



The Drawers - Headbones Gallery

Contemporary Drawing, Sculpture and Works on Paper

Headbones Anthology 2007

Commentaries by Julie Oakes

RICH FOG



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Headbones Gallery, The Drawers - 2007

Contemporary Drawing, Sculpture and Works on Paper

It is with the purpose of securing the works a place in history and a reinforcement of our commitment to the serious engagement of our dealing with works on paper (and a small component of sculpture) that the art works featured at Headbones, The Drawers, are archived within the current Headbones Anthology, 2007

The artists who are featured each month (the formula has been up to ten artists showing up to ten works) enjoy their designated period of wall space when the work is presented for public contemplation. Then at the end of their display, each piece is put in an archival folder and placed in the alphabetically arranged flat files. For a client, the route to the art work is then made through the individual artist's catalogues, the anthology, or through the Headbones website for those unable to visit the gallery. The result of the research is an art work being drawn out of the file and the glascine being folded back to display the work for a palpable viewing. This was the original concept for Headbones, The Drawers, when we opened in Toronto with an operating model that would be akin to a library or visual research facility. In order for this concept to have an energetic viewing life, the contents of the drawers, must be attractive. The work must entice the viewers to see it first hand. We are confident that the quality of work within our flat files does this, for Headbones has begun to work as it was first envisioned. Collectors are spending time looking through the catalogues, opening the drawers and engaging.

The slate is the attraction. We have senior artists whose excellence has garnered inclusion of their art work in the great museums of Canada, and internationally, long before their work was shown at Headbones. We have introduced emerging artists to the Toronto art market, some who have also moved onwards to be represented by other galleries, still keeping a paper foot in a drawer here at Headbones. Overall, we are proud of the contents of the Drawers, and of the Headbones Anthology, both 2006 and 2007, for we have been assured through the acceptance of the art work by curators, the media, and collectors as to the quality and excitement of our offering.

The landmarks were both encouraging and poignant. There was the jubilation of the Headbones Award, voted by the artists featured in the Drawers, with thanks to the generous sponsorship of Artcast Inc. Neutral Ground in Regina hosted Headbones Gallery

with a drawing exhibition curated by Brenda Cleniuk and featuring the work of Sergio Finamore, Zachari Logan, Shauna Oddleifson, Srdjan Segan and Ruth Waldman. The Drawer went on the road again this past summer and was enthusiastically received, anticipated even, by collectors in British Columbia. We committed to the representation of Stephan Bircher, George DeWitte, Scott Ellis, and Srdjan Segan and in doing so, will proactively participate in what is already proving to be an upwardly mobile direction in their careers. We presented Headbones, The Drawers, to advantage in our first art fair, the Toronto International Art Fair, and are encouraged by the experience to further research international venues. We hosted numerous touring groups and continued the tradition of dinners held in the gallery in the midst of the art work. We have, overall, had a great year.

A salute to the artists of Headbones, The Drawers - thank you for enriching our lives and all the best in the year to come!

Julie Oakes and Richard Fogarty

An Exotic Erotic Xmas, December 9 - January 11, 2007

In a season when clichés abound, Headbones, The Drawers is stepping outside of the norm and presenting a show of exotic works that are striking and unusual in their effect and appearance. With paper works both suggestive and explicit, a fire performance, the titillation of eroticism amongst an exotic crowd and the swinging jazz of Joe Sealey and Paul Novotny on opening night - an Exotic Erotic celebration is in place.

Gykan Project Room

Bogos Kalemkiar

Irina Dascalu

Thomas Ackermann

Michaele Jordana Berman



Thomas Ackerman

An Exotic Erotic Christmas

Inside plastic boxes so that they can't be touched, turned over, or pinched to test their virtual reality, nor can they be marred, the wax sculptures by Tom Ackermann are a mixture of attraction and repulsion. They are not comely beings but they're also not completely ugly. The petite figurine is infused with the air of better times, like a Barbie doll memory gone wrong, as if the coated feminine plaything might have fallen into the hands of a boy, prepubescent and experimenting on his hapless subjects. And with boyish delight the naughty contortions have been creatively indulged. There is the residue of a gleeful, willful wickedness - "what can I do to her now?!" Ackermann has had his way with Barbie and the offspring of the strange coupling appears to carry a mutant gene.

There is also a strange beauty in Ackermann's waxen and molten fluctuations of humanoid forms that have an unrealized quality as if they didn't quite reach full term and were relegated to an everlasting nascent region where beginnings were halted and fixed in wax. There is the inference of a prototypical mold that has not yet been approved for full-on production. It is this 'original' prescience that grants the little forms their attraction. Despite the severance from recognized fetal, fairy or baby forms, they have an understandable and acceptable proportion.

The latex molds on paper work in much the same way with more of an experimental time line implied. They seem like sketches for the finished works, with the freedom to try on more skews as if Tom Ackermann allowed himself to be even more manipulative with his company of dolls. Like Gericault bringing in his body parts, there is a curious question as to what Ackermann will bring into his studio next.



Barbie Yoga #30, mixed media, beeswax, 10" high - 2004

Michaele Jordana Berman

An Exotic Erotic Christmas

Michaele Jordana Berman waxes as exotic as ever (formally of Michaele Jordana and The Poles, an 80's punk band) and brings forth a 1984 drawing of a proud and happy transsexual that she titled "And She Called Herself Fat Fanny". In her newest evolution into super realism, she integrates photography, airbrush and pixels into the experiential and interactive game world she creates for her super heroes, taking the genre to the next level, and asking the question "What is real?"



Retribution - digital giclee print, 48x48 in - 2006

Irina Dascalu

An Exotic Erotic Christmas

With the hand of a European master, Irina Dascalu exhibits the head of a European mistress. She exposes herself, not blatantly, but after a courting period, a series of lunches and discrete visits and then she extends the invitation into her boudoir. In the soft light that glows from the vestiges of the past, the firm discipline born of tradition sheds a clue to the complex nature of the artist.

Her ability to render is sure. The wealth of taste coupled with the knowledge of great works done in studios lit in the past, under colored skylights or illuminated by southern exposures bleeds through to the present century. Her ability to surrender is not so secure. The dark renaissance background with the female figure glowing as if lit by a bank of candelabras placed on heavy furniture in a castle is misted by striped wisps. She is wrapped in cellophane so that the bulbous flow of breast and hip is smothered into pressurized folds like a shrink wrapped chicken. Yet, she is still sexy, seemingly squirming, ready to be unwrapped and used, her juices marinated by the breathless shroud. Like the biblical phrase "giveth and taketh away", she has been complicit in the bondage. She is awake. She is exploring arenas that many women cannot bear to acknowledge existing, the female - objectified, packaged and ready to be picked. It is because Irina Dascalu is strong, and like Houdini, knows how to break free of bondage, that she is not only able to tackle the subject matter but brings to it inimitable insight. The woman bound is Irina. The artist who is presenting the woman bound is Irina and the woman who is breaking free of any psychological bondage is irrevocably Irina Dascalu. For once these images have been entered in the great image bank of art history, they have been exposed and the perpetrator who denies liberation is brought to trial and condemned.

Irina Dascalu has, in the past, drawn and painted women's bodies where the identity has always been hidden, the face covered or severed by the boundaries of the page. In this recent series, Irina reverses the captured moment like a flash that can only be developed as a negative. With the body wrapped and the head flung back, eyes shut and silence waiting to be broken, who is in control here? Only one, the artist, Irina Dascalu. She knows absolutely, who and what is being given or taken away.



Black Socks #2 - pastel on paper - 33" x 49" - 1999

Andy Graffiti

An Exotic Erotic Christmas

Romantics kiss first. They kiss for a length of time, a physical connection that alludes to the sex act, tongue exploring mouth, fleshy lips on fleshy lips. In seven drawings of an unassuming size, Andy Graffiti has gone straight to the sex where his hands have caressed the genitals leaving sensual wanderings in messy tracks upon a once pure white page. His wanderings have a bisexual nature as penises are touched as well as vaginas, sizeable stems stroked to a dark greasiness while cherries nestle in hair, rouge red like the age-old simile for the hymen or as if cursed by the stain of menstruation. These are erotic drawings. They depict the root of the matter.

This visible lustiness is not devoid of feeling. It is a hot rendition of intimacy. Rubbed by the warm palm to a waxen shimmer, the dark panels are the literal semblances of intimacy at night, under the sheets, when darkness furthers the mysterious attractions of sexuality. They are whisper drawings, telling small secrets and not divulging identity other than sex, male or female. They are a suite of private moments where no names or histories get in the way of the pleasures. They are drawings of a mature sexuality, an experienced lover who has abandoned the ego in the pursuit of knowing the other. Like the sequestered rawness of "Last Tango in Paris" this is about sex, not futures, co-habitation or relationship. Andy Graffiti's drawings have the capacity to arouse.

Reading *The Pillow Book* provokes a like happenstance, where eventually not only the artist/writer but the viewer/reader is affected by the castles of fleshy imaginings and lured into a passionate place where juices well up and cups overflow. More evocative and less pornographic than the drawings, the seduction of the poetry is in the perfect turns, the combinations of words that become irresistible phrases that inspire an aesthetic exclamation that in turn leads to the erotic.



Untitled, pastel on paper, 15x11 inches, 2006

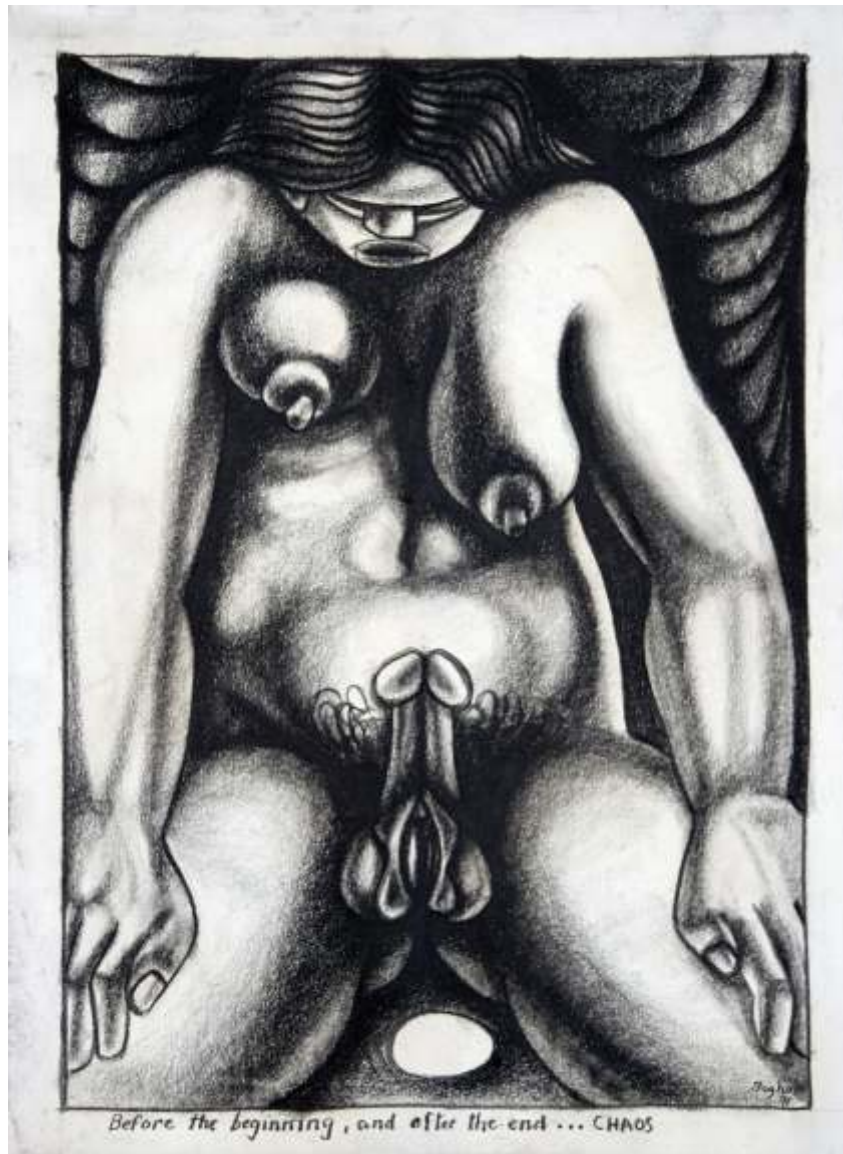
Bogos Kalemkiar

An Exotic Erotic Christmas

Bogos' bodies are bombastic. They bump with fleshy brashness, seemingly bursting the picture plane and invading the private space of the viewer as if their proximity sense was slightly too permissive. Big hiped women, taken from the viewpoint of a masculine gaze, seem to miss the fact that they are the focal point. Languorous and sensuous in the soft pastel sketches, they are the permissive invitations to enjoy the sensations of the flesh for the body embodies the erotic impulses and flesh signifies sensuality and there is nothing quite as enticing as a nude. The sexuality of painting from the figure cannot be disguised or averted even when the context is mythological, classical or exotic. Bare naked ladies, whether in an art book, magazine, strip show or museum, invoke the response of exposure.

The work shifts into another dimension in the more formal drawings where a religious text is quoted. Wrestling with the mysteries of creation and sexuality, Kalemkiar harkens back to a time of passion plays where a mixture of pagan and Christian references excite and taint the religious iconography while lending a formality to the shamanistic. Bringing to mind traditional settings with the heavy lines of stained glass windows in ecclesiastical spaces, the rude insertion of hermaphroditic genitals gives the origin of the species a new take.

There is also the insinuation of magic, spells that the body remembers from the dawn of civilization that have been reborn again and again into the gene structure, each time reignited by sex. The frontal presentation of the figures in these drawings could be the beginning of a set of cards where the players are linked to royal lines, serpents intertwine with humans and the Tarot is born from the affairs of supernatural agencies. Beyond the range of ordinary knowledge, the occult influences have crept into a contemporary artist's oeuvre and Bogos Kalemkiar possessed - has used his adept hand to further the subliminal messages.



Before The Beginning, charcoal on paper, 30 x 22 inches, 2003

Donna Kriekle

An Exotic Erotic Christmas

Amongst all of the 'isms' where do you place Donna Kriekle's opalescent, metallic renderings of grasshoppers courting, fore-playing and eventually copulating? In the realm of delight, whimsy and play.

Art has been historically associated with the lofty realms, high and intellectual thoughts, religious inquiries, votive inspiration and moral example. Lighter and less pontificating were the pastorals; neo-classicism and beauty rising to the surface and allowing for sensual appreciation. Donna takes a rather annoying bug, the grasshopper which is especially obnoxious to prairie people, and grants it light consideration. In doing so, the fragile exoskeletons, painted with metallic paints become as gorgeous as the scarab jewelry of the Egyptians. To further the reclamation of dignity, Donna has depicted them mating adding a prelude to the sex act that parallels human mating activities. She grants them specificity with vague identities, preferences and grace. The thin legs of the grasshoppers form patterns, their brittle arms clasp each other to their breast plates and the pictorial depiction of sex in the field is presented from a perspective that is eye to eye with the act, right in the range of the intimate buggy encounter.

The black backgrounds with the iridescent paint further allude to science fiction. The robotic semblance, aerodynamic shapes and architectonic angles, as they glow from the darkness of a matt black ground remind us that within nature lie the origins of the mechanical. There is also a grim insinuation that the toxic chemicals used to spray the grasslands and protect the harvest for human consumption just might have crept into the biological makeup of the grasshoppers and created their eerie luminosity. Perhaps there is a philosophy related to quantum physics at play in the miniature dance of the grasshoppers and Kriekle's delight is the pathway to the awareness of the interconnection between species.



For-Play #4, acrylic on black alphamat, 7.5 x 5.5 inches, 2006

Zachari Logan

An Exotic Erotic Christmas

Although there is diversity, a consistency rules with unflinching surety. There are no women. There are only men and each man is an archetypical, perfect specimen of maleness. Zachari Logan's man is a prince among men. He has an apollonian body. He is in the process of discovering the New World. He is a man among men even when wearing a ballgown.

Zachari Logan depicts with graphite in a manner reminiscent of romantic illustration. He has created a neo classical narrative of modern men with hip goatees, Little Lord Fauntleroy curls, baseball caps and sideburns dressed in the costumes of centuries previous or flaunting a Spartan nakedness. They inhabit a focused world, each figure realistically modeled with dramatic shadows adding clarity and dignity. Each man is concentrated on his task. They are busy doing the work of men, exploring the world in ships or scaling, mining and exploring mankind. In "Gulliver," Jonathon Swift's character is beached. The Lilliputians climb and claim the burly male body. They stand on his head, they peer into his anus, they truss his testicles. Zachari has lassoed masculinity.

The drawings are larger than the normal concept of drawing. Drawing has a history of being preparatory work, secretive intimate recordings, unfinished, undeveloped and partial ideas that have been given a cursory life on paper. Zachari Logan transcends both the physical and the conceptual limitations of drawings. He blows up an intimate statement of homoerotic yearning and grants the subject a monumental, dignified bearing.



untitled, graphite on paper, 14 x 10.5 in, 2006

Julie Oakes

An Exotic Erotic Christmas

Our society so often asks its artists to please, soothe or decorate. Julie Oakes shakes this complacency by compelling us to view work that contradicts this notion. Julie uses strong shrill images that jangle our nerve endings and confront us constantly with messages in an almost "comic strip" immediacy. No subtlety here! These are images that provoke, confront and even repel. She commands us to notice and react. Merely sensational? Not a chance.

The work has substance. These pieces are not hastily conceived or executed, but are witty, intelligent and speak of good craftsmanship. They are rich in material, color, detail and pattern. Her visual language is often lush and sensual: an unabashed celebration of paint and erotic imagery. Her messages are stark and exclamatory dealing with issues such as discrimination, feminism, greed and misuse.

Renita Kraubner, curator of "Born to Shock" at the O.A.A. Gallery.



Coming Out of the Closet - three panels each, pastel on paper - 110" x 30" - 1993

Gord Smith

An Exotic Erotic Christmas

Penises, vaginas and breasts are polished to compete with the glow of the sun. Gord Smith's erotic sculptures relate to the diversity and interconnection of nature as it twists from geometry into organic forms. Much like the Pygmalion myth when the Cypriot king sculpted the perfect Aphrodite and the goddess took pity on his ardor and brought the sculpture to life, so Smith's erotic bronzes fulfill a niche not yet imagined by the original creator. Tit-Roll, a concise combination of female genitalia, Tri-ball or Adam's Handle could be brought forward as contestants for the ultimate physiognomy, the stuff that is spoken of in the creation myths. Smith grounds a subject that has been shied away from by fixing the sensual in solid bronze sculpture.

The attraction of the male genitalia to the female opening, the desire to enter another human while at the same time releasing one's own life essence, the sounds of fluid exchange and the guttural grunts of animal beginnings - all of these supple and subtle exchanges are fixed in bronze. The material attests to the commitment to launch the imagery towards infinity and grant a kind of everlasting-ness to eroticism.

The great erotic literary collections of the past were quite often retained by the clergy and it was in the secret recesses of religious libraries where the erotic texts were kept to be shown only to those who could digest them without undo attention, attention that could corrupt the viewer. The belief was that it took a strong faith to be able to understand the place of eroticism in life and that only the very wise could sustain the knowledge without corruption. There were erotic Renaissance treatises that were destroyed during periods of purge; so strong were they alleged to be. The concept of a wild potential where all might break loose if sexuality was to be given a seat in the parliament of our life's legislature has exerted an undeniable slant on the acceptance of sexual content in art and literature. It is this area of censorship, this politicized arena of earthly delights, that Smith has solidified in enduring bronze.

This group of bronzes, first begun in 1993, have never been shown. Perhaps they are still so ahead of their time that the status quo will catch up to their bold declaration of sexuality many years hence. But Gord Smith, with the stature of self realization, is ready to call it as it is and has vested dignity to a subject often relegated to the back pages of underground newspapers. The erotic impulse is impressive. Only an experienced voice could reign as confidant and unflinching in the face of a subject that has flipped politicians, popes and more than one sacred vow, upside down.

Yet light is still the essential component for as in the lightness of being, it is the balance to the responsibility of existing. Just as sex can be the great release to let off the pressure of the stress of two separate entities relating, so the light reflects back from the bronzes and filters throughout the lacy circles that make up the drawings. Pastel and lovely, the drawings bounce and wriggle with energy like cells completing an organic whole.



Adam's Handle, cast bronze, 6.5x5.5x3 in., 1995

Eric Wickes

An Exotic Erotic Christmas

Eric's drawings of sexy women in provocative poses bring to mind a tradition of illustrations associated with 'slick'. There was an adept, talented hand drawing, a playboy's touch that brought an insinuation of class, taste, and even elegance to the acts depicted. From a decidedly male gaze, an appraisal is taken from a connoisseurs vantage point with the cliché accoutrements of glossy pin-up girls - little white socks, high platform heels, bondage ties, blindfolds, a man's shirt and tie on a nearly naked woman. This is the sex trade at its best, a land that has assumed an almost mythological proportion in the annals of sex history, the time honored rumor that there are high-class whores. The women, created by Eric (do such women exist?) coax us into the fantasy of sex for sale, the sex that costs yet has no attachments and is free in other respects; free of strictures, commitment and certainly not tainted by either the harsh realities of disease or the sour aftertaste of moral judgment. Eric Wickes is giving us the all American man's interpretation of the all American dream girl, the same 'girl next door' that first inspired Hugh Hefner to launch Playboy Magazine.

In a world where the articulation of sexuality has become politicized, policed and rebellious, it is an act of courage to present such a testament to the enjoyment of a man's taking a woman. Without the worry that he might be branded a misogynist, harbor an unrealistic vision with AIDS raising a grim specter over the sex trade or that the full blooded male stance is not quite 'hip' in our bisexually oriented liberation; Wickes delivers a handsome product. The babes are hot and if the orientation is 'het', the desire rises to 'do' them. Has Eric managed to win over the critical perception, titillate the prudish and entice the eyes of the modest? These elegant drawings, "Ex-girlfriends," bring exotic up to the dignity of Gypsy Rose Lee when she first peeled off her glove as a 'strip tease artist.'



