel work, "Interaction # 1," progresses from still life imagery to total abstraction. The suggestion is of the transcendence of mundane matter, as symbolized by the wine bottles, vases, and other everyday objects on tabletops in the panels below. (Conspicuous by their absence are the fruits and flowers so often present in conventional still life compositions, which one gets the feeling Marin generally avoids because they come too laden with symbolic clichés of abundance and eroticism that she is eager to avoid in favor of her own less obvious juxtapositions of objects.)

In order to arrive at this pinnacle of abstraction, however, at which, as Marin once put it in another context, one may "unfocus from the images ... think them away and let the color, abstraction, rhythm take over," the artist obviously believes one must deliberately work through the mundane gravity of daily existence and all its worldly detritus, lest the escape into the ether of pure aesthetics turn out to be an empty victory.

In Marin's case, too, the very process of painting is transcendental unto itself. Thus the interactions in these works are not only between the relationships of one object to another within the individual compositions; and to the larger overall composition that each grouping of separate but connected paintings comprises; but also to the distinctly different techniques and styles that the artist calls upon in the act of painting — often combining several in a single work.

For few painters at work today command the virtuoso means that Marin has readily at hand at this point in her career, enabling her to quote from art history as freely as Marianne Moore quotes from past literature in her marvelously eclectic poems, merging realist, surreal, and abstract elements within a striking postmodern disregard for all stylistic barriers. (Indeed, she does so with an anarchic zest sometimes reminiscent of Larry Rivers, switching from full volume rendering of a figurine or ceramic jug to abstract expressionist drips or iconoclastic swipes of bare charcoal at the flick of a supple wrist.)

In her "Interaction" series, Danièle M. Marin goes beyond the exquisite ekphrasis that makes the poet and writer Guy Davenport's slender volume "Objects on a Table" the definitive essay on the genre, to meditate visually on still-life, while demonstrating, from several angles simultaneously, many of its most sublime attributes.

— Ed McCormack

Danièle Marin, recently seen at Noho Gallery M55 Art, 530 West 25th Street

Ines de Poligny's Harmonious Blend of Freedom and Precision

An Argentinean artist of mixed French and Russian extraction, Ines de Poligny states her artistic mission as an attempt "to express opposites coexisting," and "to express nature's qualities, bringing my own abstract vision to it."

Perhaps de Poligny's most overtly nature-derived painting, due to its horizontal format and the sense of a rugged terrain that its rocky shapes and ruddy red hues suggest, is her composition in acrylic and oil on canvas "Bosque en Ilamas" (Forest in Flames). Another work executed in the same medium, in cool blue and steely gray hues on a more suitably vertical canvas, is called "Nueva Eva." It depicts tall, somewhat abstracted but still distinguishable, urban towers soaring skyward, with looser, splashier forms resembling smoke — presumably, in the light of the frightening events of our present age, from a terrorist's bomb — about to bring them crashing back down to earth. Such are the grim realities of our "Nueva Era" that even many of the most abstract artists of all nations are emotionally affected by the contrasts that they present.

"Raices Multiples"

Fortunately, however, de Poligny, still finds much to be hopeful about in works such as "Raices Multiples," a presumed celebration of her own mixed ethnic roots and those of others. For here is a dynamic and exuberant work, in richly burnished ochers and browns that mingle harmoniously with black and white hues, in a lively composition comprised of a wide variety of organic and geometric forms and shapes that add up to an emblematic composition, resembling a family crest for humanity at large.

Equally energetic in its own manner is de Poligny's dynamic composition "Splash," which resembles an abstract expressionist painting subjected to a more refined, premeditated technique, with the splashy form of the title rendered in tones of blue and white with a linear precision akin to Hokusai's famous woodcut "The Wave." Rather than being impetuously painterly, the earthy background, too, is subtly glazed, almost as though by an airbrush, lending the painting a Pop quality. Here, one sees another example of the artist's professed love of contrasts held in check by a classical sense of balance. Her earlier influence, her first stylistic infatuation, was with Surrealism, and she has apparently incorporated some of its deliberate techniques of figurative definition, along with the freedom of abstraction to the process of creating her present work.

This fruitful merging of the freeform and the precise is also evident in de Poligny's work in acrylic and oil on canvas "Azzafrán," consisting of bold vertical forms in black, yellow, and tan which span the length of the composition, from the top to the bottom, edge to edge. These stripes are boldly laid down with a broad brush in a loose gestural manner, with ragged, edges that sometimes splash onto and mingle with the adjoining color or onto the bare white priming coat of the canvas. At the very center of the composition, however, is a more precisely painted broad stripe of tan, its edges neatly lined with yellow, that provides a resting point for the eye.

In keeping with Ines de Poligny's love of contrasts, it functions like a classical column, perfectly balancing without inhibiting the energetic flow of the composition.