Amy - charcoal on paper - 41 x 30 in. - 2006

Ivan Yovanovich

An Exotic Erotic Christmas

With a masculine urge towards tactility, Ivan Yovanovich comes to grip with detritus. His choices of found objects are substantial, no floating garbage or airy remnants of distracted littering but weighty adamant, stubborn substances. The work inspires a gut reaction like the raw sexuality of young men whose strengths are fueled by healthy hormones and irrepressible appetites. There is a staking at place, a claiming of territory whereby the art pieces, especially when lying on the floor, exhibit an uncouth, immodest, stiff surrender that begs to be managed.

Feminine and masculine are both present for although the relationship to physiognomy is more often female with the crevices between limbs being similar to vaginal orifices, the material comes from the masculine world. The pieces inspire rough handling. It is partially the choice of the found object, the shape of the wood, that suggest that it is most reasonable to hoist the piece up by the crotch, an implied rudeness that Yovanovich exemplifies with hints to bondage practices by dressing the wood in harnesses originally meant for domestic beasts. The suggestion of female genitalia, either left as natural as they were found or rouged like the nether lips of a brothel mistress, insinuate sado-masochistic acts. The studded messages, "stripper" or strip her" further the invitation to manhandle and engage in a 'debaucherous' celebration. That the wood is shaggy with weathered wear and splinters apparent, creates the sense that to fornicate with this wooden woman, sans identity other than gender, would be to yield to a lusty moment so intense that it would beget destruction rather than new life. And to offer these found objects, barely manipulated up as 'art' further challenges the relationship that humans have to objects and the craft of the artist to historical forms of art making.

A cross between an urban inventor and contemporary allegorist, Ivan interacts with intensity and serves up an intellectually complex premise that even truncated, dead trees, can lead to arousal.



StripHer II, found object & mixed media, 32x45x44 in., 2006

Highly Recommended, January 11 - February 20, 2007

The most enthusiastic, vociferous and intuitive audience for art is the one made up of artists. They stay the longest, discuss the most, pinch pennies in order to acquire, boo the loudest and leap the highest in standing ovations.



Headbones, The Drawers has turned to the artists from 2006 for their recommendations. How apt for the title of the exhibition that coincides with the presentation of the HEADBONE AWARD to be Highly Recommended, referring to the fact that the current choice of paper works was chosen from Headbone's artist's recommendation, for who has a better and more concerned finger on the pulse than the artists themselves!

The 2006 Headbones Award was created by Gord Smith, cast bronze, 6x3x3 inches and presented to Julie Oakes by the Headbones' artists.



Billy Copley

Highly Recommended

With an orientation to the page and Pop, the imagery in Billy Copley's recent works on paper propel the precepts of the pop artists into fast-forward and this festinating results in a giddily perplexing narrative. Like the wackiness of Saturday morning cartoons or the shifting roles of paper dolls as they don their paper disguises, each piece is full of adventurous changes.

There is a lot going on within the four borders of the page. Copley melds the abstract urge with the disciplined habits of an obsessively precise aesthetic. With an unabashed freedom to borrow from kitsch and sentimental rag barrels, he snips, pastes, prints, rubs and paints his way into a new corner, a place of no return for there are so many layers of visuals that the process of making or looking back to the beginning is hard to determine. He accomplishes the same novelty within his palette with an evident demonstration of ability, for technically, these are sophisticated performances of artistry. Relishing creativity, there is a lip-smacking tastiness in the riot of things, recognized and strange, within the layered compositions. Characters are balanced in a clown's ring of juggling balls. These appear to be happy works, but they are also disquieting for they are insistent in their screaming need for attention much like the play of children.

The works are mature, however loud they scream, power pieces with a lot of visual presence. Copley extracts a varied beauty from the world of tacky objects as he juxtaposes many styles from hard edge to the mottled handling of surfaces; a wealth of visual treatments that carry braggadocio as if they were developed from a strategy to wow the viewer who in turn loves to be wowed. With psychedelic, hallucinogenic perspectives, the foregrounds recede as backgrounds approach and the relationships between visual spaces are queerly developed so that elements fold into each other's proximity.

Billy Copley seems to be pushing all of the buttons at once and taking us on a ride that brings forth a queasy, yet thrilled, jubilation. For those who get their kicks out of art, it's a rush better than a carnival ride.



Untitled Devil, collage on paper, 40x29 in., 2006

Mitchell Friedman

Highly Recommended

With such a young history, outside of the original native culture, pure American folk tales and mythological characters are sparse, but poignant - Johnny Appleseed, Paul Bunyan, Paul Revere, Uncle Sam and Aunt Jemima, to name a few. Born of the common folk, they were graphically realized in simple materials, wood carvings, woodblock prints, embroidery and simple multiple procedures. Reflected in the style that rose with The Ashcan School, the artists presented a rakishly thin, almost caricatured rendition of its citizenry and the animals, usually domestic, followed suit. Partially due to visible poverty simply being translated into visual formats, the style had an apocalyptic edge, as if the inhabitants of this world of physical deprivation and difficulties were poised on the edge of death. So it is in the work of Mitchell Friedman. The dark environs, countrified and deserted where boney horses wander and the specter of a hanged man delivers a bleak message of human recrimination, a Blake-like handling is dramatically delivered.

The light is fractured as if splintered by lightening. It is the world of witches and rumor mongering and it is a pertinent parallel to the political climate that exists in America today. Although not entirely statement oriented there is a visible delight in the working of the medium, especially the excitement of chiaroscuro contrasts and vivid accents of lurid coloration - the hint of radiated waves emanating from far distant and ominous explosions is implied. Partially a by-product of the technique, the unflinching rawness of jagged lines and spiky extremeness is discomforting. Yet with the tragic grandeur of depressed conditions, also comes a flicker of positive recognition and hope.



Noon Witch, graphite and oil on paper, 42 x 31 in., 2006

Sybil Goldstein

Highly Recommended

Sybil is a painter. Best known for her large canvases, these paper works are developed paintings on paper with the basis of an impasto ground layered by light. There is an atmospheric quality to the layering of paint, gestural handling of the strokes and chiaroscuro depiction of light. There is also awkwardness as if the footprints of her journey are evidence of having explored a challenging path. It is this aura of 'challenges overcome' that creates an after effect of admiration for a task accomplished. And in the wake of the admiration there is room for sensual enjoyment and the intellectual appreciation of the juxtaposition of elements.

Goldstein's work can be related to Matisse when there are figures, the Post-impressionists (Bonnard and Van Gogh in particular) when there are interiors or gardens and Picasso with the angular treatment of the horses heads, to name just a few from the works at hand. She walks between subject matters as if channeling from a cosmic visual subconscious that was most prevalent during the throes of Modernism. Goldstein's choice of specific subject is also rich in historical reference; there is a memory of Velasquez in BCE I, a recollection of Emily Carr's filtered light in Heaven II, an awareness of Utrillo in Flicker Alley. She appropriates from a collective consciousness of art history. She uses the same tools of the trade as they did - none of the digital under-lays or tricky new media, but an honest stab at the meat of the matter - the depiction through paint of the variety and oddness of existing. This is the source of admiration when confronted with Sybil Goldstein's work. She obviously believes in the transcendent power of the process of painting and the resultant creation of new visual phenomena - but not without acknowledging the complexity of her awareness with a salute to those who came before. With an unwavering commitment to Neo Expressionist painting, Goldstein probes the bubble of the present and joins the avant-garde.



Heaven II, mixed media on paper, 48 x 32 in, 2003

Karina Kalvaitis

Highly Recommended

There was a time when the color pink was considered too soft for abstract expressionism and then De Kooning claimed it and ran with pink. There was a time when kitsch, despite the Pop movement's progressive claims, was untouchable and then Jeff Koons flipped kitsch upside down by blowing it big-side up. His puppy, covered in flowers and emblematic of everything cute, gained footing and barked. Karina Kalvaitis is also dealing with cute and yet she isn't transcending the sweetness through size, brash compositions or new media manipulations. She is relying on the pull of endearment and reinforcing belief with her line. Her sensitive drawing supports the potentially trite and causes cynicism to wane. The manatees are exquisitely rendered with such consideration to detail that her premise that they are worthy subjects for adult and often pre-occupied contemplation becomes a consideration. Vested with personalities and titled to further the take on their predicaments, they are out to win hearts and sneak under the contemporary veneer of hard skinned attitudes.

There is nothing apparently offensive. On first embarking into Kalvaitis' risky land of sentimentalism, the manatees pose themselves as harmless creatures and there is a hint of the cuddly perfection found in nature. But they are not engaged in the real environ of hunting for food and shelter but in a social interchange that parallels the human world. They seem to have lost their way in a cozy dream state where they mush and peer out of their little eyes with an incomprehensible nostalgia. They have become spineless. The drawing titled Spiney where the ectoderm of one manatee has sprouted little spikes is not regarded with welcome by the two that are obviously communicating to each other their suspicions on their morphing fellow. There are psychological repercussions to be garnered from too much cuteness. The manatees assume depression and pass meaningless bubbles back and forth between themselves. They become distracted by small circuses.

A fitting comparison to a meaningless life couched in a foil that resembles the plush bed-mates and cartoons of childhood, the strange world of muffled manatees is thought provoking. Is this the whimper of a tired civilization or is it an allowable slip into the maudlin reality where adults stack their beds with stuffed toys and fluffy pillows? Whatever the answer, Karina Kalvaitis has squeezed a lot of meaning into these seemingly innocent and very quiet drawings.



Bottom Sticked, graphite on paper, 10x12 in., 2006

Jesse McCloskey

Highly Recommended

There are stories that are common to cultures and ages that serve as templates for the common narrative of the time: the creation myths, the passion plays, the Greek tragedies, Theatre Del Arte, classical allegories and biblical morality tales. The action within them serves to illustrate the temper of the time. Jesse McCloskey appears to have developed a current common narrative within the consistent imagery of the dog and the girl that he has used in paintings and drawings over a number of years. Are the dog and the girl with their hedonistic foreplay and wild abandon an apt metaphor for a debauched culture or is his work a release for both himself as the perpetrator of the imaginings and for the voyeuristic perspective?

What might have seemed to be solely a flight of fancy into naughty-making, has now gained the credence of a commitment and the story has even progressed to encompass raunchier sexual exploits with more brutal retaliation against the harassment metered out by the 'other', be it dog or girl. This work is not as simplistic as the pitching of good against evil, despite the angelic face of the girl or the gradual leaning of the physiognomy of the dog to goat-ishness for the girl gets down and dirty as well. Neither is hanging on to appearances and in fact the girl has been showing her witch-y side, throwing back the liquor with apparent relish and riding the strangled canine hard.

This is permissive abandon, bestiality and bad messy fun. There seems to be no moral amidst the searing colors and libidinous sweeps of paint. From the contemporary awareness of a world with a political climate of masked purposes, incomprehensible corporate power-mongering and materialistic prompts, it's a relief to spend some quality time following the scatological incorrectness of McCloskey's girl and dog.



Red Sox, paint & paper collage, 22x30 in., 2003

Becky Parisotto

Highly Recommended

Trompe l'oeil or 'fool the eye' paintings hold a respected place within the history of art, whether used as a teaching tool or the trump card of artists. There is a temptation when in possession of a 'good hand' to display the expertise. After all, the rewards are great for the layman reacts to the ability to depict - to the point of tricking him into believing that he is seeing the actual rather than the drawn facsimile of the object - as the exhibition of god-like skill. The artist knows otherwise. There is nothing brave in the exhibition of draftsmanship; it is almost shameful to permit the hand to be admired as if at a peepshow of talent. But within slight of hand and the magic-making reconstruction of phenomena, there falls the very substance of art. That Becky Parisotto has chosen to depict objects made from folded paper with such care and attention is a point worth noting for by edifying humble paper playthings (a paper hat, origami bird, paper dolls or paper airplane) and paying attention to the slighter skills of construction, the acts of both making and depicting are heightened. Combine this intersection of the minuscule and the majuscule with an adept ability to depict and a phenomenal object results replete with all of the aesthetic components that make up a work of art.

Religious practice often returns to simplicity in order to clear the mind for the grander concepts. Hence, a monkish cell, restricted diet or disciplines of mind and body both foster and sustain spiritual perception. Parisotto, by focusing on the details of the folded paper pieces, realizes the intricacy of the three dimensional world as it is able to be transformed into a different dimension - the second - through the miraculous human action of drawing and coloring. The co-ordination of eye to brain to hand is sophisticated, intellectual and sufficiently academically adept to perform a conjuring - an object upon a surface so that it appears to exist within space, with a front and back, surround of atmosphere and all taken from a specific and understandable point of view. There is a profoundly human statement in trompe l'oeil work for we have the ability to not only comprehend the transformation that has occurred, but also to perceive the difference between those who can accomplish the trick, the slight of hand, and those who can't. It is the magnetism of artistry that draws the viewer into Becky Parisotto's fine drawings. And it is her humble choice of subject matter that takes it far beyond posturing.



Crane, mixed media on paper, 22 by 30 in., 2006

Laurie Sponagle

Highly Recommended

Charcoal is usually used to register looseness and not so concerned with precision. Laurie Sponagle defies this convention and it is in her defiance that her definitive renderings rise above the common lot. With charcoal powder and masking, Sponagle is able to gain the deep blacks of the charcoal, an unruly substance that likes to drift away from tight enclosures and reign in the evocative medium that seems to come with built-in shadows and mystery. By concentrating on specific subject matter, in this case interiors and nudes, the medium becomes the common denominator. Each subject area retains a consistent look, although similar to each other through a cool psychological tone.

The chairs have been assigned the personalities of those who sat on them. Within the rigid lines of wainscoting and framework, the implied presence of humanity is infused in the construction of the man-made environ as well as the vague auras of inhabitants past. With rich lush blacks and pristine sharp lines, Laurie Sponagle infuses an animation into the venue, as if a ghost was sitting there, warming the wood and holding spooky, silent court.

In an empathic placement with the chairs, her nudes fix humanity in a cold contrast of black and white. Without heads, they have no identity. They are as cool as alabaster, not so much stopped in the middle of motion, but posing. Who they are is not important. They exist as a phenomenon of neutrality where the body is engaged in no more than the occupation of space. This stasis, - faceless, nameless and unmotivated- is more like a thing than a person.

The chairs have been lent the identity of sitters. The nudes have assumed the clarity of an inanimate object. Sponagle, through her controlling artfulness has mastered her medium to omnipotent ends.



Conversations with Time: Fulford Chairs (Mabel Ellis),
charcoal on paper, 29 by 22 inches, 2006

Anthony Taylor

Highly Recommended

The implied time line of the documentation of an incident, lifted from current events, media exposure or personal history is reinforced by the schism between the medium and the message. Anthony Taylor's sepia tone drawings, executed with a deft renaissance hand, have the look of the past. The subject, however, fast-forwards and zooms into the immediate, hip, and cheeky present. Recognizable political faces, and the clutter and waste of our culture seem to share an umbilical relationship with species or objects as diverse as animal kingdoms to urinals. The organic relationships between the elements in the more complex pieces have compositional clues, like connect-the-dots- directives that don't necessarily come up with a recognizable over-all picture. Abounding in visual clichés that work much like the phrase "the world is his oyster", it is not sure as to whether pearls are being granted or the grit is still being embalmed by saliva. This cuisine of serving up whatever is at hand without being overly concerned with customary or traditional tastes allows for an eclectic menu that with global and technical acumen is easy to digest. Whether the origins of the combinations are known is not as important as the experience of the new associations.

This conglomerate imagery works because the facile drawing style inspires confidence in the experience that is being offered. Anthony Taylor's draftsmanship, as labored as it is, speaks of investment. He has gone so far as to precisely and artfully present the visual. The viewer can, at the very least, appreciate the display of ability. The work of art with the impact of resultant imagery is now the criteria on which to find the footing to climb on board. With the solitary animals, this is a simple step for they invite acceptance through the now-ness of cropping and execution. The stark presence of the young man with a polar bear parka in Staten Island, for instance, has a dynamic oddness that can burn an image of sufficient staying power to compete with the barrage of visual stimulus that comes from the constancy of contemporary, media exposure. Staten Island is a memorable piece, one of many.



Tales Born From Ashtrays, oil on Mylar, 22x17 in., 2006

Kathleen Vance

Highly Recommended

The unfathomable complexity of the natural world, where particular interdependencies shape outcome and determine growth, is brought into focus by Kathleen Vance's attentive lines. Since every blade of grass, wildflower, stone, weed or shaggy tile of bark is given its due, there is an equitable relationship between the hand of the drawer and the natural world. By boiling it down (rendering) to a section of land or tree bark, there is potential to examine with precision like a surgeon peeling back the layers of flesh with a scalpel and then probing with gentleness in order to examine the make-up of the body. The path, wending its way with a graceful curve into the distance, a pathway of pristine white paper, is a place to kneel and examine closer the delicacy. As it snakes on the two dimensional page upwards, towards the top, the clear passage heads heavenwards much as the stem of a plant reaches towards light.

These drawings are meticulously executed diagrams for sculptures or studies for three dimensional projects. There is more of the hand of woman than the hand of God here, for Vance is not only overwhelming with her disciplined style but also determined to press the innocent slice of nature further under her thumb. She brings the outdoors indoors, domesticates and house-trains the unruly offspring of mother earth. She constructs a cross section of pathway complete with sections of planted vegetation, real grass and weeds, replete with an inner pump to keep the sculpture watered. Like architectural cross sections and plans made in order to increase the understanding and comprehension of the proposed building, the drawings anticipate the sculpture taking into account each minuscule component, realizing each leafy, barky, sandy presence with the indelible clarity of individualizing lines.

There is an I-Ching saying "It furthers one to have somewhere to go" Kathleen Vance leads us down a primrose path where the dalliance is controlled within a parameter. By limiting the sensational intake of nature to her specified and somewhat clinical analysis of a patch of ground or section of tree bark, nature is ruled in and brought into focus.



Running Stream 1, pen & ink on paper, 14 x 17 in., 2006

Ethnic Convergence, February 22 - April 3, 2007

There is an ethnic convergence within the art world that makes it a far richer place in which to appreciate cultural and characteristic diversities. By bringing together the work of Canadian born, but now living in Mexico, Victor Klassen, and nine artists whose nascent cries were first made in far distant lands, Headbones, the Drawers, pays homage to cultures other than Canadian, and like a global bazaar, the sights are astounding.

Gykan Project Room featuring - **Belladonna & the Awakening**

A bass, bassoon, trumpet and regiment of rhythm fused with imagery-rich, soulful rhyme speaks the language of social justice and community. This band epitomises the experience of "spirit rising." Laying down grooves somewhere between jazz, funk and hip hop, it's all good.



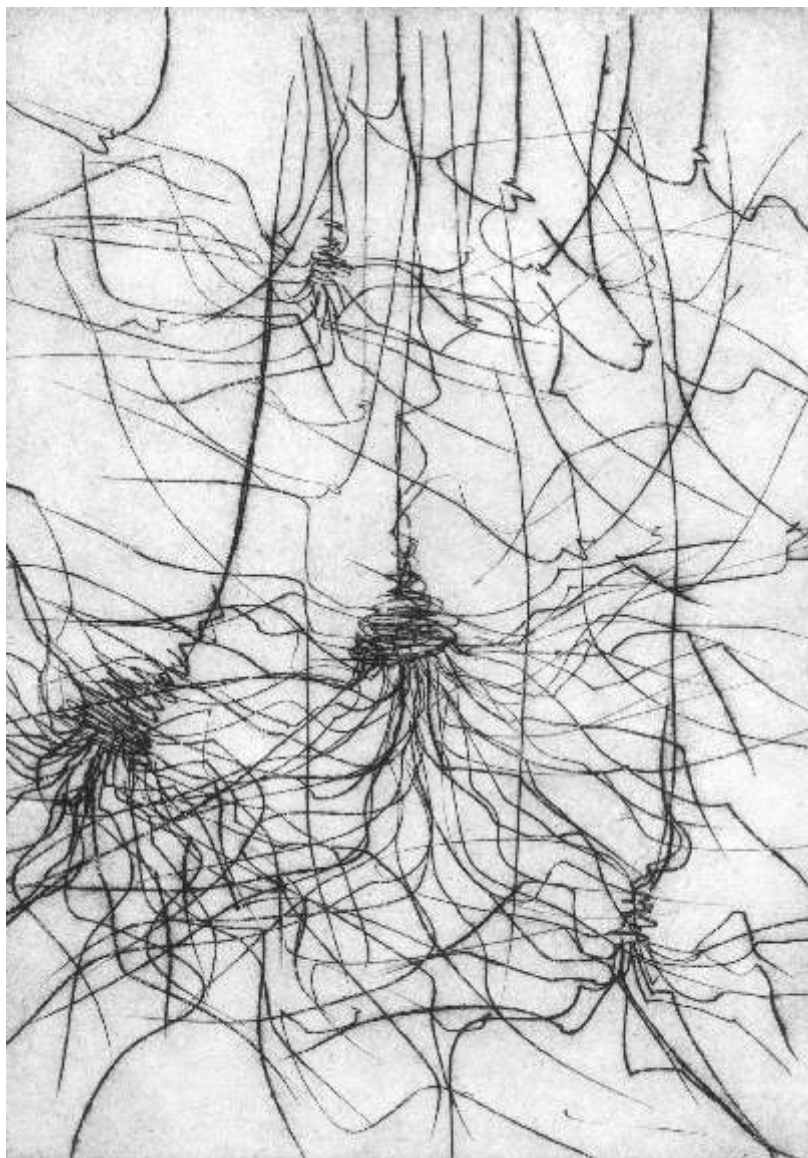
Rana Bishara

Ethnic Convergence

As if there was never modernity, as if Palestine was not occupied by the Israelis (Rana is a Palestinian living in Israel), as if the authenticity of cultural specification had not been blurred by the influences of the 'other' as global awareness tainted the focus of tradition; Rana Bishara's works on paper communicate the integrity of a centered vision. Stained by henna, the muddy dye that is used to color the skin and hair and an ancient beautifier, the handmade, fragile paper supports the calligraphic markings that bring to mind Arabic scripts. The honest simplicity, consistently more gracious than the pontificating art of the market driven western world, is effective. Faultlessly secure in her technique and application, the work speaks of a return to roots that have been twisted by countless influences. It speaks of a woman's place of resignation, the boundaried perspectives of walled enclosures and materials close at hand. Yet despite the quiet presentation and humble means, the work sings and reverberates like an ululation.

Not that the work is uninformed by the modern world. Rana Bishara has not been adverse to using mediums as progressive as installation and performance to put forth statements concerning human rights and freedom of expression. The courage of acceptance, the embracing of the less demonstrative from within a country that has been permeated by strife, and the bravery to put forth the value of gentler expressions is the subtlest of strategic methodologies. It is a Ghandian methodology. It will not entertain violent or aggressive promotions and instead brings forth a sureness of foot that is admired for its graceful dexterity.

Are the signs messages and if so are they of peace or passion? It is impossible to know from a western vantage point and this fact as well, illustrates that although ethnicities might converge with occasion, their differences remain mysterious. Since there is no guilt passed outwards in Rana Bishara's paper offerings, no didactic warnings to stay out, the door is open to experience another culture.



Untitled - drypoint, 9x7.5 inches, 2005

Ellen Butler

Ethnic Convergence

The attraction of intimacy and the closeness required to wander over the details is offset by an overall lingering pleasure in the perusal of the whole with all of its misty subtleties. The coloring, as in ancient Chinese scrolls, is evocative with muted monochromatic simplicity.

The romantics were absorbed with the contemplation of the passing of time and the vulnerability of beauty. In Ellen Butler's work, the image seems to disintegrate before our eyes and the only semblance of stasis is the Chinese symbol. There is the suggestion of immeasurable distance yet a stellar glow appears to emanate off of the floating or falling biological forms. There is, as well, a haze that partially obfuscates them. The sense of dissemblance in process is counterbalanced by the suspicion that this might be a frozen moment in time that has been irrevocably captured on paper for inspection. In contrast, the Chinese symbol fixes this floating world by marking the time or suggesting a place that is foreign to our Western knowledge bank for we cannot interpret the symbol or translate the dark scrawl that appears to be from an exotic language. As the symbol sinks into the paper with its shadowed recessing, the impression of a cloudy environment turns to stone. The illusion to otherness is fixed within a reference of desire - dewy , gorgeous and illusive.

The process is mysterious and Ellen Butler has the technical acumen to pull from many. There is the hint of photography. The frozen yarn-like squiggles resemble the microscopic traces of cellular life forms captured between specimen slides. The edges of the veins have the look of silverpoint. It is the enhancement of inherent loveliness through the hand of a competent beautician that seduces us into the consideration of beauty and the sublime.'



Leaf I, mixed media on paper, 48x60 inches, 2003

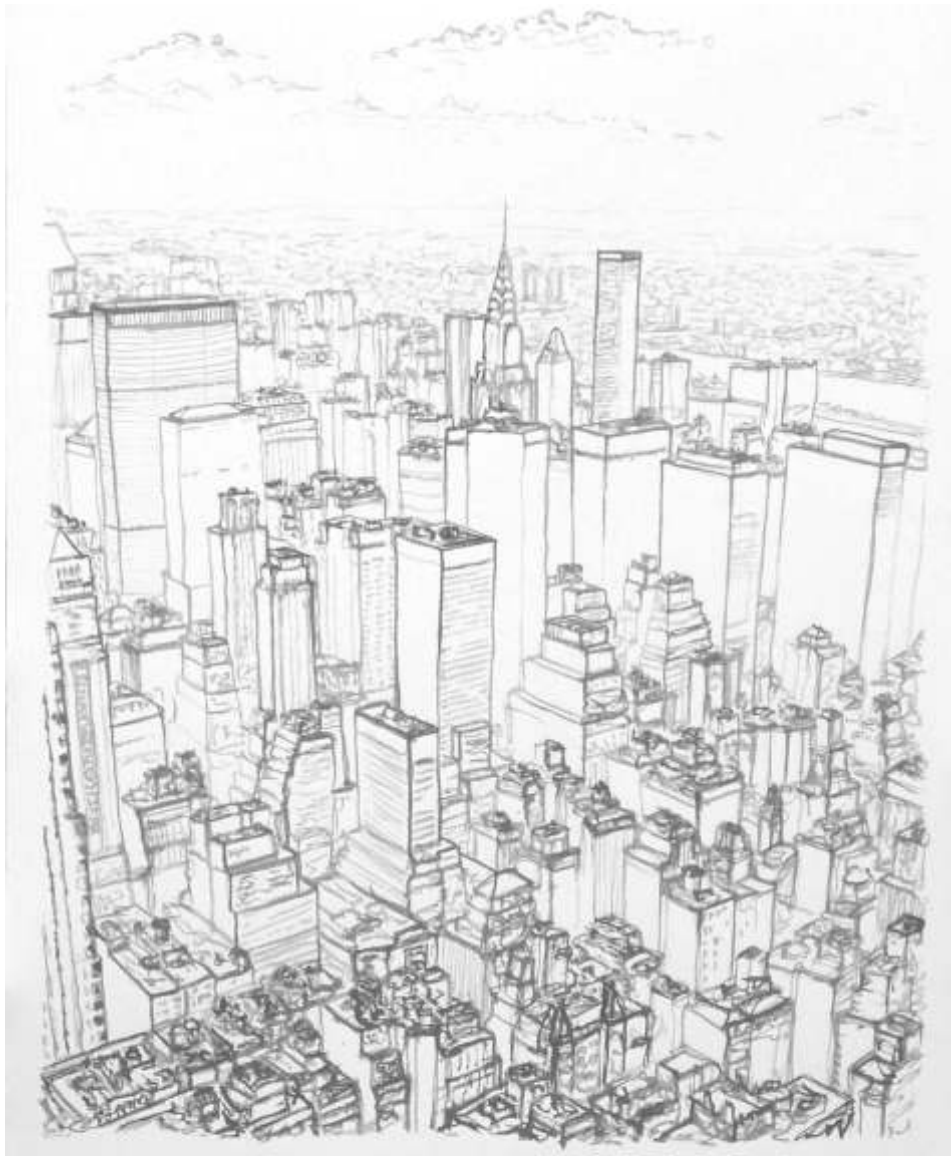
Adrian Doura

Ethnic Convergence

Doura brings us the empire of man spread before the viewer like the vista from the perspective of the Empire State, the Space Needle or, in Canada, it would be the CN Tower. Restaurants boast the spectacular views for those enjoying the city with the metropolis lying below moving as a minuscule traffic, banks of office windows and the neglected roof tops of buildings implying human activity but, for the viewer, it is far too high to actually see a person. There are no visible pedestrians from this height.

Along with the sophistication of urban architecture and the realization of millions of people living and working in close proximity, is the ability to place the artist's eye in the ominous position of overlord. Man has accomplished this. The secondary aspect, that of looking-down-upon reinforces the inherent status of this elevated perspective. The melding of the view and the viewer with the concept of humanity diminished by the power that allows for this tremendous perspective (planes and 'sky scrapers') places a philosophical idea precisely in the field of vision and through subject matter alone unites the world of seeing (the visual arts) with both the glory and the depersonalization of intense urbanity. If the job of the artist is to interpret his time, passing through his art the knowledge of his contemporary state, Adrian Doura has fulfilled the profile.

Add to the mix the fine, cool execution on a very good paper stock of an oriental-like brushwork with the gradations in tones reinforcing the perspective and the product becomes a succinct impression of sophistication, of a civilized culture that has within it's possession both architectural and engineering prowess. Far detached from the rooted naturalist, yet executed in a realistic style that is even more intense in the almost photographically painted works, Doura's cityscapes inspire contemplation. They provoke thoughts of man's beginnings by referring to just how far he has come and in doing so the pride of human accomplishments are given a few minutes of fame within the bustling quotidian rounds that are needed to produce a cityscape. This is the world of corporate gain seen from an objective, distanced and least disturbing perspective, that of 'above it all.'



Untitled, china ink on paper, 31 x 22.5 inches, 2007

Saroj Jain

Ethnic Convergence

A formalist who adheres to the conventionality of traditional materials and modernist forms, Saroj Jain has conquered the systems that once allotted the 'stronger' art forms to men. She is one of India's first female artists to venture outside of the craft arts and into the higher realms of sculpture. By adopting the age old techniques of stone carving and bronze casting, both massive and messy mediums that range outside of the more delicate spheres of women, she has grown to a position of eminence. She has also chosen abstraction, the most intellectual of styles and once again asserted herself as a strong presence, worthy of note. Yet she retains a womanly wisdom, one that encompasses humanity and the complex interdependent relationships between people.

She is sensitive and true to her materials, almost as if she has listened to them as they related their history and their connection to the inherent authenticity of the medium. The white stone is pristine, in line with its natural qualities. Bronze, with the age old melting of metal (the first of many philosopher's stones) along with the ancient recipes for process and patina, supports the human subject matter with a tried and true dignity of expression. Bronze and stone, the heavy materials, show commitment to her ideas and within the weighty medium, Saroj Jain makes a feminine statement. Especially in the figurative work, for example *Nritya* and *Soulmate*, she expresses feelings from a woman's world. That she has paired several of her works with Rabindranath Tagore's poetry further attests to her humanistic orientation.

It was said that only a man could have written "War and Peace" because women stayed at home. Their expression would have to be about the home. Women are in tune with care giving and because of the nature of the 'occupation' their accomplishments often go unnoticed. Saroj Jain asserts herself. With masculine means, she brings the heart of feminine insight into the public realm with her formal observance of mankind.



The Kiss, marble, approximately 16x16x18 inches

Erik Jerezano

Ethnic Convergence

Erik's world is becoming freakier and more specific. The general permutations between species and the spirits are in sharper focus and despite the violent acts depicted, the fog is clearing so that the spaces between digits become intense. The demarcations of purposeful mixing and morphing are not left to interpretation but documented with an attention to detail, as if experimental visual notes were taken on an unusual evening when the beings that wander the earth decided to go crazy on each other. This should be disturbing, but the privileged point of voyeurism, the witnessing of dubious acts, leave the viewer with no part in the affair other than the satisfaction of a rather morbid curiosity. This misplaced interaction between beasts - and also between man and animals - provides little provocation no reason to react with cries of repulsion.

The excellent drawing softens the subject, as does the great distance from which these stories are reviewed. With the expansive white pristine space suggesting a far-away viewpoint and the flat handling of the scenarios, exploration of outrageous performances between natural beings is made possible. There is nothing to support a cry of protestation, for the distance between reality and Erik Jerezano's world is too far apart. Therefore, he can twist and turn his characters; put them into wicked relationships with each other and it all comes back to invention. Looking carefully, and his line invites the careful inspection as does the clouded areas, and a revelation occurs there are grotesque and strange things happening and Jerezano knows how to draw! There is a moment on one of the virginal pages when a bird's head becomes a horse's and the nose of the horse is a small furry mammal and each is outlined along a silhouette with a minimal treatment of the features they are perfect throughout, and it becomes easy to wax on for Erik, himself, is visually saying something that is thoroughly interesting.



From "Animals That Collect Animals", ink & pencil on paper, 13x10 inches, 2006

Ashley Johnson

Ethnic Convergence

Modern living is overlaid with processes disguising our reliance upon the natural world. Animism, mysterious to contemporary Western understanding, establishes symbiotic relationships with animals - practically and symbolically. The masks of the native West Coast aboriginals for instance, often frightening, were used as a visual channel to understanding the spirit of the animal.

Historically, that incredulous understanding has been couched in allegory. Satyrs, centaurs and the many animal manifestations that Zeus assumed in order to interact with women (with Leda he became a swan; with Europa a bull) were a part of the visual vocabulary of the Greeks.

By morphing the human with the animal or depicting an interaction, Ashley Johnson breaks taboos to reveal concepts that are not commonly part of our existence. Johnson is telling stories using animals that are drawn from both the Western psyche and African culture. In one image, hyenas, nocturnal carnivores that feed primarily upon carrion, prey upon a female human infant. This image describes the abhorrent practice of raping infants to cure AIDS, absolutely and effectively depicting the desperation of the disease.

The impact of visual depictions foreign to our knowledge can be shocking. This jarring of sensibility, when executed in a readable manner, as it is by Johnson's dramatically cropped compositions and luminous coloring; is frankly powerful. The imagery touches one and is provocative. This is a positive step towards wisdom. That one might feel repulsion rather than attraction, is not a negative reaction, it is simply an intelligent awakening.

Africa, to one who is not African, may be incomprehensible and the depiction of beasts interacting with humans may strike chords that provoke horror. The unknown that is lurking beyond the periphery of knowledge is the cause of psychosis and Freud worked with this notion of recognizing and naming the areas of the consciousness that we have been socialized to ignore. With recognition, fear is allayed as the 'mysterious other' becomes an identifiable quotient. Once identified, it can be dealt with.



Anomalous Position, acrylic on paper, 42x38 inches, 2007

Goro Kadoi

Ethnic Convergence

With direct simplicity that relies on the recognition of an enigmatic image, Goro Kadoi captures attention. He is a Pop Japanese presence. With a dual discipline of music (he had a band and performed in NYC) and visual art, he takes advantage of his 'other-ness' with a piquant rendition of the hip-ness of modern Japan. He has invented a character, a unisex, simple being in a blue robe. There is just enough oddness in the makeup of his line-drawn, robed being to arouse curiosity as to the origin. Many possibilities come to mind - characters of Japanese comics, small and inexpensive toys, logos, graffiti and then there are the ancient associations - Shinto shrines, votive figures, coarse woodblock characters, or kabuki theater. The flat application of paint seems to veer towards a manufactured or screen printed look and yet the tremulous shading and line, with the odd mistake covered by impasto white in the background belies a slick reading. This brings the perception back to simplicity, not for the sake of dampening the human touch, but as a means to cutting through to the quick of iconography.

The woven black lines in some of the backgrounds have Japanese textile associations. The small white shape at the bottom of the figure, seen through what might be an opening in a blue robe, looks like a white bound foot contained within a clean black line. The white face resembles the powdered visage of a geisha. Dots or short dashes form the oriental eyes. The character, a combination of shapes, forms a figure much as the combined brush strokes of a Japanese character form the word. There are vestiges of pencil for the placement of the ink lines and sometimes there is a discrepancy as if in the application of the brush stroke a more precise rendition of the character was discovered. There is a unique individuality to each character despite the sameness and 'smurf'-like cartoon handling.

Deconstructing the Kadoi figures really leaves no clue as to their identity or origin. The exercise, instead, illustrates the fact that some images override their origins or associations and enter our pantheon of visual icons with a prescience that is unavoidably secure, like the birth of a new visual species.



Prince From The Sky, paint on paper, 30 by 22 inches, 2005

Victor Klassen

Ethnic Convergence

Pure abstraction is untainted by direct references to the physical world although it can provoke associations with elements from our corporeal existence. It is a product of the mind and because it is less concerned with the material world - although tied by the medium to the art world - it grants a picture of the make-up of consciousness. Man is aware of himself as an individual identity and yet where he places himself, the extreme 'I', is more a sense of belief or an idea than a realized concept. And thus, abstraction embodies mind, wherein the spirit is housed. Victor Klassen presents a picture of the interlacing thoughts and spaces between (as in 'spaced out') His work lends an intricacy that supports the dexterity of the mind as the eye travels along the colorful ropy highways, back into the depths of space and even now and again flying off the page, only to be drawn back into the maze with an invitation to consider visual phenomena, a product of the mind.

The richness of colors parallels the fabric of a life that has integrated cultures and religions (with their attendant visuals) into the solid homespun cloth of a Mennonite upbringing. Victor Klassen comes from a Canadian Mennonite family. He practices an Eastern meditation discipline - Vipasana. He has lived in Mexico for the past twenty years where he married a Mexican woman and has raised his daughter with dual citizenships. His life, infused with the diversity of vastly different cultural influences is reflected in his work, woven from a saturated palette to form a ground of color that is broken periodically by visual exclamations. His exposure to global influence produced a true ethnic convergence for he is an artist who has assimilated and processed the possibilities of a borderless existence, a deep actualization of world peace.

The product that Klassen hands over is a tool that allows the viewer to escape the round of earthly things and engage in a more elevated conversation with visual phenomena. It is like the space inside the head when with eyes shut, the traces of perception gradually recede and a freer and less constrained sense takes over. An untarnished field of color and light is there to be explored with tangential connections and veils lifted. This is when abstraction is pure, unattached to the agendas of virtual reality and let loose.



Untitled, acrylic on paper, 30x22 inches, 2006

Mahmoud Meraji

Ethnic Convergence

There is an old world craftsmanship in Mahmoud Meraji's unique visions. He has the hand of a fine drawer that can lay rightful claim to the glory of admiration at his talent and ability to depict. He uses his technical ability to support a far more inaccessible narrative. Like the story-line of dreams where the connections are hard to make but the sense is embedded in the memorable impact of the visual, so his figures and their situations veer away from logic to enter a more instinctual realm. He uses a vocabulary of images that seem to possess romantic underpinnings.

The work is subtle and classy, intellectual and yet fresh. His use of colors illustrates his taste. It is never too much, sparingly doled out to accentuate the detailed rendering. Mahmoud uses repetition in a symphonic sense, subverting rhythms in favor of a melody that forms agreeable successions and arrangements of shapes and movements. It is a classical melody with attention to form lending a general effect of balance while the emotions are distant and collected.



Untitled, pastel on paper, 17 x 11 inches, 1999

Srdjan Segan

Ethnic Convergence

Size brings monumental themes into play and yet is rarely executed in paper, a fragile medium. That the subject is a human image, stretched, hanging from the hands and visiting animist sites as it makes the long transition of space, both attests to the grand notion of humanity and also to the brief trajectory of each life through time.

All that the drawings embody is related to the artist's history through a traceable path. Srdjan Segan is a Serbian from Croatia, a minority ethnicity who had made up a lesser percentage of the population for centuries. He grew up in a country where the citizens were often pitted against each other. At nineteen he was able to receive a refugee status but it was not until he was twenty-four that he began the process that would allow him to immigrate to Canada; he was twenty-six when he finally arrived. He had changed, while in Serbia, from his studies in medicine to an interest in Fine Arts. The innards exposed in the drawings, twisted and mixed-up bring up the medical orientation of the body as corpus, as the physical structure and animal substance. The drawing as a whole, magnified as it is, becomes "the main or central mass of a thing". Then, there is the third connotation of a corpse or a carcass, splayed and hanging to cure. Srdjan uses charcoal and coffee to stain and draw on the paper - simple substances on a humble ground. In doing so, he grants the body a more 'full bodied' rendition of the matter making the concept of monumentality a virtual object in the art piece.

They are a testament to man's status, standing upright above all of the other species. They are not singularly consumed though for they incorporate images of the lesser realms and hence show the relationship and interdependency of the creatures of the earth. There is also an alien intonation as if the long paper men/women are from another galaxy, a silent witnessing being from outer-space.

We walk down the length of the bodies or squint to peer up at the faces from our picayune vantage point. We are connected to the giants through the large drawings and the human potential is made greater.



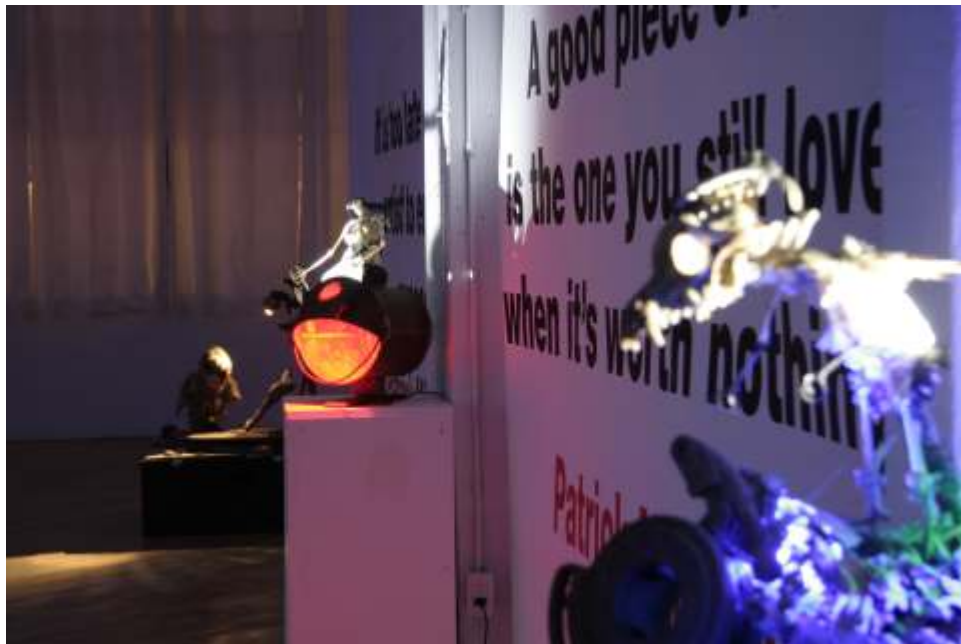
Tall Standing Figure, ink, dye & coffee on paper, 30 feet by 42 inches, 2007

For Font's Sake, April 5 - May 15, 2007

Before the Tower of Babel fell, it attempted to reach heaven but the confusion of language brought the grand ambition to a crumbling close. Text based work, often dry visually has a critical bite that clearly is picking up on a chaotic chatter. Transferred into didactic sayings or cryptic clues to the meanings of societal mores; the messages seem to be working as visual configurations in league with the shapely fonts.

Gykan Project Room

Stephan Bircher and Patrick Mimran are featured in the Gykan Project Room. Headbones Gallery thanks both Gykan Enterprises Inc. for the use of the space and SML Solutions for their generous support in printing the large banners for this project.



Carin Covin

For Font's Sake

Historically, the first scripts grew out of patterns, simplified shapes that roughly depicted things from the physical world. They were scratched into mud or sand with twigs, gouged onto wood and wall or chiseled from stone. They contained messages, communicating between humans. Carin Covin's work has previously dealt with patterns, repetition of shapes that often formed an all-over field. This new body of work implies messages for although the marks read as shapes - the origin of the shape seems to be letters. On light paper, sewn with white filmy thread or cut away like lace; they, nonetheless, have a weighty significance and the actual profiles of the 'letters' resemble inscriptions from tombs or temples, from the Western or the Eastern worlds, from ancient to present languages, and seem to be derived from familiar yet foreign scripts. The placement of the origin of this muffled talk is impossible without a dictionary to guide translation. There is, however, a sacred tome intonation, a secret spell aura, as if these are magic words that could be a key to understanding and have been strategically placed before our neophyte vision to decipher.