— J. Sanders Eaton

Ines de Poligny, Agora Gallery 530 West 25th Street, March 4 - 25, 2014
Reception: Thursday March 6, 6pm - 8pm

WSAC West Side Arts Coalition 1979

Black Renaissance 2014
A Fine Arts Exhibit
Curator: Sonia Barnett
February 12 - March 2, 2014
Reception: Feb. 15, 2:30 - 5:30pm

Carole Barlowe • Sonia Barnett • Sandra Brannon
Gertrude V. Fleming • Nate Ladson • Margo Mead
Dammika Ranasinghe • Dorothy Scott • Robert Scott
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WSAC West Side Arts Coalition 1979

Dreams & Reflections 2014
A Fine Arts Exhibit
Curator: Daniel Boyer & Silvia Soares Boyer
March 26 – April 13, 2014

Reception:
March 29, 2:30 - 5:30pm

Broadway Mall Community Center
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Gallery Hours: Wed 6-8pm, Sat/Sun. 12-6 pm
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New Century Group Show Aspires to the Highline

Curated by participating artist Basha Maryanska, "Highline Art Show" brings together a group of international talents of varying styles, genres, and techniques. One of the most visionary is Polish-born U.S. citizen Eva Lachur, a well known New York theatrical costume designer who also creates intricately beautiful paintings that often feature willowy, tawny-haired young beauties reminiscent of Sandro Botticelli's famous Venus.

In Lachur's "Dream," one such figure is suspended in midair in a Buddha-like lotus position amid various other images. In another intricately detailed work by the same artist, a variety of floral and other organic forms comprises a nature tableau as filled with energy as one of Charles Burchfield's masterly watercolors.

Veryal Zimmerman, another painter with a visionary sensibility who often takes inspiration from nature for her oils and pastels, is represented by an atmospheric cloudscape titled "A View from Above." Zimmerman also shows " On the Highline," a fantastic image of an old-fashioned locomotive enveloped in a tempest of roiling steam, possibly imagined by contemplating the past of the Highline when it was a railroad, rather than an elevated tourist attraction.

Interpreting the ostensible theme of the exhibition more literally, Maria Angeles Hegglin, an artist born in Cordoba, Spain, shows neoimpressionist paintings that explore images of the Highline in all four seasons. Working in a vigorous palette knife technique, Hegglin evokes its color and light with vigor — particularly in "Spring," where graceful tree-limbs laden with pink blossoms sway in the breeze against the sooty skyline of Chelsea, and "Summer," where grass and flowers adorn the space between the abandoned railroad tracks.

Another bravura painter, Mervyn Beamish considers himself "basically a storyteller" of places he's been "in reality and fantasy." Many of his best paintings depict the ruddy landscape of inland Australia in a suitably rugged technique akin to the later neoexpressionist works of Malcolm Morley. In Beamish's oil on linen "Snake Gully," blasted trees do indeed writhe like serpents against a turbulent sky. By contrast in his "Pavilion," the gently curving limbs of lushly verdant trees provide shade and shelter.

Curator Basha Maryanska again demonstrates her impressive versatility by showing an abstract mixed media work called "Going Back," along with another composition titled "Renaissance Window," which combines features of her characteristic poetic realism in a thickly textured nonobjective context. Maryanska is the compleat painter making few distinctions between her abstract and representational styles, trusting to intuition and instinct to meld every form and image into a successful synthesis of vision and imagination.

Similarly Elaine Weiner-Reed moves easily between the two genres as well, but tends to veer more frequently toward abstract expressionist mixed media works incorporating a variety of different collage and mixed media materials: lengths of rope, patches of pigment-encrusted cloth or burlap, fragments of wood, bits of wire — apparently anything near at hand that can be swept up into the painting process. Possessed of a compelling physicality, compositions such as Weiner-Reed's "Night at the Improv" and "Jazz Trills and the Dance" are enlivened by a uniquely funky beauty.

Daisy Velo, a 17-year-old artistic prodigy and honor student from North Texas has already had a solo exhibition at the Back Room Gallery in Beacon, New York. Trees are presently a favorite subject, and she interprets them in a variety of ways in mixed media. In "Scene from Highline," for example, Velo presents a lone sparrow perched on a limb of a bare winter tree set against a deep blue night sky. It is a simple but affectingly poignant image. In "Reaching," another shadowy tree grasps at a pale daytime sky like a skeletal hand. Then there is Velo's pastel, "The beginning," in which what appears to be an egg-shaped moon glows mysteriously out of an atmospheric nocturnal expanse.

Dorota Michaluk creates intriguing mixed media works by drawing over photographs, as seen in her image of a trendy young woman set against a backdrop of the Highline, as well as another piece in which four figures (three young women and one young man), span four different sized panels that create a panoramic photographic vision of Times Square with its lights and billboards blazing. Drawn in a supple outline, Michaluk's figures have a ghostly quality, seeming to symbolize the marginalization of the individual in the contemporary urban environment.