The removal of the letter-like shapes, cut from the paper with precision, pasted on new strips, or sewn on character by character, furthers the impression of a ritualistic handling of the material. Clearly, it was a painstaking task, a labor of love, to make these pieces, like the names of lovers carved as a public announcement of private passion.

Covin's letters are like birds flying in straight lines. They can create shadows, the light can shine through them, they have dimension and they could come loose and drop to earth if they weren't stitched into place. These pieces have a wondrous effect. The simple white or graphite gray has ceremonious associations; weddings, Far Eastern death rituals, Catholic convocations, christenings, and then there are the natural associations; snow flakes, crystals, icing, spider webs, moths, doves. The dove is very present for there seems to be a peaceful missive delivered within these beautiful pages.

Poetry and song as it veers to the purity of abstraction has similarities with Carin Covin's paper pieces when they take the tangential turn from description to impressionism. These pieces are flights of flocking, feathery, whispers. They bring words to mind and the love of beauty to heart.

Handwritten text in a cursive script, likely a diary entry, covering approximately 30 lines of text. The writing is dense and fills the page.

Oswego Diaries III, graphite on paper, 30x22 in., 2005

Briar Craig

For Font's Sake

Going back and forth between extreme focus and a sense that there is something more to be seen than we have access to; both the message and the visual support the disconcertion. There is an inconvenience imposed that creates a discommode as if the information is intermittent. To be able to grasp the entire significance we are in a position that requires a step back in order to see the whole picture and yet we have been given a magnified version of the message instead.

Combining the shape of the letters with a convoluted messaging system, Briar Craig tests our response to his letters. The viewer is seldom allowed a passive stance, for he offers just enough clues in his formatting to suggest that if the mind stretches, the reason why the letters have been set up in such a way will come clear. It may be an association with the ground and the placement of the letters, Upside Down for instance, where the very phrase has a curious ring, and when suspended in the context of an art piece, it becomes even "curiouser", as the white rabbit coined. The faded, creased, rusted, shot or frayed material lends an immediate historicity to the object, yet as an art piece the object is far more present than it was in reality. Craig coalesces his mind games in an aesthetic realm that is partially endemic to the medium, silk screen. The technical layering of the colors contributes to a poignancy of image, and Briar Craig has perfected the method of creating a sensuous depth of field to the extent that a crumpled piece of card becomes a varied and rewarding color experience.

The challenge of the discussion he is provoking is almost overshadowed by the poignancy of the visuals and the temptation creeps in to forget about meaning and rest, instead, in a simpler visual appreciation. As the cardboard changes under his hand into gold, K and O by existing on such a ground become important characters. The words "Utopian Vacuum" with a glow radiating from the relief letters on the intensely evocative background provoke a Gollum-like desire to possess this found object, now transformed into a precious object. The personal rewards from having found significance in the discarded are however suspect as if there is more trickery at play than is realised. The objects seem too incredible, too wonderful, to have been real scraps. Or perhaps it is our lack and we have not been sufficiently alert to discover the treasures that blow through the windy streets.



Briar Craig, *Cookie II*, screen print on paper, 42x27 inches, 2005

Scott Ellis

For Font's Sake

Minding your own business doesn't leave as much room to be your brother's keeper as Scott Ellis needs to continue to edit his understanding of things. He strikes with a dogmatic lash and the resounding snap is hopefully going to cause someone to wake up. How many times does the world have to be told that what is happening is coming through, loud and clear and off center, before reaction sets in and the inevitable revolution begins? Maybe the revolution has begun, quietly, in the collage imagery of Scott Ellis. If the world ends with a whimper rather than a bang it's because the meek have been told that they will inherit the earth and that noise, commotion and rabble rousing will be of no avail when the final tally is made. Scott knows this so he quietly snips and glues, allowing the muffled groan of art, with historical precedent, to once again speak its mind. It is repeating the words of the song of the sixties "Something is happening here and you don't know what it is, do you, Mr. Jones."

The work is statement oriented, message saturated, obsessively executed and well researched. He has his nose to the ground, his ear to the wall and his artistic discipline intact so that what he over-hears can be retold from a scrutinized vantage point. His work is didactic, opinionated, monomaniacal, and obstinate in regard to the matter spoken of - and proud to be so! It is also open, embracing, tolerant, and consummated within the act of making art, a vested belief. There is heart, soul and passion behind these reconstructed media images. The context has changed, the pictures, accepted by the public relations boards that mediate world events have been cut out, rearranged and pasted into a brand new position with the result being another new world order, another dreaded acronym - flipped!

It veers between desperation and control. There is an unsettling loss of balance and a desire to comprehend in a glance. There is too much to deal with. The initial flash of daunting recognition is taken over by a slow dawning that reveals a sense out of the nonsensical overload of information, a comprehension and a wonder. Has Scott Ellis managed to reign in the dissonance of information and present a clear picture? The task appears too ambitious. It is, in fact, impossible to be able to understand just by looking at the work, what he is precisely saying. The wonder is that he has managed to put it all together, to design and to execute it - to make the artwork.

His methodology begins by addressing a subject, and in doing so he makes an initial step towards organization. But even here his choice creates a balk. Subject matter; World War One, World War Two, Industrialization, Religion, Manufacturing, Globalization - Scott has taken on the grand themes. Deconstructing an overall miasma of media images, paying attention to the parts, committing to an order, refusing to ignore language - a new politic emerges. He has assumed a plenipotentiary position, taking upon himself full authorization to control and handle our diplomatic relations to both our history and current social and political status.

Whereas the media's encapsulation of world events tends to be parasymphetic, like the contraction of the pupil of the eye, Scott's oeuvre has an expanded pupil that in turn stimulates a form of psychedelic perception. Just as with the use of hallucinogens, the miracle of earthly existence becomes an acceptable revelation - in the tranced state there is no avoiding it - so Ellis' barrage of thing ness and happenings brings about an acceptance despite the queasiness. That we are able to live within this jumble of information, a combination of synchronism and memorable images - seems a wonder. His commentary vacillates between topical and historical. It is a wonder that his head doesn't explode or that he doesn't become tongue tied, intimidated by his task. But that which comes about with a psychedelic infusion is a loosening of the tongue. As the synapses of the brain go crazy, connecting along new pathways and assuming an illogic of an independent nature, the programming becomes rerouted. The master board is discombobulated. The brain machine is shorting out and the result is enlightening, freeing, for there is no longer a valid reason to stay within the confines of historical reference. No longer is the axon of one neuron and the dendrite of another connecting in sequence. There is a new route along which there are no totally objective, immutable signposts. There is, in the place of that truth, endless possibilities.

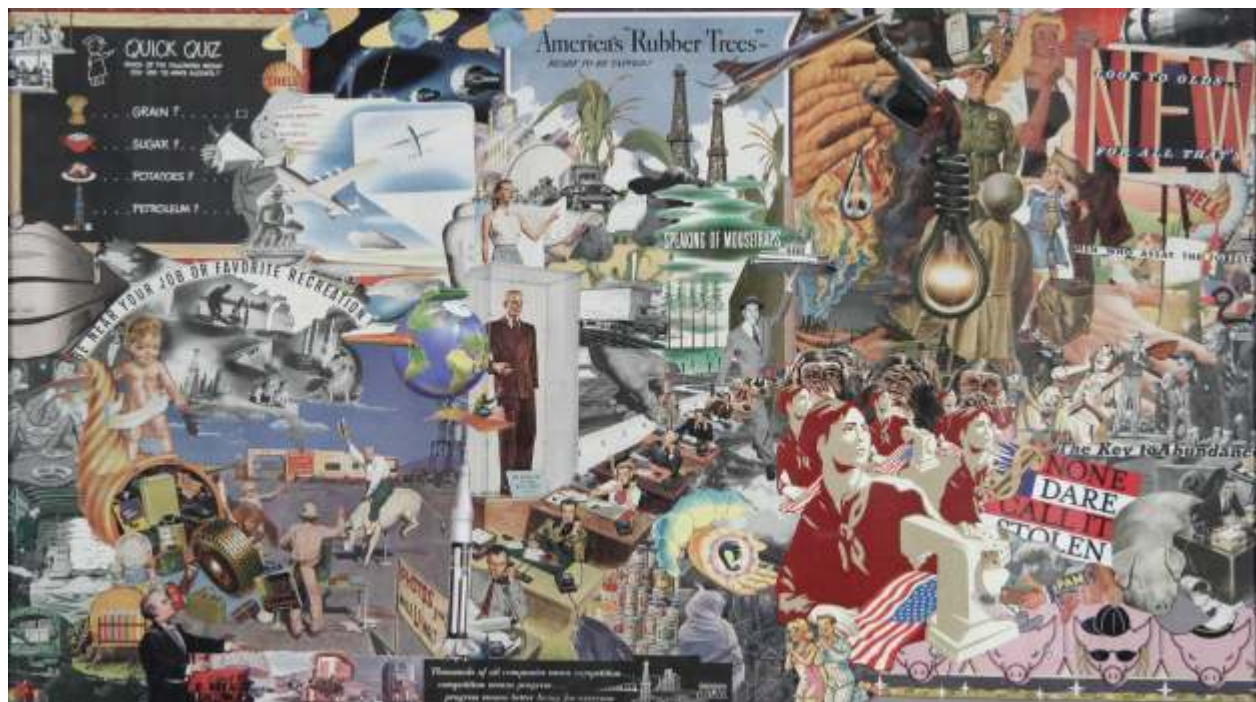
Consider the moon, waxing and waning. Sometimes, Scott Ellis is showing a haunted spectre of the day time's reality; sometimes he is more obscure than the darkening night, holding back the clues as to the pathways that we are accustomed to traveling. It is a paraselene, a bright, moonlike spot on the lunar halo that overrides the presence of the

moon. World events, dimmed by time and existing in the half-light of the past, already exist as hazy, often personalized interpretations of those events. Does he believe that we will be able to find our way out of the convoluted pathways of heavily laden imagery? Has he done the work for us and charted a direction, or is the flashlight dim, a lunar trance-like light that makes our pupils grow large in order to encompass the blast?

Scott has something to say. He is like a factory where the raw material goes in the door and then comes out the other end, reshaped, refurbished with a fresh slant and yet skewed by the unique re-combination of parts. Taking outdated as well as current media sources he rearranges the puzzle pieces so that the resulting message has a semblance of familiarity, as if the message is straight, but not quite. He inserts his point of view, the private illuminations of a stealthy sleuth into the permutations of mass media messaging. As glib in real life as he is in his visual dispensation, Scott brings the full punch of a lively mind to bear and compresses it into a tightly wound ball of information.

There is no choice but to receive the messages. They operate on many levels: the work ethic that is evidenced with the thousands of cut-outs, the color combinations providing aesthetic clues as to where to look next, the metaphors in the choice of materials (burnt holes in a globe, gasmasks, children's blocks, vintage magazine and newspaper illustrations) and the ever-present realization of the dedicated focus that Ellis has brought to the subject. As an author, he has invited us on a visual read - a veritable tome! - and with absolute conscience, he has put a dedicated effort into the story that he has elected to tell. He has promised that he will not waste our time and that the time that we spend walking through the maze that he has reconstructed from recycled media reportage, will not be for naught. He has granted us choices, the possibilities seen from a psychedelic brain.

It is not a philosophy where 'nothing is sacred' and all can be expropriated. It is a philosophy where everything is sacred, needing to be rescued. Having been given the license to create, Ellis is upping up the ante with a clarion wake-up call. He is walking us through the tunnels of things, in a junk yard of old news events, in the heart of a city of variables, in a country brimming with potential, in a world of various combinations, in a galaxy of interpretations, in the universe of Scott Ellis.



Yesterday's Utopian Dreams, collage, 22x38 inches, 2006

Patrick Mimran

For Font's Sake

In Chelsea New York, as one gallery hops, you can't help but notice the large didactic sayings on billboards mounted to the sides of the structure for the old subway line. Patrick Mimran's semi-instructional, quasi-moralizing, nearly-pompous take on the art scene has become a fixture of the Chelsea district where the height of the art world airs 'the latest' and conducts business. Often witty, the bold words presented in a straight-on font and format, subliminally sink into the art world conversation.

As art pieces, they are minimalist in construction and as accessible as the closest copy shop. They are not limited edition, signed prints. There is nothing rarefied about them. They are comments on art rather than art itself and they step even further away from the object by commenting more on the art scene than on art works (which is done with critical writing). The impersonality collects no burrs, no direct slurs coming back at the author with viperous reactive venom. It is a conceptual pinnacle where three degrees of separation from the object bring a commonality of availability to everyone. All it takes to have a piece of Patrick Mimran's work is to be there to see it.

The conversation that results from the sayings can dominate the ongoing perusal of works in the near vicinity, and in this respect the large Chelsea billboard works especially well. As those who have the fortune to purchase walk alongside those who have only the will to see, and their part in the process is leveled. Mimran has spurred a thought, about art and the art world that becomes unavoidable, for he has placed himself in the epicenter. Side stepping juries and validation systems and niggling the minds of a distracted milieu, even his name is memorable, for placed in the bizarre context of a billboard with a message that is not an advertisement, it becomes a signature branding as powerful as a corporate logo.

Patrick Mimran took the premises of Pop and united it with the larger scale formats that went along with the conceptualists. He reversed the art-making that grew out of the visuals on billboards (Rauschenburg and Rosenquist) and brought the commentary back full swing upon itself. The full circle brought back a clip and critical slap as resounding as a white glove on an aristocrat's face. Is it necessary to accept the challenge?

**Collectors want to be dealers,
dealers hope to be stars,
and curators
dream to be artists.**

Patrick Mimran

Collectors - one of ten interior billboards at Headbones Gallery, 60x108 inches, 2007

Christopher Olson

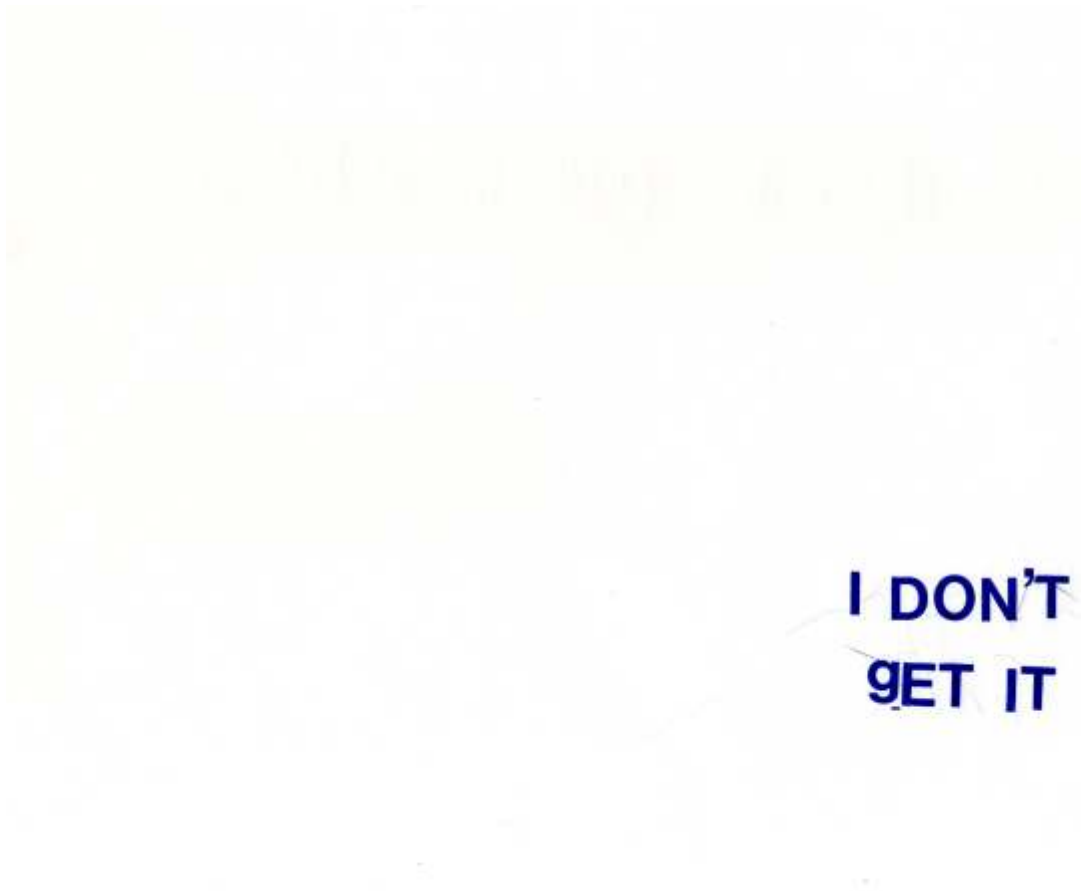
For Font's Sake

Olson's witty repertoire acknowledges the feebler attempts to speak one's mind. With vestiges of cat hairs attached to the surfaces: his scribbling, cross-outs and erasures seem to affirm origins of insecurity taken from seamy perspectives. However, there is a hipper wit at work than just the meanderings of a disgruntled or misplaced person - it is the raw voice of the street savvy saint who lauds and applauds plebeian plight.

The cat hairs are stuck underneath the Letraset. Pressed onto the paper by lying the sheet of letters face down on the receptive surface and then rubbing the backside with a spoon, this method of lettering has become antiquated since the advent of the computer. The inept allusion is a set up. There is quite a lot of fuzz and hair stuck under the letters as if the cat has been encouraged to sit on the paper before Chris Olson begins to lay down his messages. There is too great an attention to detail to rule out intention.

These cheeky pieces have a rebellious nature. The German intrusion, art interception, a referential pseudo-intellectualism in the cracked and out-dated method is like a finger at the nose waving with defiance, jeering at our seriousness. "This took two minutes to do", Olson states. The paper talks back to itself "I don't get it." There is a vapid menace as if a crazy threat has slipped through the mail slot and fallen onto the living room floor. In one, there is a brutal situation being played out in street lingo from the wrong side of the tracks - "Fug dat I sez...", the thick goon talk of a bully, a prelude to violence.

The references are oblique enough to cause pause and question the necessity of the words existing. The reason that all of this should fall under the denomination of art is also considered. As the depravity of message and means is placed on a pristine page, then set up as 'art' and made precious by intent it works, on many levels. Visually, Chris Olson's work is interesting to look at, abundant in fine details, well laid out, formal, elegant and even gestural. The statements are relevant with a spooky prescience as if Olson is in on a knowledge that we are moving towards at a much slower pace.



I Don't Get It - cat hair, letraset & ballpoint on paper, 9x12 inches, 2005

Ed Varney

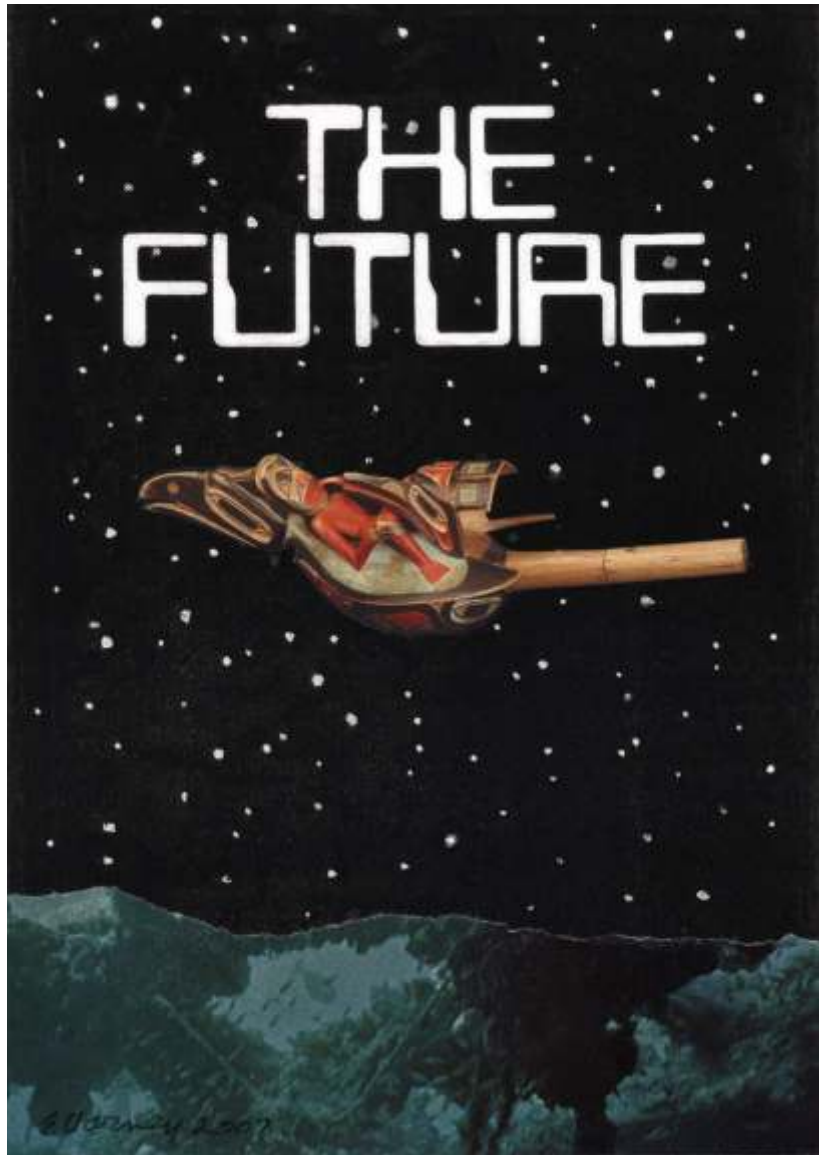
For Font's Sake

THE FUTURE, in capital letters, will always be a vague and philosophical notion. It is also rife with cliché and our imagination, although it can extend towards that unavoidable time, tends to clothe the future in sci-fi imagery. Ed Varney lays down a digital premise as the ground for the collage - a starry sky with a technological design to the lettering of 'the future'. He addresses the earth, gravitationally situated, backlit by a rip. His choice of earth imagery varies from vague semblances to city lighting or an undersea shot to more graphic depictions that we recognize as 'earth'. With one collage element juxtaposing the set-up location, he floats a new idea, this time pristinely cut out and pasted so that it could be a digital rather than a virtual application.

By describing the object in each piece and stating what is seen, the message comes through. For example, "A vehicle with open doors floats over a landscape" or "A snorkel clad woman leaps into space above a field of cows." Crazy disconnects in an eerie silence slows down the movement towards The Future as we attempt to make sense out of the diverse items. There is a stock taking in place where the random associations of elements may or may not be clueing us into the mysterious and unknowable future. Instead, a singular idea of the future is clarified, a visual moment that could be as possible as any other visualization of The Future. The dominating words, however, are what promotes the inquiry into the reason that the particular 'earth' and 'object' has been paired off. It is a clever way of approaching the union between text and image and balancing the weight and importance of the concepts suggested by both the words and the visuals.

The pen and ink words that make up the pieces War and Peace also vacillate between text and image but this time it is the tracing of the silhouettes of the letter, an act of the artist's hand, that is the visual element and the words, addressing monumental themes, are carefully recorded by the unusual process. Varney, with a life long dual practice as both a poet and a visual artist, exercises a sensitive power-of-one in the painstaking process, with the words using the alliteration and grammatical construction to put forth the messages.

Ed's work has been text based from the get-go. A co-founder of Intermedia Press, Vancouver, an active poet, and a versatile potentate of multiples, he has galvanized the diverse output of artists far from his geographical area. He was one of the early initiators of mailing correspondence projects dating back to Junk Bonds and continuing through his famous stamp editions. Both the insides and outsides of envelopes, globe trotting from post box to mail bag to destination, have displayed the results of his generated visuals. He is a puppet master, pitting and playing Word with Visual in a manner that, like the familiarity of Punch and Judy, tackles the problems of our everyday concerns in a recognizable way.



The Future #7, mixed media & collage, 7x5 inches, 2006

Daryl Vocat

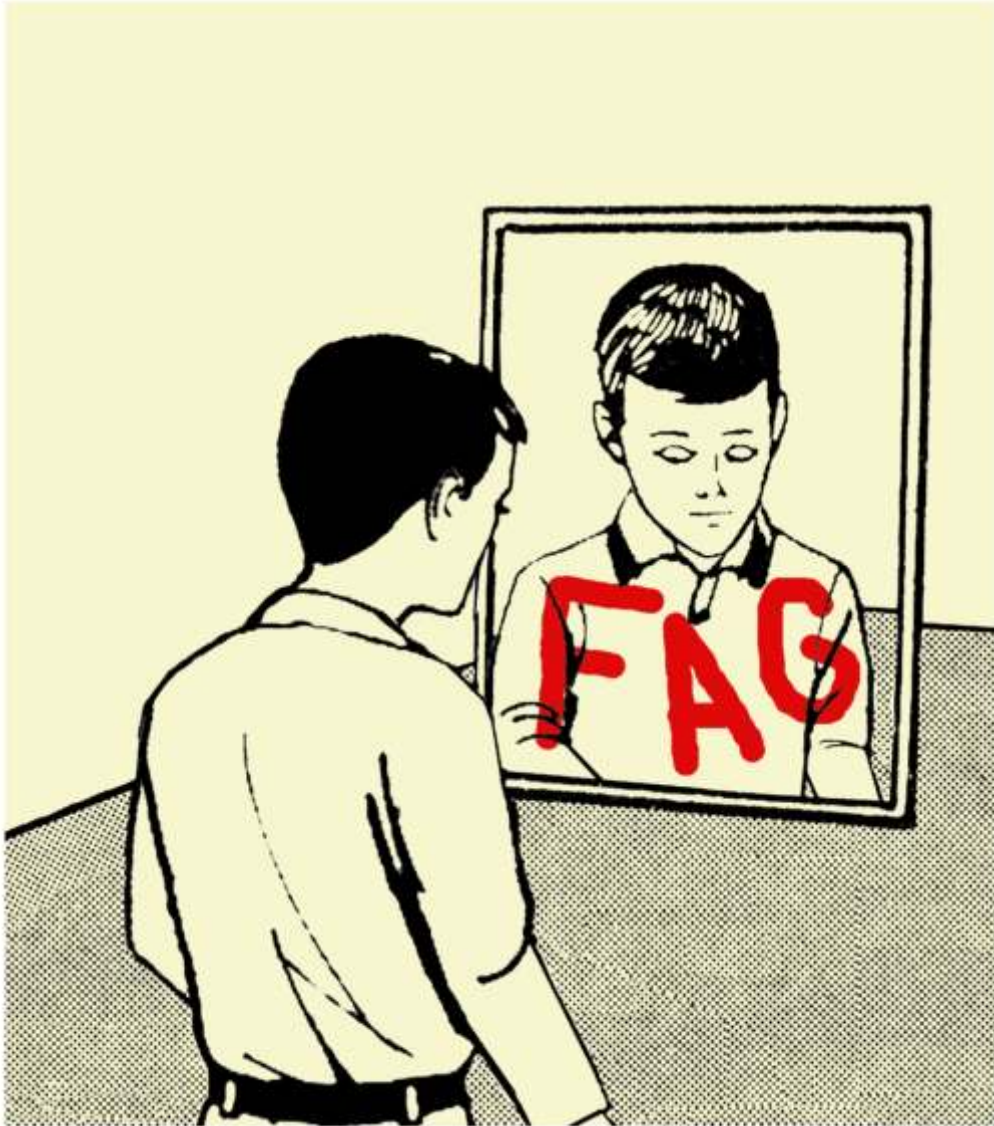
For Font's Sake

Memory can make hyperbole of childhood and adolescent impressions that stand out in the mental landscape as larger than life. The script in Daryl Vocat's work is demonstrative of this dynamic, and yet the message is one of vulnerability. Daryl has a mission. He has a message that he wants to get across, and he uses the addition of words in his pictures in order to make sure that there is no mistake as to what he is saying. He leaves no room for confusion.

Vocat sets up depictions of boy scouts and lets their thoughts be examined, hearts pulsing secret yearnings for the love of other boys across the page. He adds the innocent badges of honour, the costumes of a mild young military obsession, and then he brings the little boy up to date. The exchange between the vulnerable, trusting nascent love letters and the harsh reality of the gay man (little boy grown) is aptly reinforced by the text and a forthright delineation of gay politics.

The rendition is illustrational, but it has been given the distance and safety of a style from the fifties or sixties, before Vocat was even born. It harkens back to a more covert age in gay politics where closeted emotions were the source of stress, and open declarations of a queer sexual preference were shunned. This atmosphere, executed within the clarity of outlines, clichés and mottos (fag, gay, be prepared) loses focus as the boys become men. Boy to Man juxtaposes a graphic rendition of a scout leader paired with a scout and a vague, held-back version of two men, one mounting the other, or at least the positioning of the two figures suggests that this is the case. The wide-eyed belief in childhood infatuations with other boys seems to have developed into a more overt explanation of male, same-sex love.

In Indoor Field Day, Vocat depicts a boy lying in bed. The visuals in the background suggest that he reading a medical book. This print lends the nuance of fantasy and young imaginings to the perusal of biological material. There is the insinuation that eroticism is spurred by the wonder of his anatomy, although there is nothing overt to reinforce this suspicion. There is also a similar eroticism at work in the viewing of Daryl Vocat's work. There is something coy and sexy in play, blurred as it is in the patina of times past or set up within his tasteful colorings and formats. It is the kind of work that may arouse, for the pieces themselves are seductively attractive.



Personal Measurements, *screen print*, 34 x 26 inches, 2001

Bona fide, May 17 - June 28, 2007

Have you ever felt when looking at a piece of art work that you might be falling into the state of one of those silly peasants who were fooled into believing that the Emperor had on clothes and that perhaps there was an element of fraud in the work? "Bona Fide" is a presentation of work that is absolutely real and without fraud. We have gathered solid, earnest artists that have made work in good faith that attests to an inherent veracity, rare hits of substance in a world prone to a quick fix.

The Gykan Project Room featuring animated vignettes by: **Paula Jean Cowan**



Paula Jean Cowan

Bona fide

"There's a whole lotta shakin' going on." Shaking and shimmering lines, shivering renditions of playful or painful moments in time with an immediacy that is as haunting as a ghost image. The presence called forth in this instance is the artist, Paula Jean Cowan, but still held at bay, kept distant by the hand. Cowan videos herself acting in a short skit. In one of these quick encapsulations, there is a table in the foreground on which there are cupcakes. She's dancing, the kind of light hearted self content that happens when one is completely alone and there are great tunes playing in the background. There is in actuality, silence. She takes a cupcake and peels off the crinkly paper. This is all executed in a series of squiggly, wriggly lines. The flickering light of the television screen is interrupted only by the lively snaking drawing, outlines. Cowan has traced her image from the video screen onto paper, shot the pages as singles and then edited them sequentially in order to create the animation. In an extreme examination of the self, she veers on the comedic within the tradition of self criticism that is imbedded in both theatrical comedy (theatre del Arte, Shakespearean comedy, Theatre of the Absurd and right up to modern comedians like Lenny Bruce, Ray Romano, and Dave Chappelle). Humanity pokes fun at itself and in experiencing a delightful belly laugh, the human condition becomes lighter, more nourishing and less devastating.

The aspect to Cowan's work that deals with self image lies within the long history of artist's self portraits. The snippets, staged, appear to have been captured without guile by a hidden camera. In actuality, Cowan has been a peeping Tomassina practicing a voyeurism with herself. She has concentrated on her corporeality in much the same way as the mirrored interpretation was used as reference for the more traditional painterly portrait. A considerable duration of focus has been spent in an objective rendering of the physical attributes of the self. By tracing image after image, minute variations on her movements reveal an ongoing discussion with time and personality, physicality and performance.



Gnaw, cell for animation #120, graphite, watercolour & ink on paper, 10x10" 2004

Diane Feught

Bona fide

It is difficult not to use the word 'beauty' in conjunction with Diane Feught's paintings on paper. The fair distribution of attributes creates a sense of divine proportion. There is symmetry between the exoticism of the subject matter and the formal elements of the piece, substantiated by a remarkably adept execution. This balance between the subject and the process provokes a self effacing exclamation of pleasure, an un-selfing, or the "opiate adjacency" that Elaine Scarry in her book "On Beauty" speaks of experiencing when in the presence of beauty. Self consciousness disappears and the ego steps aside, paying honour to the experience and yet retaining enough of the self to appreciate the brush with beauty. The moment extends and repeats itself as memory. This is when the art piece transcends time and the image assumes a life of it's own and although each piece is different one from the other, there is a stream of visual similarity running through the series as if they all belong to the same exquisite circumstance.

How does Diane Feught manage to measure up to the rigorous strictures that define beauty as an elevated state? By breaking down the overall impression into specific elements, there is perfection within each aspect- the color is rich with the compositional placement of the window in a field of patterning (applied with stencil or linocut repetition) promoting a feeling of luxurious elegance. The gold and silver leaf, the graceful patterns of wall paper or floral material, the framing of the windows with slats or seemingly carved embellishments, all lend an aura of aristocracy as if the world is the site of a series of exquisite peeks.

Diane Feught also brings into play cultural particulars using costumes, a blushing light, a wan, consumptive complexion, a chocolate skin, or a faded nostalgia to shuttle between the past, the present and the future or to fly across oceans or catch a searing glimpse of an art nouveau flash of eroticism. She is a steward of the strange and curious having formed close acquaintances with the denizens of her own imagination. She brings forth an affirmation of beauty from the wonderful panoply of existence and offers the chance to saturate in the pleasure through the grateful distraction of a phenomenal art piece.



Chinrezig - gouache & metal leaf on paper, 17"x22", 2007

Johann Feught

Bona fide

Feught presents a spiritual landscape or a mind map consisting of fractured layers, splintered associations, colourful gels and glimpses of solarized humanoids. The ethereal other-worldliness is structured as a portrait rather than a horizontal layout in order to form the necessary connection with the vertical momentum of mental ascension. The closest comparison from architecture would be the vaulted ceilings with stained glass windows of the Renaissance and yet the environment that Johann Feught creates is not only from the past but also a projection into the future, kaleidoscopic and disorienting. Vague and incomplete memories unite with hopes and aspirations of moments yet to be born. It is like the novel 1984, the time in which it was set is now past and yet it was meant to be a depiction of the future. The year 1984 bore little resemblance to the events or even look that George Orwell described in his novel, first published in 1949. The novel, however, assumed an even greater significance than the virtual year, frozen as it is within the literary piece, as if to supersede reality. There is a similar resulting overview in Johann Feught's imagery. It has a familiarity that is more real than the disconnected environment that passes as reality. He has exposed the circuit board. His spatial constructions communicate on various levels. It is an ultra reality, one that draws from undiscovered places and sets them within the perspective of art.

There is a tapestry-like feel to these pieces. The coloration is reminiscent of the silver, gold, natural dyes (indigo, cochineal) or the extreme poignancy of the pthalos used in medieval tapestries. The application upon a stationary warp of the tapestry produced a dimensional shading much like the tinted tones inherent in the etching process. The gradations, color to color, are eerily perfect as if wrought by a more developed technology than we have been introduced to in our dimension.

The figurative elements too, appear to be communicating from another realm. They have a haunted distraction like a visitation during a séance. David Hume has written of perpetual flux as "several perceptions successively make their appearance; pass, repass, glide away and mingle in an infinite variety of postures and situations". It could be a description of Johann Feught's work, where the woman with her raised pouting lips, the bearded man, or the delicate, bald, ethereal being criss-cross between art pieces and show us glimpses of associations far beyond our ken.



Face Forward - intaglio & colograph, 46.5"x30", 2007

Ed Giordano Jr.

Bona fide

"What is Man?" This was the perpetual question that drove forward the figurative tradition as artists depicted man in relation to God, the church, nature and society. Often aggrandizing and lending the question an inherently positive examination; the interpretation, discipline, situation and material has changed but the subject matter never ceases to boggle. It is Nietzsche's query - "Why are we here and why do we do what we do?" It extrapolated into "And how have we become what we have become?"

Ed Giordano's prognosis is bleak. His typical man seems unable to move off of his solitary and compromised perch. He is imprisoned in words, covered by statistics, pinioned by the message of modernity rather than set free by the fictionalization of his possibilities. There is no room to soar upwards and pursue the divine quest of finding himself. The Overman is someone else. This sad and stymied 'ordinary guy' is not going anywhere. This is the pith of the sorry matter and with true psychological Zeitgeist and flare, the piece transcends its intrinsic commonality through the monumental truth of angst. By confronting the locked position of this vision of man, the opposite is invoked - freedom and all of it's liberating facets.

The diminutive size and rough rendering of the figure allows us to wrap our head around the grand philosophical mysteries without having to be overwhelmed by the impossibility of understanding. The more likely fault - missing the mark - loses the stigmata of ignorance. The potential for expressing the human condition has been realized in these unassuming figures. They pose no threat upon our need to stay at least somewhat comfortable within our sentience. In fact, they grant a reverse dignity to our common plight by vesting humility with a presence, a powerful sculptural identity.

Ed Giordano's sculpture opens a door to compassion. It is void of arrogance and admits no challenge. It exists with a stubborn right to be blindly depressed. We feel sorry that it had gone this far, that the straight jacket has fused like a second skin, that we have not taken better care and been more attentive to this diminishing stature. They win us over with a blind sided sense of mutuality and identification.



Untitled - plaster & mixed media, 30"x8"x7", 2005

Susan Hamburger

Bona fide

Works of art are at the pinnacle of the collector's pyramid, both financially and as the saturated expression of the ideology on which the work is based. Susan Hamburger's dishes are a complex combination of events, a syncing of the philosophies that cling to the idea of collections. The scenes she chooses to put onto her plates are taken from her immediate environment yet based on historical patterns. The Williamsburg Series is based on real china that was made by Spode, with the same title. In Hamburger's faux set, we see the Williamsburg Bridge, buildings, streets and scenes that made up her immediate milieu as a working artist in Williamsburg, a section of New York City where there are many artists' studios. Her collection is made of paper and bares witness in the use of the accessible medium to the economically disadvantaged, for paper is a peasant's choice, often disposable, an unstable, generic type of dish. The sociological content, placed on a medium where economy of means is an implied message, elevates the humble paper plate, through the intent and context, to a collectible status.

The final Hamburger product is a paper plate brought up a notch; hand painted and in the style of the great ceramic houses such as Wedgwood or Spode, houses whose historical output was broad and depicted events, places, landscapes, themes, celebrations, memorials and documentation. That they can be bought individually or as a set further orients the idea of 'collection' to 'art'. Hamburger brings this tradition of recording on plates up to date and just like the real china of yore, the Hamburger plates as well will become cherished collectibles.

And yet, they are not real and even the cabinets they sit in are made of card. This is a rare phenomenon when a set of china, no longer utilitarian, becomes solely a work of art with all of the associative calls to the intellect and senses.



(Brooklyn Spode) Williamsburg, Brooklyn - ink on paper on foam board, 11"x15", 2004

Jenny Laden

Bona fide

She has found a way to kiss herself.

Peeling back the layers of narcissism, unlike Caravaggio's entranced boy imprisoned in stasis by the wonder of his own reflection, Jenny Laden has decided to become actively involved. The impish big-eyed girl glances from under a scathingly raised brow and throws out the challenge to admit her, despite her flaws and foibles barely covered by the circus scrim of a green face mask. Jenny has been staring herself down and always coming up the victor. There's attitude behind this spunky face.

The multi-dimensionality caused by the overlays of Mylar either yields an x-ray or background to the elfin women. The loose water color, dripping to the call of gravity plays up the sensation of an innocent pathos like tears or damp hair, an adolescent crisis rather than an emergency. The frail medium encompasses the gamut of a runaway condition where the adventure is well worth the minor discomforts.

Imagine the process. A committed confrontation with the self. It is the grit of philosophical inquiry, the turn around when the ego meets the ID. Her persistent visual meditation is like the Buddhist who becomes complete through the contemplation of her belly button as the energy is circulating outwards from the artist and then back from the artist into the piece. By exploring the concept of self reflection, a child of the artist is born, another generation created from her will and her need to procreate. Jenny contemplated Jenny and made for herself a friend - an invented likeness, a self portrait.

The outcome of this self-generation has recently become a new being, the big-eyed offspring of a pregnant and self centered process. This is more a fairy girl than real. It is more in tune with animation where the bodies in proportion to the heads are slighter as if they are swelling with magnificent ideas. Laden has left behind the wispy hair of her mirrored image and piled a lush, ornate, aristocratic hair-do on the expanded head of her newest creation. Yet there is still a resemblance as the bellies swell and a prenatal germination becomes physically apparent.



Big Orange Hair - watercolor on mylar, 24"x20", 2006

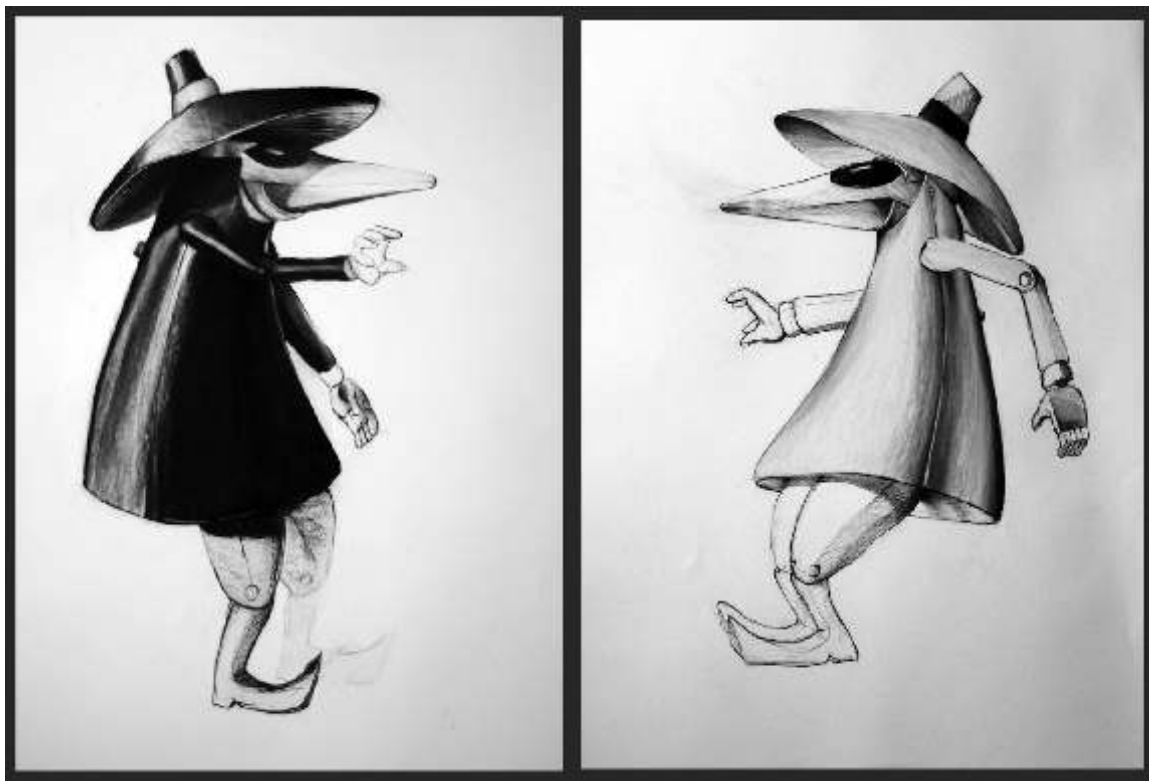
Jeffrey Thompson

Bona fide

The thrill of recognition immediately classifies the exclamation because the drawing that has provoked the enthusiastic response often refers to an adolescent or even childhood interest. It may be a reaction to the pleasure derived from a yellow rubber duck, the archetypal bath toy. Then, growing older, the transference to plastic soldiers, superheroes or warriors was a means for children to enter into, and control, a series of relationships that were seated in the pretend personalities of the toys. *Spy Versus Spy* hits at the heartstrings of those who spent time with the characters in *Mad Magazine*, one of the first comic magazines to reach above the fantasy level of cute cartoons or superheroes and make forays into socio-political opinions. *Mad* claimed a readership that crossed from juvenile rebellion into a more adult coming of age. The black spy and white spy were loved, almost as much as the stars of the silver screen. So was Rat Fink.