Cynthia McCusker creates compositions in acrylic on canvas, as well as in the unusual medium of acrylic on vinyl, in which baroque abstract forms flow like elegant arabesques. McCusker is a bold yet subtle colorist, who sometimes shades her shapes to give them the volumic presence of objects occupying real space rather than the two dimensions of the picture plane. Although titled "Fluid Cats," one of McCusker's compositions in acrylic on vinyl contains no figurative image of cats, but suggests their presence through the feline grace of the forms she depicts.

New York-born artist Trevor Hunter, who has lived in East Hampton but now lives and works in the Hudson River Valley, close to bard College, creates abstract compositions in a mixture of acrylic, oil, and ink, in which he employs an impressive array of mark-making techniques. In "Carnavale (Red)," he adds collage, employing foil to the mix to enrich the textural quality of his surface in an abstract interpretation of a festive subject. From canvas to canvas, Hunter pulls out all stops, employing a variety of techniques ranging from thick impasto, to translucent oil and acrylic washes, to linear forms created with ink, to juicy areas of color applied with a palette knife, to lend his paintings a sensual tactile appeal that tempts one to want to touch as well as savor them visually.

Frequent exhibitor Kathryn Hart has been attracting considerable attention lately for her tactile, mostly black and white (sometimes with glistening splashes of red added to increase the visceral effect), found object assemblages, featuring tumorously bulging stuffed and wrinkled forms and brashly torn, distressed, and otherwise violated surfaces that lend abstraction a unique new shock value. Like the burnt dolls and other atrocities of the Beat generation California funk sculptor Bruce Conner, Hart's pieces, such as "Invisible Fissure," in which a ragged black shape resembling an animal carcass is tethered to an empty black frame by an intricate spiderweb of black thread, have a queasy seductiveness, sending out intimations of mortality and other distress signals that grip the viewer in the pit of the stomach and refuse to let go.

Dominick Botticelli, reportedly a direct descendant of the aforementioned Renaissance master of the same surname, combines Symbolism and Surrealism in meticulously executed canvases. In "Queen of Cups," a platinum-tressed beauty holds a silver goblet, its rim festooned with jewels. Lounging dreamily by the seashore in a seashell throne, possibly borrowed from the artist's distinguished ancestor's prop attic, as a lone gull sails through the sea-blue sky, the regal matron rules over her own private world. In another canvas called "Intergalactic Communication," one of the giant stone heads from Easter Island and the pyramids are next door neighbors on the same nocturnal desert, where the stars twinkle above like flying saucers — drawing closer, perhaps to deliver the message that Past and Present make no difference to Eternity. Indeed, Dominick Botticelli's paintings are filled with intimations of timeless wisdom, but the real message resides in their flawless rendering, which does the artist's heritage proud.

A fashion-designer turned sculptor who molds clay to the female form, sans the actual human body, Renée Chase achieves a strikingly aesthetic semblance of movement and sensuality. Like gorgeous ghosts her gowns stroll the runway of the viewers'

Continued on page 23

Highline Art show, New Century Artists
Gallery, 530 West 25th Street,
March 11 - 29, 2014.
Reception: Saturday, March 15, 3 - 6 pm.

The Domestic Genius of Japanese Quilter Mizuho

Most of the prominent woman artists who gravitated to quiltmaking when the fiber art movement began to gain traction in the 1970s started out as painters. Although not all of them were as militant as Judy Chicago, in the political climate of that era many took up needle and thread as a gesture of feminist solidarity with those scores of anonymous women who created objects of beauty that were dismissed for centuries by art historians as mere domestic handicrafts.

A Japanese woman named Mizuho, however, came to fiber art from the opposite direction.

"It was eight or nine years ago that I started my project of creating a *fukin* [dish cloth] for each day of the calendar year," she recalls. "It all started with finding myself,

every day, using a plain kitchen linen to cover my husband's dinner sitting on the dining table, waiting for his late return from work. How unwarm, unwelcoming, uninviting. I started thinking to myself how I might leave my personal mark on that plain store-bought linen."

Along with a large fishing net filled with cloth flowers sewn by women who survived the Tsunami in Japan, memorializing its victims, the art that evolved out of Mizuho's simple domestic desire to creatively enhance her husband's dinnertime, will be on view in her exhibition at Caelum Gallery in Chelsea.

The idea of creating a fukin for each day led her to research significant events that occurred on that date, adding a conceptual, diaristic, aspect to her designs. For example, for July 3, the design that she created is a simple picture of a Carvel-type ice cream cone, and under a heading saying "Soft Serve Day" is the following text: "One this day in 1951, the Japanese had their first taste of soft serve ice cream. It was introduced to them through a July Fourth celebration hosted by the post-war occupying American army in front of the Meiji Jingu temple."

Another piece, embellished with an image of traditional ornamental dolls, is called "Hinamatsuri" and is recalled diaristically, with the happy memory of a childhood gift bestowed on March 3rd, which is known in Japan as "Girl's Day": "The Ohinasama dolls my parents bought for me were a beautifully crafted wooden pair. Gazing at them, in their serenity, would make me feel kind and gentle. Displaying Ohinasama dolls is a tradition that took root in the early Edo period."