The subject matter in Jeffrey Thompson's work is crucial and yet essentially, the subject is just a toy or character that made it to the top with enough aura (and financial backing) to convince the populace to embrace these icons of their formative years. Thompson, by spending careful, talented and trained time rendering the characters, grants to them a span of concerned attention and also raises them to the higher aesthetical realm of Fine Arts. Their significance is acknowledged.

Children like to draw from cartoons and adolescents from super heroes. The ability to recreate them is a discernible power, admired by their peers. Jeffrey Thompson has elevated the subject. He has dressed the original cartoons in an aesthetic that denotes maturity, elevates nostalgic pop characters to the sophisticated echelons of a high culture and by doing so with a classy clean style; he enables a response. He allows a whole new level of interaction on the part of the viewer - that of a connoisseur, one who understands the details, or principles and is competent to act as a critical judge in the current 'play'.



"Spy vs. Spy" study - 36" X 45" each panel, Charcoal & Pastel on paper, 2005

Nanna Vonessamieh

Bona fide

Nanna Max Vonessamieh crosses disciplines between visual artist and literary critic with panache and witticism. The psychological portraits reveal as much about the discipline of the sitter as they do the expressive, and hence telling, hand of Vonessamieh. She accomplishes the revelation of her sometimes scathing opinion within a concentrated small portrait, often emphasizing an aspect of the personality, as in Harold Pinter's red nose. A closer examination of the rendering reveals a subversive imagery, almost as if the nose were another more intimate part of the anatomy. Much the same association is brought about by Colette's red tie. Famous for her stories of libertine adventures, the dainty Colette is given a foot into the masculine arena with her bright tie, and yet there is also a cheeky assertion of sexuality with the rude red phallic embellishment waving like a flag of liberation. The cuffs and cigarette top off the forceful presentation. Virginia Woolf, very much a woman of her time, when the parlour was the dominant domain for women, has a wiser aspect, more accepting of her gender's limitations. There is also a Vonessamieh portrait of Woolf with a cigarette, the social renegade beginning to surface. Bukowski looks boozy but elegant, confident and almost challenging with his informal lounging. Tales of his misogynistic lifestyle and alcoholic demonstrations of frustration are exhumed with the smudgy pencil work.

There is evidence of a searching examination of the inner spirit of each of Vonessamieh's sitters. And yet they haven't all sat for her. In many, she has not known the way that they would influence and inhabit her space other than through faded photographs that document their existence. A true historical researcher, like the revitalization of objects by their exhibition in museums, she breathes life back into their departed physical presence and they become known not only for their work, their art, but for the way that their genius showed through in their physical presence. Nanna Max Vonessamieh reveals more of them than was hitherto understood (even when they are still living and simply 'no longer sitting there' as with Martin Amis). She assists their genius as it shines through the graphite to illuminate their work.



Colette, pencil on paper, 32x24cm, 2006

Ruth Waldman

Bona fide

Ruth Waldman's work deserves a second look and this leads to a third and then a fourth and an eventual examination of what at first glance might have appeared to be an overall delicate yet undemonstrative design. It is like the role of 'the new woman' - sexy, competent, knowledgeable, secure, multidimensional and far deeper than the saccharine colors the feminine aspect presents as a first impression. These are pieces that could hold their own in respectable circles for they are clothed with decorum and yet appeal to an aristocratic kinkiness, cultivated in the secret assignations where bondage, trusses and slings enhance pleasure and bring it into refinement. It is the realm of the Victorian lady, looking prim and pretty until the petticoats rise and all hell can break loose with a lascivious spill of imaginative cavorts.

Embroidery, needlework, and water coloring were once used to keep nervous female imaginations within a lady-like fold. Waldman's work is clear evidence of hours of patient execution in order to build her intricate coloured drawings but the powdery atmosphere defuses upon closer examination of her handicraft. The organic characters, feathery and pretty from a distance are involved in a series of complex relationships that have an unmistakable resemblance to sadomasochistic sexual practices. Like a visual kama sutra, the drawings depict the inventive multiple permutations and twisted interdependencies of a promiscuous bunch of freaky creatures.

The source and mastermind of the dynamics exercised upon the freaky fragile characters is revealed. They are manipulating each other. Waldman's disciplined, detailed and delicate touch is evidence enough of their origins, while their symbiosis is generated within their own company.

The wonder lies in the duality of both purpose and effect. As the discipline and talent of the finely crafted piece recedes into the awareness of close inspection, the strange fecund imagination of one of the 'gentler sex' leaves a fascinating possibility in its wake. Waldman's seemingly feminine perspicacious leanings are even more enticing when we examine her naughtiness.



Cycle II - colored pencil & ink on paper, 16"x12", 2007

Pooyan Tabatabaei, Guest Summer Curator, July 15 - August 27

Six weeks of Iranian art held at Headbones Gallery from July 15 to August 27, 2007 features a variety of Iranian artistic works as well as unique live performances, music, and theatrical shows in different settings at every opening. We will present many visual works such as photography, painting and sculpture showing various aspects of Iranian culture and heritage.

As a visible growing minority in Canada with more than 120,000 Iranian-Canadians in this country, we are trying to:

- Preserve and promulgate Iranian cultural and intellectual heritage in the Iranian as well as Canadian community
- Provide an appropriate channel for communication and dialogue for the Iranian community.
- Promote interaction amongst art members within the context of the Canadian art society.
- Aid and represent Iranian artists in this multi cultural society and help their voices be heard by a larger audience.
- Actively work with other organizations to meet objectives.

Pooyan Tabatabaei, Curator



Pooyan Tabatabaei

Six Weeks of Iranian Art: July 15 - July 24, 2007

There is an abiding philosophical question - who are we and why are we here? The answer lies, in part, before the question is even asked, in the undeniable presence of existence. Pooyan Tabatabaei's recent series becomes a viable visual answer to the question. The set-up is simple. A figure, we assume it is a woman, in a chador, interacts with a snowy landscape and from that interaction an integration happens. There is equality between the two. The landscape embraces the cloaked figure. The woman is camouflaged by the billowing second skin. She has an undeniable place in the organic order, even more so than if her identity was clearer for in Tabatabaei's visual interpretation, there is no conflict between the human and the landscape, no assertion on the part of the dominant species to rule, but rather a melding into each other.

The sensation of equable exchange can be broken down within a compositional analysis. When the chador is spotted and closer to the snowy whites of the background, it forms a mute liaison with the footprints, or the patterns of snow on the branches. The figure breaks the static vertical insistence of the trunks of the trees as they have, in turn, broken the continuity of the perfect whiteness. The spotted covering lends itself to the shape of the body or accepts the influence of the wind. The black chador and the white snow are also engaged in a visual conversation. The stubborn insistence of the dark shape, often abstracting the figure or making it into an anthropomorphic characterisation of another species, also has an irreversible part to play in the unfolding of things. The woman in the chador takes up space as a negative shape between positives or as a figure enveloped by the ground rather than sitting upon the background.

The metaphor is grand and well spoken. Between the black and the white, the symbolic positive and negative, the plus and minus, there is a divine balance. The balance is beauty. The equation is perfect and Tabatabaei has stopped the blur of time and recorded the symmetry, between man (or woman) and the earth, between the figure and the ground, between the asking of the question and the receiving of the answer.



untitled - photograph, 2006

Mahmoud Meraji

Six Weeks of Iranian Art: July 27 - August 3, 2007

I had noticed a modernist trend in Mahmoud Merhaji's work, an insistence on creating a new reality despite his obvious adeptness at portraiture and realistic depiction. The super realism associated with the pop movement (Chuck Close), and then with the recent New German Painters has taken realistic depiction back into vogue. This could have been an expected progression in Mahmoud Meraji's work - to continue, with such a strong hand, his portraiture. Yet he insisted on making steps forward into the unknown, into modernism.

Mahmoud Meraji is graceful in his depiction. He is discrete with a gentleman's manners. And because of these layers of meanings, not quite revealed, but refined and cultured, the work touches the finer aspects of our own connoisseurship. It invites us into the Meraji realm, one of good breeding where the origins of drawing are accomplished and can thus enter into higher conversations.

If the iconography is not always clear, it is because there is a learning process in place and Meraji is teaching us how to see his world as he offers a respite from the clarion perspective of contemporary depersonalization.



Untitled, acrylic on board, 48x36 inches, 2007

Iranian Artist's Cultural Reunion

Six Weeks of Iranian Art: August 4 - August 14, 2007

This art show is representative of a collaboration of seven artists, coming from various backgrounds and diverse styles who are united by their heritage and culture as Iranians. The group consists of talents emerging from different generations of artists that have had the effects of various eras on their lives and work. Most of them are internationally recognized and have established distinction in their artwork.

Pooyan Tabatabaei, Curator

Artists: Sadegh Tirafkan (Photographer)
Mehrad Meraji (Painter)
Shahmsi Shahrokhi (Painter)
Behzad Adineh (Mixed Media)
Mahmoud Meraji (Painter)
Pooyan Tabatabaei (Photographer)
Ali Kamran (Graphic Designer)



Moshen Vasiri

Six Weeks of Iranian Art: August 18 - August 27, 2007

Mohsen Vasiri is a Real Artist. It is the term of recognition given to one who has found new frontiers in art. These are words of respect paid to a master technician. He is a Real Artist, a statement of fact realized through a lifelong practice. Reviewing the work of Mohsen Vasiri, I am impressed by the leaps and bounds of his visual enthusiasm as he moved from depiction to abstraction. He was evidently pushing the boundaries of his materials and by comparing the dates to those of the abstract expressionist movements in the west, Vasiri was experiencing the same sense of total freedom, divorcing his work from any ties to semblance, right in the front lines of the avant-garde. The changes flow from series to series, a natural progression of discoveries and with each new leap, there is vibrancy. The energy extended from artist to viewer is infectious. It is exciting work.

The aluminum relief work from the sixties seems to have set the stage. Vasiri brings together clear curvilinear impulses while still giving an intimate expression of his hand. The amoeboid shapes that contort in jagged repetitions of the sculpture from the 1968 to 1975 have an elegant purity that is carried through into the paintings. It is brave work.

Big sizes and complex compositions attest to a confident methodology. The work seems to be bursting with a mature humor, a sense of purposeful play. Then it evens out, becomes more spiritual in the muted colours and objective with the cut paper collage.



Untitled, oil on paper 48x60 inches, 1963

Abstract (B&W), September 8 - October 4, 2007

Abstraction is an opportunity to ignore the pressing concerns of representational thinking, loaded as it is with meanings, and delve into a freer vision. By paring the flight of freedom down to black and white, Headbones Gallery opens the Fall Season with a power packed slate of artists whose diversity exemplifies numerous visual possibilities. From the grand and brutally strong drawings of Gertrude Kearns to the fragile intricacy of Angiola Churchill's pure white twisted paper installation, an astonishing range of greys appears between the polarized opposites.

Gykan Project Room featuring colour abstract drawings and paintings by Gertrude Kearns.



Karl Heinz Boyke

Abstract (B&W)

Formalist and secure in craft, Boyke's work speaks within itself and to itself, communicating similarities between the individual sculptures as well as unique traits. With a hieroglyphic distinction, his language is best understood by the initiated. What appears to be privileged visual information is unravelled when the key to the source of the imagery is made clear. Closer inspection - and illumination by the artist for it is doubtful that the impressions would be read as such without direction - reveals that a horseshoe, a saw blade, the grip of a tool and other utilitarian items have been pressed into the original bed from which the bronze mould was made. The formation of the final bronze, from the first material (clay, wax or plasticine) is made by passing through a stage where a mould is made in which to pour the molten metal. Boyke, with a clear and curious eye, has been known to consider this passageway from positive through negative to resulting positive as worthy of notice. He has transformed the negative into the positive which would mean that a second negative must have been made. The relief, Fries in Pompeii, is an example of such a transformation. It is a perfect example of how imbedded Karl Heinz Boyke is in the process of making sculptures.

The 'associations' that can be made to the works are more universal, however, and hence accessible. Both the relief work and the sculpture - even the triangular formats of the paintings - suggest archaeological findings and treasures from civilizations that have come and gone. The round formats are similar to weathered coins while the rectangular are like tomes. The sculptures bring to mind time-worn religious or fetish icons while the large public sculptures make reference to the grand statuary or ceremonial furniture of churches and temples. The triangular paintings could be embellishments above a portal leading into a sacred space. The use of gold leaf furthers the associations to the spirit realms and lends a symbolic aura to the work, just as the Egyptian pictographs conventionalized pictures of the things that they represented.

And yet, there is a more common pulse that runs through Boyke's diverse techniques, a human response to the sentiment of the work as the knobbly bulbs, pokes and nipples distributed through the vertical columns are easily associated with the figure. These bronze sculptures have a warmth and personality that belies the hard metal for they have been handled, from the initial moulding to the final rubbing of the wax on the patina. They invite a caress or a heft to test their weight and confirm their character. Like an interesting guest, they reveal themselves over time with a myriad of fresh angles for interest.



Barlach II - bronze maquette, 5.5x3.5x12"

Angiola Churchill

Abstract (B&W)

White has a positive dynamic. So does 'big'. The evidence of extreme and precise labour is a cause for admiration and so is the embodiment of originality. All of these factors are present in the hanging paper installations of Angiola Churchill. The coupling of grandeur and delicacy causes amazement and a fairytale rush of pleasure when one first sees one of her sculptural installations.

That the pieces are made by a woman and express a female sensibility seems obvious. The work is substantial and comes from a long and arduous art practice, a feminine trek in an area inhabited by more muscled beings. There is nothing hard nosed about Churchill's work, although she has pioneered in her role as a female artist alongside the others - Joan Mitchell, Helen Frankenthaler, Niki de Saint-Phalle, Elizabeth Murray - working large canvases, producing stacks of drawings, developing her thematic trends and enlarging upon them. The twisted paper work set her apart from the bold and colourful female abstract expressionists. Churchill brought a womanly craft up and out for women had traditionally been the weavers, knitters, lace and macramé makers of yore. Their hands ever busy, the practical duties of providing clothing, warmth, gathering, and cooking joined with their natural inclination to beautify the necessities. Hence, the flowery vines of lace or embroidery and the repetitive patterns of knitting, basketry or weaving invoked worlds beyond the confines of the utilitarian.

There is also an aspect of righteousness in these works as if there were an echo of mantras, holy chants, magic intonations or the slipping of beads on a rosary where the tactile counting keeps track of the prayers. The relationship between the manual task of making these pieces, the folding and twisting of paper, to the large space that they eventually occupy is similar to the use of the maze as a meditation tool or the mandala as a collection point for universal forces. By mentally entering the mandala and moving toward its center, one is guided through the cosmic processes of disintegration and reintegration. There are also technological overtones with computer circuit boards or microcosmic and macrocosmic imaging systems coming to mind. Churchill's pristine gardens, intricate mazes and spidery webs engage our fancy and like dream catchers send us on positive paths of thought.

Professor Emeritus and founder of New York University's Venice Masters Program, Angiola Churchill's floor to ceiling paper installations twist the preconceptions of paper as sheet, as plane, as two dimensional surface and instead create a labyrinth of sculptural space. The work, monumental in size, occupies the space with a presence akin to that of an elegant beauty.



Paper installation - paper, plexi-glass support, 7'x4'x8'10" high, 2007

Alan Glicksman

Abstract (B&W)

Modern living, socialization and institutions have us traversing certain pathways that often leave no time or inclination for individual exploration. The role of the avant-garde, however, is to push towards the boundaries and at the limits of the constraints a choice must be made - to break on through to the other side or to hold back and participate in the quotidian realm. Kant proposed that the only way to find the individual voice was to become liberated from the expectations of our culture. He proposes that fine arts is a path that leads to liberation and freedom. Art is a way to bring about an actual picture of free thoughts and grant them a graspable body. The expressive individual crosses the borders, explores the limits and yet retains sanity.

This is the place revealed in Alan Glicksman's work. It is a space of absolute liberation, bound only by the medium of paint on paper and made clear through the black and white palette that he has chosen to use. The marks can be associated to automatic writing. A visual message coming through from the other side, from the inside of man, from his head, motivated by his heart and vested a committed place in the pantheon of things. It is the unknowable realized. There is evidence of the artist, the trail left by the energy of his marks, born of a necessity to create and an educated perspective of choices from which to begin this journey into freedom. The result is specifically and uniquely individual. The marks have been made and there is no recourse, no turning back the wheels of time and playing that commitment to paper backwards so that it wipes clean. The painting becomes the inaccessible, unfettered state of freedom that can only be realized in the work, like the way that grapes ferment to become wine, a zymurgy that changes the docile grape into an intoxicating drink, able to open and yet also confuse the mind.

Abstraction worked in one way for the artist as he made the piece, bringing to it the vast combination of experiences and knowledge that are brought to play during the process of creating. Then the viewer is set on another journey when confronted by the work, one that has the attributes of the viewer's individuality associated with it.

In a body of work such as this, a series where the similarities between pieces are as great as the differences, how does one choose? There is an array of memories, recognition, attractions and disturbances that trigger synapse. Veering towards one over another has little to do with Alan Glicksman. Or does it? Perhaps that which attracts the viewer to the piece is in sync with the impetus that brought it about. The bleed through from the artists's consciousness, a kind of quantum transportation, is made physical.

Glicksman has his "higher necessity", his particular path that will set him free. The paths between artist and viewer meet in an extreme present that contains emotional elements in common and something equally coalescent - a work of art.



The First Occasion • acrylic on paper • 40"x26" • 1991

Gertrude Kearns

Abstract (B&W)

A division can be made between the drawings and the paintings in order to clarify the difference between the two while still revealing the common bond strength.

In many of the drawings, although derived from within concrete reality (the saw), the work expresses a characteristic which is not specific to the object. Rather, it pertains to the formal aspect of art that is abstraction and by emphasising the shape, especially of the handle, new associations are made. The obvious and intended association to the bull, as the double grip of the saw handle forms the horns, is inescapable. Yet, this is not a depiction of a bull, but a sympathetic resonance with the qualities of the beast. There are myriad art historical usages of the animal, from the ancient Greeks where Zeus assumes the form of a bull to entice (and eventually rape) Europa to Picasso's repeated use of bulls and bull fights as symbols of virility, rights of passage, violence and war. The bull has been a loaded visual trope.

The dominant size of the paper works with the stark use of black, white and sometimes red supports the aggressive associations as does the fact that the referential object is a saw, a jagged blade, a cutting tool. That the point of menace has been transferred from the blade to the handle furthers the sense of rich layering. 'Handsome' is an unavoidable adjective when describing Gertrude Kearns' work and 'handsome', being the term most used to denote masculine beauty, strength and vitality; is seductive. These are beautiful, elegant pieces, dignified in bearing and well appointed. They show muscle both in the well defined shapes and the sheer physical scope.

When the saw is no longer evident or other readily available references such as the architectonic leaves the conversation, as in the yellow, blue and black paintings, certain qualities (elegance, virility, confidence and resolve) remain in tact. Without the specific directive, the dynamic between the shapes is less didactic, even veering on playful. There is a sense of abandon and freedom in this brave and ambitious work, as if Kearns has decided to show us her versatility in an abstract language, her accomplishments a declaration of her sure footedness. The magnificence of the work, secure on all levels, intellectual to technical, commands respect.



Constricted, Conflict Group - 77" X 50", oil/charcoal on paper, 1991

Ortansa Moraru

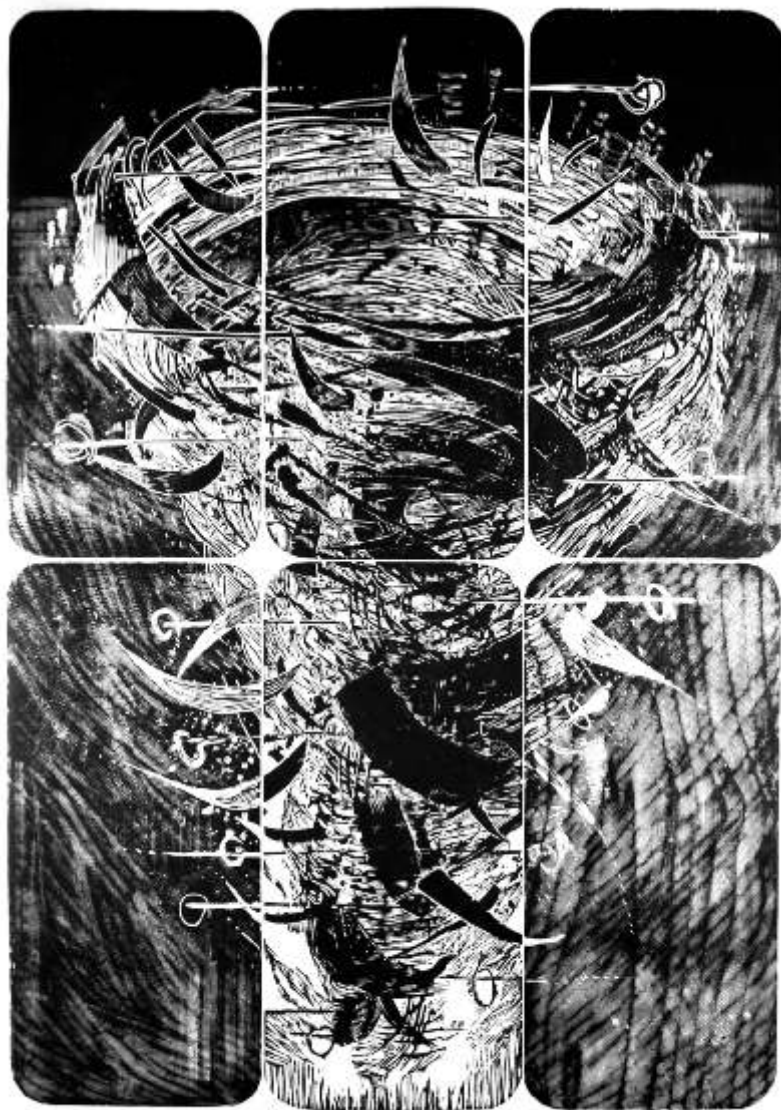
Abstract (B&W)

Ortansa Moraru's descriptive spaces are not worlds of complete freedom, but tangled and embroidered flights of fancy that imply existences other than those from which we have learned to escape. We are confronted by a maze-like frequency of turns and barriers that interrupts our expectations with a jag in an unexpected direction.