Mizuho's sewn images have a charming simplicity, somewhere between the folksy neo primitivism of Grandma Moses and the comicbook-inspired Pop figuration of the Swedish multimedia artist Oyvind Fahlstrom. Her takes on history are equally diverse. Although it originated in the U.S., the tradition of celebrating May 25th as "National Tap Dance Day" apparently really caught on in Japan. Under a sewn image of a spry dancer with a cane and musical notes shooting like sparks from his shoes, Mizuho's enthusiastic text reads: "National Tap Dance Day celebrates the birthday of the king of tapdance, Bill Bojangle Robinson. It was first presented to the American Congress in September 1988, and signed into law by President Bush in November 1989. The footwork in this dance requires not only a high level of technicality, but an excellent sense of rhythm."

No event is too minor to be commemorated. For January 30, the embroidery depicts a bright red telephone, and the text tells us: "On this day in 1970, the charge for a local phone call was set at 10 yen per 3 minutes. It may be hard to find public pay phones now, but before the widespread popularity of the cell phone, public pay phones were found at every street corner, some with lines of waiting callers."

In America, a black cat with an arched back is an automatic semiotic symbol for October 31. But in Japan the same image evokes February 22 "Cat Day." Or as Mizuho

translates in the text for one picture: "Nyan nyan nyan. One cry for each two, and with three twos (2/22), this day is Cat Day..."

Then there is June 9th, "Rock 'n' Roll Day," illustrated with an spike-haired musician in a tanktop wielding an electric guitar, of which the artist writes "Roku (six) and ku (nine) make rokku, for the rock in rock 'n' roll. The Japan Lock Security Association also uses the same pun for lock, and celebrating a lock Day."

Creating an image for June 14, gave Mizuho an opportunity to pay tribute to a fellow seamstress, under the heading "Betsy Ross Flag": "In 1777, the thirteen star version of the American flag was adopted. The United States' fiftieth state, and now fiftieth star, is Hawaii."

And June 15th, Issa Kobayashi's birthday, is illustrated with a wonderful illustration of two cartoon animals wrestling and one of that Edo period haiku poet's more playful mini verses: "Scrawny frog / Hang tough!/ Issa is here."

Indeed, although not as condensed or syllabically strict, the combination of a simple picture and explanatory text in Mizuho's presentation of her pieces calls to mind the original scroll format, in which the literati painter/poets of ancient Japan conceived that most exquisite Japanese art form, haiku.

Also included in the exhibition are some of Mizuho's larger, more elaborately wrought fiber art pieces, based on traditional themes such as dragonflies hovering above golden weeds swaying in a gentle breeze; graceful long necked waterbirds; and ornate umbrellas decorated with bright floral patterns.

It is in her delightfully witty calendar of designs for humble household items, however, created on plain muslin with needle and thread, that this gifted Japanese artist / homemaker pays the sincerest tribute to anonymous kindred spirits, over centuries and across seas, whose simple domestic genius, like her own, has brightened and nurtured countless lives. — Maureen Flynn

Mizuho, Caelum Gallery, 526 West 26th Street, March 4 - 15, 2014

Renée Borkow: High On the City

Unlike many artists who consider it a preliminary medium, most suitable for sketches and studies for paintings, the painter and printmaker Renée Borkow approaches drawing as a finished art form. Indeed, in Borkow's hands, color pencils become an absolutely painterly medium, with gradations of tone defining form and creating tonal patterns as subtle as those in any work in oil or acrylic.

The epiphany that prompted Borkow's new body of work, "In the City," occurred, she says, about three and a half years ago: "I was gazing out a ground floor window on Columbus Avenue, when across the street I saw a very striking image. It appeared in front of me as a horizontal composition in black and white that was direct, concise and looked like a complete and finished painting. In reality, it was a brick wall shaped like most horizontal brick walls with three or four bare skinny trees planted and standing directly in front of it. The trees had no leaves, because of winter. But what I was seeing was such a beautiful image that I had to draw it immediately. That was the beginning of the idea for my most recent series of artwork. I continued drawing these cityscapes or environmental inspirations in many different locations throughout the city. I didn't want them to be known or famous tourist attractions or spots. I preferred the less obvious, or even the backs of buildings..."

"High in the City," 19"x 26" linoleum block print on arches paper

Although Borkow makes it sound simple, her compositions are actually quite complex. "Kaleidoscope," for one example is well named; exemplifying the quality that the artist calls "flat depth," wherein the contradiction between the illusion of perspective plays cunningly against the two-dimensions of the picture plane to set off tantalizing pictorial tensions.

The particulars are many: the edge of a slate-gray brick wall, entering on the left side of the composition and leading the eye inward, through paler gray slender winter trees, tinged with tones of soft violet, to a maze of windows, interspersed with the touches of the pink, aquamarine, orange and ocher pastels that modern architects employ to soften the impact of relentlessly climbing steel and glass. Yet Borkow melds what, in the hands of a lesser artist, could prove a dauntingly discordant array of urban details into a harmonious composition, possessed of remarkable abstract clarity and grace.

Even more complex for its intricacy is "Turtle Bushes 2," where flurries of colorful breeze-blown leaves and speckled foliage come into play against an even more intricate background grid of walls and windows. Here, too, with a fanciful mastery of abstract patterning in a realist context akin to that of David Hockney, Borkow evokes one of those pastoral pockets of the city to which harried office workers in midtown retire at lunch hour, as if to a shady, sheltering grove, for a few precious moments of semi-serenity. Here, in particular, we see, "the juxtaposition and combination of geometrical or architectural buildings, combined with the organic and natural lines and shapes of the trees or nature," which Borkow finds fascinating.

A more deadpan mode of "abstract realism," to appropriate a term coined by another writer for this publication, comes into play in "From Mondrian's Window." Here, the flat facades of a row of brownstones, suggesting Hopper's "Sunday Morning"—sans the atmospheric hangover of angst—appear sandwiched between the larger rooftops of buildings ostensibly in the foreground. The latter buildings, however, appear to hug the picture-plane as flatly as the former ones; for here, as the wry wit of the title indicates, the emphasis is on the two-dimensional geometry which opened the door to modernism itself.

Being a quintessentially postmodern artist, however, as her equal interest in representation and formal play makes clear, Borkow feels free to have fun with that once sacrosanct space by tilting the picture plane slightly awry around the edges of the two "foreground" structures, so that just the smallest suggestion of perspective confounds the viewer's spatial perception with a twist of Escher.

The spatial playfulness is taken even further in the aptly titled "Every Which Way," where the buildings converge from several directions at once in veritable maze of angular juxtapositions. In this vertiginous composition, too, the mostly browns, tans, and ocher hues, combined with fewer areas of similarly subdued green, pay tribute to Cubism.

Drawings, Renée Borkow reiterates "are the main starting point for my understanding and appreciation of a subject and which later can be translated and transformed into more abstract images, using other mediums to create paintings and prints. However, I also see drawings as final and finished art." And nothing could drive that point across more effectively than this exhibition, which will also include black and white block prints such as "High in the City "

In this dynamic linocut on Arches paper, the bold forms of tree branches, silhouetted buildings, and starkly stylized leaves that resemble flying crowns, reveal a graphic power approaching that of the Expressionist woodcut master Franz Masereel. But while Masereel, who created several wordless "novels" in his medium, was primarily a narrative artist, Renée Borkow is more concerned with aesthetics than storytelling. Her recent prints, like her painterly color pencil drawings, are driven by a desire, as she puts it in her artist statement for the series, to capture the "strong contrasts and nuances of New York that help maintain the intrigue and interest of looking at and being in the City."

That she capitalizes that last word indicates the significance with which she imbues her subject. — Ed McCormack

Renée Borkow, Viridian Artists, 548 West 28th Street, March 18–April 5, 2014

Diverse Styles Create Complementary Contrasts

Holiday group shows are eclectic affairs, and the West Side Art Coalition's "A Gift of Art" was a typical offering, in that it's only theme was the presentation of varied visual pleasures.

Thus two of the bright puzzle-piece abstractions in Robin Goodstein's sprightly "Yellow Series" shared a wall with Lynn Lieberman's fascinatingly detailed watercolors of upper Manhattan and Central Park.

Although the contrasts in the work of the two above artists were complementary, less strange bedfellows were Jennifer Lenn's still life and interior compositions, such as "The Blue Room," with their mellow colors and a light linear touch reminiscent of Raoul Dufy; and the sophisticated primitive floral compositions of Danguole Raudonikiene — particularly the latter's quaintly surreal scene "Windy Evening," with a white horse parked outside a conical cottage and a flying windmill hovering above.

Adrienne Cosner's cityscapes in acrylic ranged from the fiery intensity of her acrylic painting "Red Sky at Night" to the cool, deadpan quality of her river scene "St. Petersburg, Russia." By contrast, both Linda Lessner's richly verdant pastel with collage, "Ulster County, Summer" and her oil on canvas "Autumn Grasses," are possessed of a softly poetic quality that derives from her ability to imbue color with a sense of light.

Another visual poet, Catherine Silver, employs the ancient medium of encaustic (melted wax mixed with pigments) on wood panels to create glowing compositions that tread a fine line between nature studies and abstraction, as seen in "Chinese Meditation," where a semicircle of tiny red Asian characters is juxtaposed with a sensuous form suggesting a succulent halved fruit.

Then there is Joseph Healy, who exhibited a single, modest-sized work on paper called "Two Scholars," but made a memorable impression for the sheer complexity of a composition in which elements of photocollage were combined with freeform figurative allusions and abrupt shifts of scale to create a work at once imagistically compelling and formidable in formal terms. Gail Comes also caught our attention with a large monochromatic portrait head in oil on canvas entitled "The Silver Knight." Comes' work is notable for the artist's unique way of merging bold abstract forms with elements of stylized realism akin to Richard Lindner's iconic 1960s figure compositions.