Consider the grain. When a perfect curve is unfolding and it hits the grain, the intrinsic path of the wood - the life lines and indications of history trip the wandering line and shift the pathway. It is similar to building a nest when the grasses and branches are woven into place by an intelligence that is unaware of mathematics and engineering, like a bird's, yet understands how to build the nest from the inside of it's being. The nest building gene is a part of their make-up. So it is with Ortansa Moraru's detailed woodcuts. They map an inner dimension that translates into marks familiar yet unique.

There is a subterranean feeling to the habitats. The stripes of wood with dots appear to be thicker dimensions from which the cartoon-like images are trying to free themselves, sending up air bubbles, as in "The Hearing Sense" or as the title suggests letting dancing sounds into a receptive ear.

Whether as a single image or in the multiple woodblocks, Ortansa Moraru's woodblock prints are striking, complicated linear messages. She has successfully utilized the traditional play between the stark black line, printed from the wood left raised as the area around it was gouged away, and the snowy white paper. The tones between the black and white relying on lines, fine to thick and constructed in reverse, reveal the mental dexterity required. Moraru's tangled layering, alongside the deep lushness of perfect inky blacks, presents us with a dynamic field of tension and relief.



Nest IV - 120 X 90cm, woodcut on Japanese paper, 2006

John Noestheden

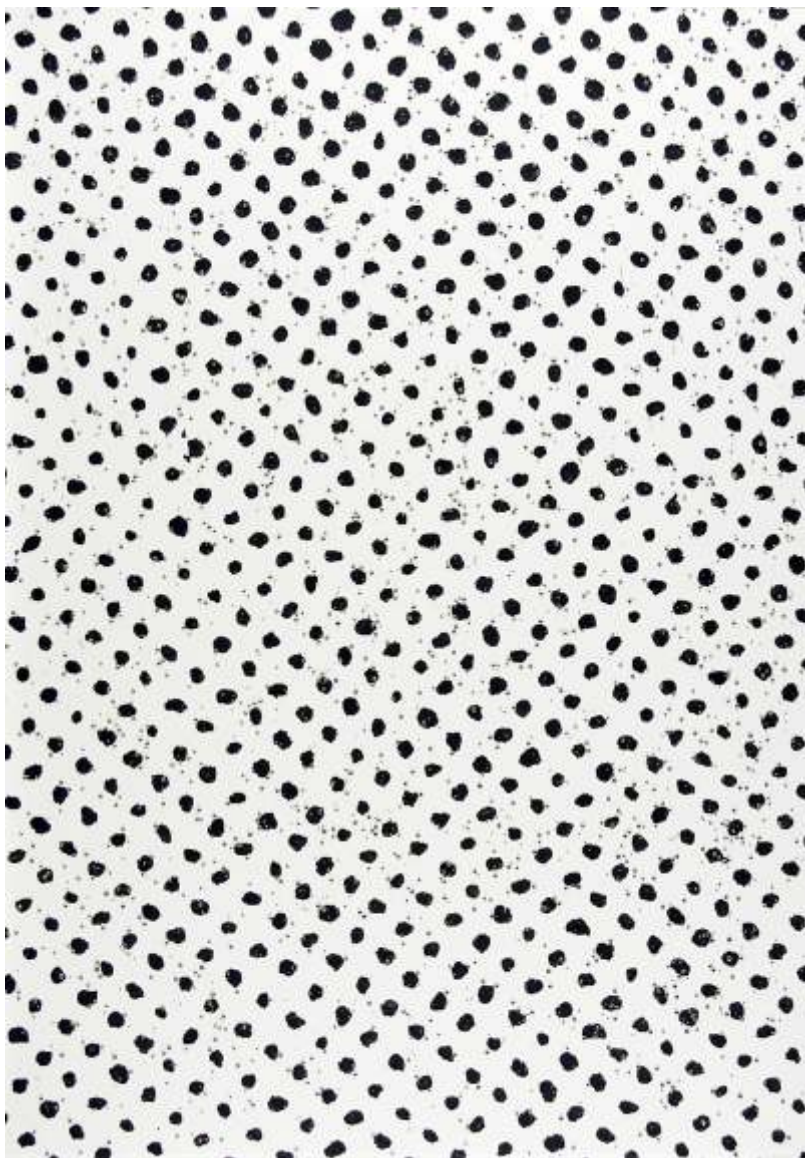
Abstract (B&W)

The sparkling surface overwhelms the conceptual base and so it is with any great work of art. What is it that we revere - the Bellini or the Madonna, the Picasso or the profound sorrow of Guernica, the Twombly or the battle, Lepanto? The phenomenal object, the work of art, although it may have been born of grand concepts, it is the enduring physicality that provokes awe. And so it is with a Noestheden.

The initial source of inspiration and configuration is the night sky under which man has stood marveling for eons. As a subject, astronomy contains the secrets of the origin of life coupled with the overwhelming concept of infinite space. The imagination must stretch to encompass the possibility of life forms, perhaps intelligent ones that go beyond our limited philosophies. From this great source, John Noestheden brings the imagery closer by using illustrations and star maps of star systems as his base material - the night sky interpreted through the knowledge of man. Then he extracts a small section of the depiction and magnifies it using them as inflated models of some detail of the universe. He meticulously transcribes the details, first in pencil and then in ink, paint or crystals and presents his examination. The result is an abstract wonder, a phenomenally beautiful object, perhaps as wondrous as the night sky.

John's hand, in service to his conceptual master plan, also raises admiration for the making of these sparkling drawings or fanatically precise ink renderings is almost beyond comprehension. Such exactitude! The art of pasting the tiny crystals onto the paper in rigidly-adhered-to images, (the crystals had been dispersed by vibration systems, as in the universe) and the painstaking task that must have been, provokes awe. But the most incredible aspect of Noestheden's work is the leap that he made from concept into material and the resulting work of art. If ever that term 'work of art' can be applied, it is in the presence of a Noestheden silver crystal drawing.

Noestheden's work, abstract at first reading, is actually representational. John captures the wonder of the night sky. It is necessary, like standing under the canopy of stars, to experience the work first-hand, for as the viewer moves around, the tiny diamond-like crystals sparkle and bounce off the retina as if they were receiving an electrical pulse. It is the phenomenology of binocular vision, a resultant visual illusion as one eye sees, then the next follows, just as the light from space is often old light from an extinguished source.



Apian's Star Field - India ink, silver crystals, glue, 42x30", 2006

Bryan Ryley

Abstract (B&W)

Bryan Ryley's small charcoal sketches with some collage are visual think tanks, clear and open for observation. The marks, as if moving in a liquid space that is receptive to the meanderings of the creative impulses, reveal a domain where nascent thoughts begin to grow and acquire a form. The gestation period where growth can take a variety of paths before settling into a more absolute form has been made into an intriguing visual.

The work is reminiscent of the diagrammatic compositional overlays used to illustrate the course that the eye would logically take when meandering about a more traditional painting. But Ryley has declined the opportunity to hang the suggested movement on a pictorial frame and allowed the eye to dance without referential fetters. These drawings from the early eighties have a bare boned, no nonsense immediacy as if they were quick responses from the artist through his medium onto the receptive ground. There is an emotional one sidedness in the making, a pushing and pulling, probing and retreating, that results in an encapsulated field of gestures. The marks are evidence of time that Ryley spent with the once virginal sheet of paper. The size reinforces the sense of intimacy. The simplicity of means and spare use of lines and shapes are clues to the duration of the fleeting affair. And always there is the wonder that these loose, gestural outpourings may have developed into more mature relationships between Ryley and his medium, that what we are standing before may have grown and matured into a full grown piece.

There is a link between the work and the process of art-making that the viewer who is an artist responds to whole heartedly. The culling of ideas between the making and the drawing room floor has taken place. Ryley is offering these gestational drawings up for examination, having realised the importance of these small pieces to his overall oeuvre. Purely abstract, they are levelling examples of the link from the maker to the viewer when the artist shows enough of his mind to allow the viewer to become artistically aligned as well.

These small swatch-like drawings reveal the mind space where even the relationship of the collaged chip to the rapid sketch evokes sampling, experimentation and freedom.



Looking On - 5.25"x6.25", charcoal on paper, 1981

Abstract (Color), October 6 - November 1, 2007

Color can be the sole focus of abstraction as in the color field paintings of Heidi Thompson. Color can differentiate between elements and describe space as in the work of Steven Rockwell or it can carry geometric associations as with George Dewitte's dot works. Color serves to express a display of emotional states, symbols and conditions in Forero's paintings and choreographed performances. And then there is color as a team member, a component in a symphony where form, composition and color combine to celebrate a new vision as in Klunder's and Meledandri's work. In this exhibition, the component of color is necessary to the work like the spirit that carries life.

Oct 6 - Performance by **Cesar Forero**

This is a collaboration piece created by artist Cesar Forero, dance artists Michelle Moylan, Kimberly Feltham , and choreographer Richelle Brown-Hirlehey, with the technical video assistance of Bill Dowling. The music is composed partly by Bruno Lerullo and varies musical selections made by Cesar Forero.



Robert Bigelow

Abstract (Color)

The term 'classic' does not necessarily reside in the same sentence as 'abstraction' but when considering Robert Bigelow's work, they are aptly applied. He has adhered to a standard of methodology that he has consistently employed, a record keeping from his mind to the page. His art making is derived from impulses conceived apart from any reference to concrete realities. The quality or characteristics that he expresses have the 'classic' qualities of enduring interest first awakened during the beginnings of modernism - the reference to the materials, mark making, and the page as a ground upon which to place the gestures of an artist rather than as a window through which to observe a depiction. His work brings to mind the painterly giants of yore Kandinsky, Klee, Dubuffet and even the contortions of Guston.

Since, as humans, we exist within a physical world but possess an awareness of a spiritual, the channel between the two is, for Bigelow, ART. If art and religion are similar, there would have to be a practice to support this association, an artistic practice similar to the devotions of a priest in order to tune into the spiritual state. The process is "abstract automatism". Robert Bigelow's hand is the channel from which his awareness of spiritual visual realms is brought into this physical world. Each art piece is a visual record of a mind state.

The work that results from his practice gives back to the viewer a rich and complex positivism. It sets up a map of visual freedom that grants permission to wander the spirals, color fields, dizzy depths and convoluted space with an independent mind. I can interpret a Bigelow to suit myself. I can converse with his page, talk back to the premises that he has set up and become a part of the conversation that he has begun. A Bigelow, once outside of the mind of Robert Bigelow allows me to be alive as well, to bring my spiritual understanding to bear on the visual world that he has set before me. He allows me to revisit the reasons why abstraction is so visually conducive to personal interpretation and in doing so, allows a receptive participation in the creative process.



Untitled - 20" X 13", acrylic on paper, 2007

George Dewitte

Abstract (Color) - Project Room

There is a participatory element in George Dewitte's work that involves interchanges between the work, its origin, the environment in which it is shown and the knowledge which the viewer is able to bring to the process. What at first take may seem to be an optical exercise - and there is no doubt that this is indeed a major component - changes as the brain engages in the translation and sorting of the perceptive experience. It is a delightful sensation, standing in front of a George Dewitte, in the daytime with the natural light popping the dots into action or in the darkness when the ultraviolet component brings about a visual depth of field that immediately transcends into magic.

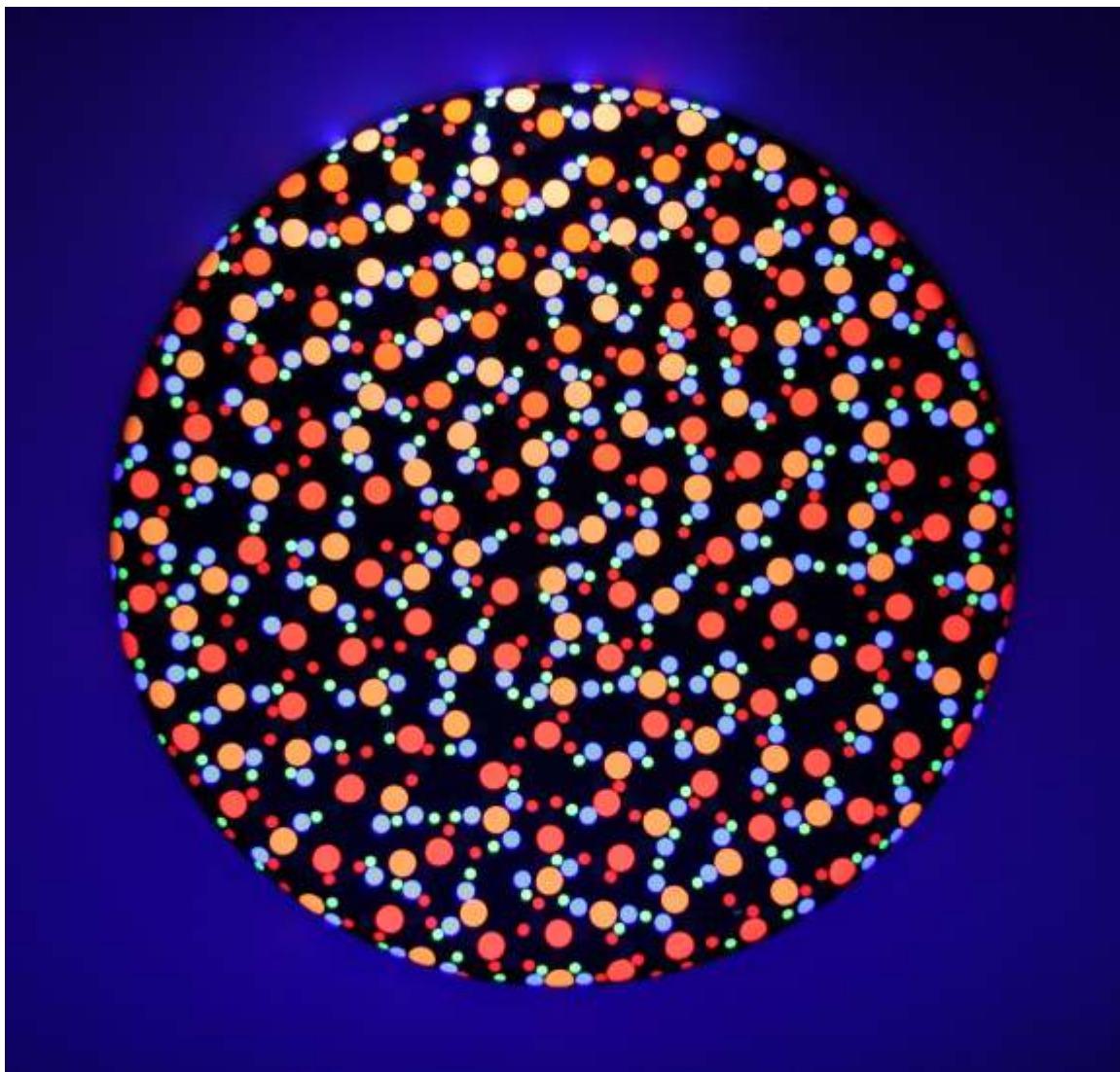
The initial randomness of the dots rapidly forms patterns and creates associations of movement. Understanding the complexities working upon the brain, through clues as to the original inspiration, furthers the enjoyment of the work.

First clue: In the painting of thousands of dots, there is evidence of a stoic exercise in steadiness and concentration. There is a spiritual practice at work, a meditative repetition that is very like the intoning of a mantra. By focusing on a limiting system, a quiet and peace ensues and that sense of security, especially when captured within a circular format, operates in much the same way as a mandala. The paths, looping and spiraling outwards, returning and crisscrossing, have a sonorous effect, a passive influence. Yet the optical charge is active - and Dewitte further activates the electricity with the black light. The resulting dynamic is balanced, positive and reinforcing.

Second clue: the patterns themselves seem to have a predetermined logic. Based on geometrical equations relating to quantum physics, the permeability of relationships in the patterning becomes dependant on an objective formula. The sensation caused by the dots, although heady and even dizzy, are based on a reasonable premise, often one that relates directly to the natural world as in the use of the molecular equations for elements. The other source of the patterning comes from DeWitte's personal background. With Metis status and upbringing feeding into his art-making, the traditional sacred designs from his native culture is also influencing the choices he makes in his configurations.

Third clue: The materials that Dewitte chooses and his use of them is informed by a post modern consciousness. He is like a scientist in his exactitude, an inventor in his choice of complimentary enhancements such as the black light or modular formats and an artist in his choice of gestural and textural application. As an artistic product, the work is slick, polished and effective.

The Fourth (and perhaps most prescient) Clue: There is no didacticism in DeWitte's work. He is as balanced and even towards those who come into contact with his work as he is in his practice. In a world where politics have inserted themselves into board rooms and bedrooms, Dewitte brings forth a magnificent clarity the work stands for itself, vested with meaning but free of subversive coercion.



Spirit Dancing - acrylic on canvas under blacklight, 42" diameter, 2006

Cesar Forero

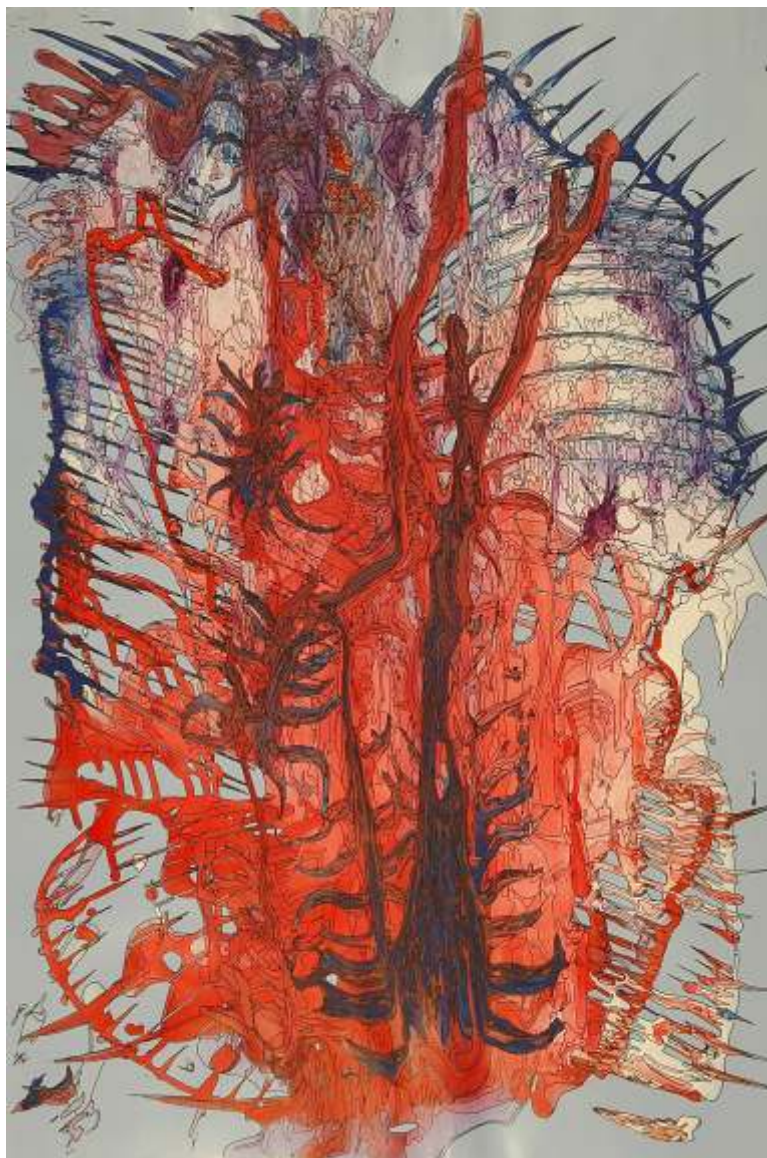
Abstract (Color)

Imagine a combination between a furnace and a tornado - a forceful blast of energy, whirling, spiraling upwards and away while carrying with it, like Dorothy to Oz, an enchanting, curious, sprightly being, enlivened by the tipsy curviness. This is Cesar Forero for the work that he manifests retains the character of the creator - Cesar seated atop of a creative wave. He moves from painting to sculpture to performance. He is a figure skater, a dancer, a ceramicist, a colorist, a seamstress, and among other roles - a choreographer with a conscience.

The visual work in this series dates back to the late nineties, a time of transition for Cesar and his partner Tony who is a medical practitioner. They had moved from Colombia to Minnesota where Cesar was studying and as the conditions in their homeland worsened, they decided to launch into a brave new experience - Canada was their ultimate choice. Cesar's work, saturated with the luscious brightness of an exotic clime, spilt out of any confines to focus on an indication of motion. The shapes mix and convolute inwards to become moiré patterns, oil-slick puddles of converging colors or psychedelic twists of perception. The shiny stiff grounds set the stage. The movement is captured like a photogenic pirouette, frozen in mid-stride, walking, falling, making a transition just as Cesar's life was doing the same.

His seemingly abstract perspective is far from pure abstract. There is narrative behind the fabrication and, in fact, Forero takes the tale a step further, an outward bound towards a capitulation into the two dimensional and three dimensional static states. The result is the birth of a totally new being, a unique object for contemplation. The piece "Box" for instance relates to the necessary sacrifice of a tree outside of the artist's house. Rather than just chop the tree down and haul it away, Cesar builds a new world around the rather tragic demise of the silent woodland inhabitant. He mythologizes the tree by turning it into a new creature, a snail. On route to its creature hood there is a chrysallistic conversion whereby dance transforms the sculptural components into a work of art.

Multi dexterous and multi tasking, Cesar Forero stirs up a witch's brew of marvelous sensations - perceptual, kinesthetic, intellectual and fantastical.



System - acrylic, w/c, house paint, ink on matt board, 39"x28", 1998

Harold Klunder

Abstract (Color)

There is a place that is personal, revisited in the private hours when the paint is laid upon the surface, when the psyche opens up and dances with abandon, when the digging is deep and resonant. This abstract extension of the inner man is a site of deep personal conviction. There is a reason why Klunder's work is recognisable, a visual trope that has the character of his site, that inner place that he revisits again and again. It develops from painting to painting. It takes from new angles, hits from fresh openings, and adds and subtracts information according to the intimate workings of his mind. The practice becomes a blend between the subconscious and the conscious. The resulting piece? Always, "A Klunder!"