Joseph Boss also made a strong showing with, "Spilling News," numbers one and two, a pair of mixed media collages with an element of concrete poetry, in which fragments of type clipped from magazines spill out of a bucket at the top of the composition spelling out enigmatic phrases, such as "Trust Us, They Are Coated." As in the collages of Kurt Schwitters, the snippets of type are combined with tactile elements, such as the lengths of twisted twine that Boss affixes to the bottom of the compositions, suggesting a liquid void for the words to splash into.

Jutta Filippelli, whose acrylic paintings have evolved from realism to abstraction over the past few years, appears to address the viewer directly regarding her stylistic metamorphosis with titles such as "As I See It" and "See What You Will." No explanation is necessary, however; for one sees clearly the sheer joy the artist takes in creating buoyant gestural forms that float like gaily colored balloons, and the feeling is contagious.

Two final artists make exquisitely formal statements: Gail Atherton with a vertical minimalist totem on masonite board and canvas, in which six simple brown shapes of varying sizes appear to float like bubbles up five connected panels; Richard Carlson with an equally minimalist acrylic collage in which the only element immediately visible from a distance is a single blue stripe running across a solid mustard field. Only after moving closer can one see the many tactile rectangular forms submerged in the mustard ground.

Atherton calls her totemic wall relief "Goldfish Crackers." Carlson titles his collage painting "Please Touch." Who says minimalism can't be witty?

— Marie R. Pagano

"A Gift of Art 2013," curated by Linda Lessner recently seen at Broadway Mall Community Center, 96th St. (center island).

FREE EXPRESSION

Continued from page 14

facial features hidden behind her long, lustrous mane, as she holds a bouquet; and an atmospheric vista by Nate Ladson called "The Falls," previously reviewed in this publication, but worthy of another brief mention here for the grandeur of its composition, reminiscent of a classical Chinese scroll painting, expressing the relative insignificance of humankind next to the magnificent force of nature with Ladson's depiction of tiny silhouetted figures standing on a precipice behind a rail, gazing over at a magnificent roaring waterfall.

— Maurice Taplinger

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ED BRODKIN

Continued from page 1

spanning five connected canvas panels. Linear images of figures derived from Native American iconography are rendered linearly on a contrasting dark ground in various neon-bright red, orange, yellow, and aquamarine hues, as though squeezed straight from the tube. The indigenous figures are overlapped to create an abstract "action painting," akin for its effect of spontaneity to the French "l'art informel" Georges Mathieu—albeit with a deliberate conceptual control characteristic of Brodkin. Then there is "Cycles of Life, The Long Pond," an acrylic painting ranging over twelve connected canvases, interpreting the four seasons on Greenwood Lake. Here, the artist's gifts as a colorist would tempt one to classify him as a latter-day Luminist, if not for the overall versatility of his oeuvre.

For unlike less inventive artists, who cultivate a signature manner and promote it like a corporate logo, for Ed Brodkin true style is a function of individual character that enables one to start anew each day and set forth like an explorer, confident that each aesthetic adventure will lead to a fruitful discovery. — Ed McCormack

FLORA JACOBSON

Continued from page 2

success in black and white checkerboard patterns is set amid fragmentary clippings of ad topography and newspaper text that morph magically into buildings, signs, and passing traffic, evoking the hustle and bustle of lunch hour in midtown Manhattan.

Such panache is characteristic of Flora Jacobson's insouciant aesthetic alchemy, in which the simplest everyday materials that can be purchased in the stationery and school supply section of your nearest Duane Reade drugstore — ink, glue, watercolors and various felt-tip markers — are employed with offhand skill to create works possessed of their own unique elegance. —Ed McCormack

AWAKENING

Continued from page 9

gestural style calls to mind another member of the New York School: Robert de Niro, Sr., late father of the well known actor. Similarly generalized, yet possessed of individuality nonetheless are the three figures in another canvas entitled "Group Dynamics." Working mainly in line, with key patches of color, applied with characteristic vigor, to knit the composition together at key points, Weiner-Reed employs the linear technique to suggest the physical and emotional connections, as well as the inevitable psychological tensions, of family life to which title alludes. Equally formidable in a more formal but no less intense manner are Weiner-Reed's purely abstract compositions, such as "Vision Quest," amd"Unraveling Mysteries" in which she takes on more inner-directed subjects and metaphysical concerns.

Another powerful painter from Maryland, Kristen Morrison, combines looming abstract forms, monumental gestures, and colors that are at once strong, yet often with a softly, subtly muted quality, to make compositions possessed of a monumental quality. Like Rothko before her, albeit with a generally more vibrant palette, one of the primary elements influencing her colors is light, which she endeavors to capture from various perspectives, stating, "The same light is perceived differently according to where one stands. For instance, a beam of light across the bow of a boat in a heavy fog is different from the same pulse seen from the shoreline."

Morrison, however, incorporates such subtleties of light as it affects color detached from specific subject matter in paintings with an impressive abstract presence. One might be tempted to describe the forms she employs as "Minimalist," if not for their dynamic soft-edged expressiveness (as opposed to hard-edged precision), as well as the often geometric but hardly symmetrical character of her forms. In her large acrylic on board "Sing," for example, a large, bulbous blue form swoops in from the top of the composition like an oddly dark cloud. And below it is a thinner, more linear area of aquamarine of varying width, which hangs like a hammock. Both are set against more muted ocher and gray areas of color. A brighter ocher line running across the composition toward the bottom, one could almost suggest a horizon line. However, all distinctions between figure and ground relationships are obliterated in Morrison's tough-minded aesthetic. Indeed, although she may use natural references when referring to "color as light," to borrow the apt term that Ruskin applied to Turner, Morrison obviously takes pains to prevent the viewer from "Rorshaching" landscape imagery into her compositions.

She discourages them in a painting called "Sing Sing Sing," by filling the top of the composition with a big red rectangle unlike anything that exists in nature; and does so in another painting—perhaps pointedly, or even ironically—entitled "Art," (as in "art for its own sake"). In both works, the apparent message is that a painting is a distinct and discrete entity unto itself and not metaphor for, or symbol of, anything else. And by virtue of her painterly conviction, Kristen Morrison makes this idea impressively credible. — Byron Coleman

WEST SIDE ARTS COALITION

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gestural elements and a meticulously painted image of a globe. However, Mead's inclusion of fragments of her familiar linear figuration in some areas of the composition suggest that she may be trying out contexts for a stylistic melding of older and new imagery. Meanwhile, Nate Ladson finds a novel approach to merging gestural abstraction with a kind of Zen spontaneity and literal representation in his splashily energetic mixed media composition "Explosion."

Robert N. Scott makes a rhythmical linear statement akin to the British printmaker Stanley Hayter, with his lyrical abstraction "Roar of the Sea. In "Hand of the Artist" and "Mask," Joseph Healy reveals a sophisticated Art Brut sensibility ala Dubuffet, albeit with his own vibrant take on color and collage. Along with his visual wit, Healy has a talent for formal arrangement that most clearly comes across in the latter work. Gifted with a strong approach to abstraction Dorethea T. Scott weaves the colors of the Pan-African flag through her abstract pastel, "Greenhouse," lending its title a symbolic meaning. Scott also applies those hues effectively in another emblematic abstraction she calls "Grotto." Then there is Barry Friedfertig, whose abstract paintings, aside from the tactile sensuousness they all share, vary greatly stylistically, as though in a deliberate attempt to evade classification. Friedfertig, however, seems to tip his conceptual hand with the work titled, "This is not a painting," consisting of that sentence printed out boldly in red with a brush on a textured black background in a manner that, like his other works in the show, can only be called "painterly." — Marie R. Pagano

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imagination. Indeed, this must be how fashion designers imagine their clothes before they come into being, as though the artist is letting us in on a trade secret that enhances our appreciation not only of the female form eternal, but of how couture accents its attributes.

To say of Chase's creations that they take the shape of slinky sirens is to confirm that she has succeeded splendidly in realizing her stated aesthetic goal: "to infuse each sculpture with form and motion as if there was a body within it."

Another contemporary sculptor who glorifies the human anatomy, both in clay and wire mesh is Bonnie Shanas, who considers herself lucky to have studied the latter medium under the renowned Israeli sculptor Shulamit Hartal. Indeed, Shanas has the alchemical ability to lend wire mesh the sense of living flesh, as seen in her lifelike male torso, "Within My Fort." Even more remarkable, however, than her skill in rendering male musculature in this unyielding industrial material is Shanas' gift for making it evoke the softer suppleness and curves of the female body, as seen in "Just Me," an apparent self-portrait, in which Shanas gives her own nude torso the feline grace of the famous 1950s calendar photo of Marilyn Monroe. Here, as in other female nudes, such as "Redemption" and "Her Own Time," Shanas achieves the aesthetic alchemy of molding an incongruous material to an unlikely subject. — Maurice Taplinger

Dellamarie Parrilli's Tribute to an Adopted City

There has never been a shortage of topnotch contemporary women painters in Los Angeles: Jay DeFeo, Joan Brown, and Deborah Remington come most immediately to mind. But many others emerged from or migrated to that sprawling, sun-splashed city where palm trees alternate with stop lights, and there has always been a lively art scene.

Recently, when Dellamarie Parrilli decided to leave Chicago, where she was born and made her initial reputation, to join their distinguished company, she created a series of untitled works inspired by L.A.

Executed in acrylic on canvas, polycarbon on acrylic cubes, and the unusual medium of watercolor on canvas, these works are among her most exuberant and accomplished to date. The latter paintings in watercolor a good place to start. These compositions are much larger in scale than most works in the medium, since watercolor paper 72 by 60 inches is difficult to find (unless, like Charles Burchfield, one wishes to paste several smaller sheets of handmade Arches together — a process that creates seams, which would interrupt the flow of Parrilli's massive abstract forms).

Watercolor and acrylic on canvas, 72 x 60 inches

Beyond all technical and practical considerations, however, these works possess a unique luminosity, abetted by a combination of majestic scale, chromatic subtlety and tonal delicacy that eludes even "poured paint" Color Field painters like Helen Frankenthaler, Paul Jenkins, and Morris Louis. Among them, the composition that appears to allude most specifically to the qualities of Los Angeles that attracted Parrilli to relocate there is a very large untitled watercolor and acrylic on canvas with a fiery red orb dominating the center of its composition, flanked by semitranslucent sinuously graceful green shapes suggesting floating floral forms.

Although Parrilli considers herself a direct descendent of the Abstract Expressionists, as well as of Kandinsky and other pioneers of nonobjective painting, and rarely allows recognizable subject matter to invade her formal lexicon, this composition evokes a sense of tropical heat and organic growth, with its hot red and orange emanations of light-filled hues, and its clumps of white speckles suggesting tiny white flowers, all seeming to emanate from the solar mass at its center.

Other large watercolors on canvas in the same series employ a dynamic "wet into wet" technique to send liquidic areas of blue and purple hues rippling out from large circular and semicircular shapes in a manner that creates the illusion that the pools of diluted aquarelle are still in active motion. Indeed the entire series is characterized by a sense of flux, of the graceful movement of filmy veils of color dancing on the picture plane, its two-dimensional flatness opened up and imbued with a sense of depth by Parrilli's multilayered approach to washes of vibrant color.

By contrast her works in polycarbon on acrylic — and particularly on three dimensional acrylic cubes — enable her to work in literal depth, merging painting and sculpture in her own unique manner. As opposed to the airy amorphousness of her compositions in watercolor on canvas — which give the impression of having been created with a brush dipped in liquid light — here Parrilli solidifies her forms and brightens her color areas in a manner akin to the harder edges of the designs in a mandala. The opacity of these more definitely defined forms plays off exquisitely against the translucent but "hard" sheen of the acrylic boxes. The effect is as quasi "industrial" as Billy Al Bengston's highly finished emblematic compositions spray-painted in enamel on aluminum, inspired by the Los Angeles Custom Car Culture. Here, too, in a moment of pure inspiration (apparently taking poetic license from Walt Whitman's famous lines: "Do I contradict myself? Very well, I contradict myself!"), Parrilli departs from her usual adamantly abstract stance, encasing holographic-looking images of tiny birds, as delicate as those in a classic Chinese scroll painting, within some of her luminously transparent acrylic cubes.

A more familiar facet of this versatile artist's ever expanding oeuvre — at least to her long-term critical champions and collectors — can be seen in Parrilli's recent acrylic paintings on canvas. These also untitled large-scale compositions, ranging from 72 by 60 inches upwards to 72 by 108 inches, absorb and update the entire coloristic and tactile vocabulary of Abstract Expressionism for the postmodern era on the scale to which it has the most impact. One such work employs muscular juicy pink red, blue, and white strokes broad enough to have been painted with a broom rather than with an ordinary brush. They swerve, swirl and interlock dynamically in thick coloristically variegated areas of heavy impasto with an energy akin to de Kooning.

In another, even larger acrylic on canvas, Parrilli adopts a more linear, calligraphic manner in which the discerning eye can catch glimpses of actual alphabet letters, albeit fluidly distorted beyond easy legibility. These linear shapes are laid down in white pigment against underscrawls of blue ecriture that glow against an overall deep crimson-purple ground, like palimpsests in a gigantic manuscript. In yet another composition, primarily in pale pink and bright blue hues, in the same series, Parrilli combines acrylics and watercolors on canvas, playing off the thick, craggy consistency of the former medium against the loosely flowing and vertically dripping liquidity of the latter one to achieve striking textural contrasts.

Equally engaging tactile qualities of another kind capture one's attention in a large acrylic painting in horizontal format (relatively rare for Parrilli, who works more often on vertical canvases), fully 96 inches wide. A predominantly deep pink ground, densely embellished with red, blue, and yellow spatters, drips and strokes, is overlaid with a buoyant linear dance of thin white that the artists tosses out like lariats.

Here, again, the graceful movement of these linear elements can only be said to resemble a form of terpsichore. And one is reminded that Parrilli was a dancer and a singer, before a life threatening illness aborted her entertainment career — biographical information is only relevant because of the bearing it has on the energy and grace that she brings to her visual art.

Indeed, Dellamarie Parrilli is still very much of a dancer. — Ed McCormack

To see more of Dellamarie Parrilli's works, go to www.parrilli.com

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