Because the works are seated within familiar formats of modernism, to 'catch' a Klunder requires the initiation that comes from inclusion in a club whose members understand the language of abstract expressionism. If this comprehension is intuitive it is the subjective response of a creative mind to the piece of art. If the understanding is intellectual, it is swayed from the pursuit of unnecessary objectivity towards a more visceral understanding of the work through the adamant physicality. Either approach or, more likely a combination of both, brings about the same result - a touch that awakens areas in the psyche that needed the robust brush stroke or the painterly gesture in order to be roused. Once awakened, the draw to cross over from the confines of individualism and into the realms of the rich unknown are hard to resist. All that is part of the world of painting and drawing - the messiness, the joy, the working out, the past imperfect that cries out to be held down with a definitive "yes!" while the smell of oils and charcoal affect reason - becomes irresistible.

Harold Klunder is an artist's artist. Standing in front of a Klunder is an opportunity to understand the urge for abstraction. It is summed up simply as 'freedom of expression'. A Klunder makes an artist out of a viewer for he introduces a complicit atmosphere.

There is the wrapping up of the discovery, the point when the search has been satisfied and the case can be closed, for this time, in this drawing, before the next search takes place.



Untitled Red Painting - two panels, 42" X 62", ink on Japanese paper, 1990

Nina Meledandri

Abstract (Color)

The terms of abstraction, as the references veer away from either depiction or referencing the realistic, become a means to understanding the invisible realms. The artist uses sources that are either oblique or tangential to the physical and in doing so clears up some of the mysteries of the unknowable. Meledandri's abstract compositions have visceral associations as the organic forms appear to connect and relate in space. They hold memories of body parts, morphing growths, sacks, pouches, embryos, cell formations and a myriad of natural realms - plant, vegetable, animal, prehistoric and amoebic. They float. They move gracefully although there is an implied plastic choreography that is beyond our physical reference as if we are watching a unique birthing process or the time when the ages moved into a new form of consciousness abetted by cosmic alliances. The drawings express an ethereal sensibility.

Nina Meledandri's very personal revelations arrest the shifting phantasmagoria that makes up the questions of substance that resides in a solid dimension only within scientific imaging. To imagine the interior workings of the human body, for instance, without the aid of specific medical knowledge brings to mind a vague array of fleshy shapes that are abstracted by the lack of particularity brought to the subject. The Meledandri drawings bring this abstracted 'unknowing' into a visual particularity, one that is touched by the personality of the artist. Reminiscent of Louise Bourgeois' integrity of expression, Meledandri's drawings have a child-like quality that is tinged with adult associations. The awareness of disease, the messiness of menstruation or childbirth, the miniscule paring down of human beings into the systems, organs and cellular structure is tainted by a lack of information and in its formlessness becomes abstract. This is the great satisfaction derived from this body of work, the comfort of 'knowing', even if it is an imagined 'knowing'.

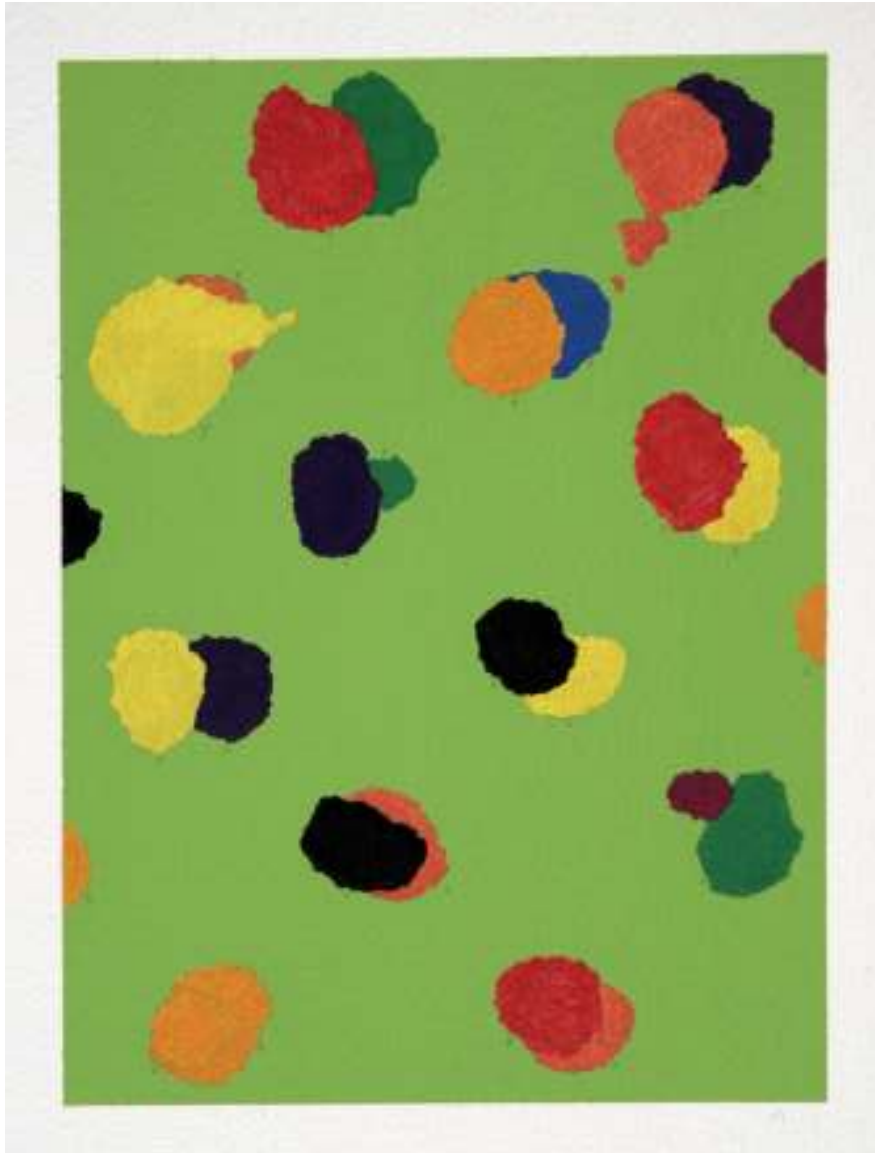


9-6-07 - watercolour, ink & pencil, 6"x9", 2007

John Noestheden

Abstract (Color)

The coloured splotches upon the saturated grounds are strong and convincing as if there is an incultation in process. Each patch of vibrant colour maintains individuality so that the overall profusion of differences packs a powerful impact, much like a chorus granting many harmonies to a vocal composition. Just as a bass line provides solidity, an alto depth and a soprano clarity, the colours sing from their own vibrational origin and in doing so contribute to an ecclesiastical expression of rich visual variations.



Pi One - 30" X 22", acrylic, pencil on paper, 2006

Steve Rockwell

Abstract (Color)

Steve Rockwell, with a clear, clean, methodical series of works on paper, challenges the perceptions. He creates a number of responses to the works that transpire as a run of revelations, each transformative step in the process being predictable, much like a ritual initiation.

From a distance, the paper appears to carry an over-all color field. In some, a larger configuration of squares are part of the composition, much like Stella's work from the seventies or Mondrian's contrapuntal syncopation of the flat picture plane. The colouring is rich, even when it is pastel, as if there is a layering of tones.

Closer inspection reveals that the colour field is made up of thousands of minuscule circles or squares. The surface changes from being purely graphic and two dimensional to a reference to the third dimension. The stacking of the squares, depending on the colors (the classic trick of the eye where the lights come forward and the darks fall back) create the illusion of stairs, cubes or building blocks. The circles, when layered, become sculptural modules that suggest an architectonic space. From piece to piece, the range of visual differences is enlightening. The square configurations originally seen from the distance as fuzz, become firm with the realization that they are meticulously applied dots.

A new aspect of the transformation now occurs as the painter-likeness of the application of the colour shows that each unit is hand painted and still retains the gesture of the application. The squares, particularly, read as a seemingly infinite number of small and perfect paintings that are interesting in themselves, square inch by square inch, and yet also demanding an attention as to how each section relates to the whole.

The next step in the Rockwell visual initiation is the concern over process. How was this accomplished? There are clues. The dots seem slightly raised on the edges as if the pigment had been applied through a template. An examination of the tiny squares yields the discovery of a penciled square in every configuration. The sheer mindfulness needed to accomplish the work becomes impressive. It is as if Steve Rockwell has decided to imitate a printing press, dot by dot or pixel by pixel.

The meditative repetition of this process also produces a sonorous effect on the spectator's eye. It is strenuous trying to discern the combinations of patterns, the links in directions and pathways that form the relationships between the individual units. So the final level left open to the spectator is one on which to de-focus, to rest in the fact that Steve has done the work, both mentally and physically, and it is time to enter the gates and enjoy the pleasure of a visual sensation.



Untitled (yellow, orange, black, green, grey) - 30" X 22", acrylic on paper, 2007

Heidi Thompson

Abstract (Color)

There is a move from sentience to cognizance that depends on the breadth of the imagination. Heidi Thompson's color field paintings on paper provide springboards to launch flights of fancy that gel into an understanding of the absolute physicality of the particular art object. It seems a weighty description of the link between the perception of one of these pieces and the knowledge that can be gleaned from them, but this is how they work.

The immediate impression is a sensate response - to the glory of the color, the texture, the edges of the paper raggedly containing the color field to the sensation of viewing the art piece. The contemplation of the sensation brings past associations into play the patinas of old Tuscan walls, astronomical photographs, mineral deposits, the dried up bottom of an evaporated fountain, mold, lichens, a rusty, barnacled prow of a recently retrieved shipwreck - wherever the individual mind has lodged a similar field of color and texture. Then there is the tangential potential derived from the immediate visual and the associations that they create; new visions like the figures and worlds that we imagine in the clouds, a bonfire or a peeling patch of debris. The response is individual and Heidi Thompson has granted the room to move in a number of associative directions. The color field becomes a launching pad for the particular experiences, embedded in the viewer's consciousness, to spring into being.

Using the piece as an object for meditation, and paring the sensation down to the energy that is flowing into the eyes and being then transmitted to the brain, brings about a distinctly human frame of mind. Because there is no subject other than the materials that make up the phenomenal object that is the piece of art, there is room to enter into a symbiotic relationship with the artwork that is just about as pure as it can get. This pure seeing, because of the human cognizance, causes an emotion - a thrill, perhaps, at the sheer beauty, or maybe dread at the subliminal mystery inherent in being or it could be a pleasurable shock at the glory of perceiving such a vision. This is the strength and appeal of pure abstraction.

Pure abstraction is a physical presence that often catches our attention (the patina, wall or rust, for instance) and yet it doesn't fade into disinterest over time. The wonder continues and the piece pulses a new version of the vision with each encounter. From the softer application of color fields where the glow of color is dependant on layering, the later works on paper have developed a luminosity as roughly textured as the layers of paint that constitutes their physical make up. There is less association in the paintings for the medium is being assertive and allowing little room for fanciful imaginings. Just as a cut glass with the added surfaces enable more refraction and reflection, so Heidi Thompson's work progressively offers more of itself, more of an intense display of its own properties. This firmness of being centers the art work. It exudes a sense of confidence as if it were a direct manifestation of the spirit of creation.



Untitled (white, blue, black) - sand, gesso and acrylic on paper, 30"x22.5", 2007

Srdjan Segan (Solo), November 3 - November 29, 2007

It is as if we are now familiar with another species, for the large drawings of Srdjan Segan are becoming a recognised shape on the horizon of Toronto's art landscape like a subliminal giant or an archetypal figure. Other visual characters and items that inhabit Segan's world have intruded upon his visceral depictions as well - horse heads, birds, the single crooked leg, ropes, beds, screws that truss and stretch or that bind and exemplify. Charcoal and coffee, simple necessities of an artistic practice, are put to use to expand the parameters of size with passionate deliberation and delivery.

Srdjan Segan is the first solo exhibition at Headbones Gallery, The Drawers.



Srdjan Segan

First Solo Exhibition of Headbones, The Drawers

I overheard two men talking in front of three of Srdjan Segan's drawings that were hanging from the adequately high ceiling of The Varley Museum for the "Canadians Beyond Borders" exhibition.

"What do you think of these? Do you think they would be as effective if they were small?"

"Well, I have a feeling that their size is part of the message..."

And there is *no doubt* but that we are impressed by the size, diminished somewhat in the presence of the long lanky figures. It is such a long expanse - a magnificent stretch of paper like a royal welcome into drawing. The figures appear light for they are made of paper and suspended by tape despite the monolithic proportions.

A focused reading of the figures from any one point is impossible. Standing at the feet, the head will constantly be a blur. Physical exertion on the part of the viewer must enter into the process of realization. It is necessary to move around or along these pieces, to walk the length of them, or if they are hung from the ceiling, to circle around their backs as if they were a piece of sculpture.

Srdjan has made a bronze sculpture of a big head staring outwards and beneath his chin a small head stares at the neck of the larger. When I talk with Srdjan, I am about chest level (he is 6 ft. and over). I wonder if most people, to him, are in the range of the smaller head, slightly below comprehension. His ideas are in tune with his perspective and work best when they are grandiose. Srdjan is destined for great things, he comes from great beginnings and has gotten off to a great start, - the descriptives are endlessly rolling out 'oversized'. The long and lanky artist is running a big and tall shop, creating skinny giants, growing a race of androgynous paper beings. He is attempting to reach above his mortal viewpoint and in doing so he is accomplishing a knowledge of the sublime.

Historically, the giant has not fared well in the hands of mortals. Athena beheaded Enceladus, David claimed Goliath's life, and our own fairytale character, Jack the Giant Killer, lopped the far-away head from the far-away neck by climbing up a beanstalk. Francisco de Goya's painting, simply titled "Giant" is sad, lonely, dark, unlovely and *bulky* with only his vulnerable back allowing us the identification of a sympathetic soul. It is a



painting that reveals the disadvantages of bigness. It is an immediate proclamation of an outsider's position for *hugely* different from everyone else, the giant is ostracised rather than admired. Segan has gained access to this overwhelming position of otherness without having to lop heads in the process. He has formulated their beings and strung them up from the rafters. And he has also exposed their innards.

His x-ray vision reveals a substructure that is similar to, but not particular to, our own. These giants seem to be gaining organs or growing heads, winged phalluses and convoluted passageways. There are beaked visages, fishy muscles, double headed serpents and scaled appendages now inhabiting the human silhouette. These figures are not comfortable. The belly spills outside of the skin. The man/woman rumbles with the pain of sentience. It is an oppressive contrast to the thrill of the size. Monuments usually celebrate the grandeur of man not the amplification of man's failings. But that which is visceral and potentially unpalatable, having grown, becomes acceptable, even admirable.

Grouping the figures, I am reminded of a forest. Srdjan calls them "votive drawings", dedicated to regenerative forces. Much as the forests of earth sustain the oxygen supply for us, his tall figures are a reminder of the connections between life and powerful energy. Srdjan relates them to the tree people of Tolkien or the anthropocentric images of trees from the Japanese *Maya Zaki* comics.

A room filled with these draping hanging presences, punctuated by his equally immutable bronzes, brings to mind ancient temples, the Eastern Island sculptures or the massive Buddhas of the Orient. They are warriors - guardians of sacred spaces. They speak of man's dignity. They are a testament to his status, standing upright above all of the other species. Imagine a room of these tall humanoids, towering above the activity below. They would make the buzz of human activity seem picayune in comparison. It is by grasping the insignificance of our personal trauma that the great themes are recognised. By asserting a phenomenal will to power, the niggling concerns of specific pettiness are overcome. It is the umbrella that lends shelter from the dribble of inconsequential and trivial problems. And yet not to rest in too lofty a realm, the pieces are also just plain thrilling. It's a trip to be in the presence of this big and tallness, like being down the rabbit hole, looking up as the pill we've swallowed shrinks us.



Untitled - charcoal & coffee on paper, 106"x126", 2006

Weird Queer Freaky Xmas, December 1 - January 8, 2008

'Christmas' has morphed into 'Xmas' and become outlandish in aspect. Commercialism reigns with high-end demands for better gifts as children loose perspective (children!?) of the inspiration for the holiday season. Art too has found its seat in elfin freaky realms peopled by crazy characters, strange in countenance and design. Rather than becoming jaded, our grab bag presentation is a joyous holiday celebration, straight from the 'art with a wrestling extravaganza for the opening reception on December 1, replete with freaks, queers and weirdos.

Project Room - Scott McEwan

It's worth being ringside at 7PM when Headbones presents Queer Wrestling, a colorful collaboration of showmanship, ritualism, choreography, and the performative aspects of pro wrestling amidst an exhibition of Scott McEwan's Neo-Psychedelic paintings. Defiance Pro Wrestling grapples with Christmas in wrestling gear by fashion designer Matthew Simpson.



Claudia Nagy - *Emperor of the Dynasty Mink*, mixed media, 20x6x12 inches, 2007

Joseph Anderson

Weird Queer Freaky Xmas

One strong justification for the myths from childhood was to reinforce the awareness of the existence of the two major themes, Good and Evil. The world was made to seem light in the face of these opposing concepts, the illustrations colourful and the stories couched in visually fantastic creations - princes, dragons, giants, and magical animals both beneficent and maleficent. The presentation was glossy, pastel, easily read, entertaining with pop-ups and cut-outs to soften the blows from the bad guys or sweeten the fire from the steamy mouths of the brimstone group (dragons, devils, demons).

Joseph Anderson brings these naïve references up to snuff, to serve as stand-ins for adult realities, often hard core and found within the context of Fine Arts. The subject shifts, slightly. The giant squid carrying off the pale-skinned young men is dappled with an abstract expressionist, painterly coloring that equals the intensity of the squirming octopus abductor. There is the hint of a thrill at the adventure, a sensual identification with the long phallic arms of the victimizer. This gratification from fear has more of the excitement of a challenging extreme sport than a *real* horrific experience. It is the safe net of vicarious knowledge stretched below the danger to allow for an imaginative participation in a happening that resonates from the memory or dreams. Anderson has also employed the use of cut-outs in his work, making use of the transformative potential like the easy change-of-role that the cut out dolls with their tabbed on clothes could affect. Replete with their two dimensional personalities, his cut out images have the paper thin disposability and hence vulnerability of playthings. The erotic nuances abide however and link the innocence to a type of role playing that allows unspeakable notions to be met square on at least within the visual realities that Art, another great theme, permits.

The work falls between fun and serious parody, an apt metaphorical position for philosophical meanderings. Anderson “wracks the mortal coil” with his dreams and places the simple illustrations from childhood in a more characteristic stance of adult awareness.



(detail) Octopus, watercolour & ink on paper, 38x100 inches, 2007

Stephan Bircher

Weird Queer Freaky Xmas

Seeing a Stephan Bircher sculpture in the dark, the thrill of creepiness in the passing blur of bones and feathers arrests the distracted progress from A to B. Immediacy reigns over distraction and the moment is realised. Interest sparked, a closer inspection courses with exclamations of amazement, horror, delight, repulsion, fascination and an overriding glee at having been aware enough to notice. There is a privileged singularity when first confronting a Stephan Bircher sculpture, a sense of luck, of having been in the right place at the right time and because of the compounded destiny, of being rewarded with a sensation. How is it that these strange, often macabre sculptures have been placed in the path of city dwellers? Simple - they're the product of a rough savvy coupling between the primal urge to create from the discards of life and technological acumen. They're modern voodoo dolls, contemporary shamanism and theatrical twists of genius from an artist who sees the world as his oyster and plucks his pearls with a pop.

Keith Richards, younger and ravished, could have held a candle to Bircher's dynamic physicality. As narrow as his boney creatures, he appears to be a cross between a gypsy and a rockstar. His figurines are equally hip and stylish, half naked and streamlined. His studio is like a science lab. There are tables with trays of arranged bones, boxes of bird feather's, butterfly wings, beehives and dead insects, shelves of clear plastic drawers with electrical components, rusted machine parts in piles, jewels, junk and things without reference to a naïve eye. The caldron in the corner set upon a wood stove looks like it is straight from a production of Macbeth. He freezes road kill that friends and neighbours give to him and then removes the flesh once it has partially thawed.

There is the haunting feeling that he is perhaps a wizard and the studio with the background whirl of boney creatures on trapezes or being winched from up to down and back again, is on a stage.

The dancing-death imagery, lit as if on the stage of life far after it's allotted term, brings Bircher's expertise to bear on a world over which he has total control, from the writing of the script, to the set design, costuming, lighting and grand finale of the amazing macabre moment of fame.



Step Into Nowhere - mixed media, found objects & bones, 12x5x12 inches, 2007

Robert Farmer

Weird Queer Freaky Xmas

Robert Farmer is a modern day surrealist with a pop bent. The background has bled through and the bedroom has been overrun with copulating bunnies. The wet dreams of the innocent have become part of the wallpaper - almost unnoticeable. The overall design made by the shadowed pink and blue clad carousers forms an abstract lacy web over the surface of the aged paper and lulls the awareness of the permutations into a comforted sense of quiet decency.

Farmer has used paper bases before with geography appearing like veins beneath the semi transparent skin of the well rendered characters that make up his particular narrative. These works on paper step up the energy of the action depicted. Now that the human resemblance is less dominant, overtaken by bunny bodies, the only human tendencies exhibited are in their imaginative positions for the animal world doesn't employ the props and playthings as these bunnies do. The bunnies at one time were merely witnesses to the madcap world of Robert Farmer. Their references more naïve, they had sat at tea parties in the company of baby faced guests, marvelled at the hot dog served for the last supper or been present, and perhaps in collusion, when the teddy bear humped the pussy cat. More than one bunny has lost its head over the strange state of affairs, but never before have they appeared with such fornicating force - crowds of bunnies getting it on with an overall frantic feeling of "What are those bunnies up to?!"

There is a formlessness to their bodies that belies the sexuality being enacted. Like androgynous figurines, they appear to be made of a malleable substance similar to bubble gum. Their shapeless clothes recall gum wrappers and the overall color scheme of pink (for a girl) and blue (for a boy) reiterate the hermaphroditic allusion. Robert throws in accents of other characters such as a snowman in a cowboy hat, a gay reference to the archetype of a queer cowboy hooker. Since he has carrots serving as dildos, the erect nose of the blue snowman, launched into an upturned bunny body, furthers the reckless atmosphere of wild orgiastic abandon. Cavorting with the glee of propagating and adding twists of bondage to the naughtiness, Robert Farmer's bouncing characters play out their sexual fantasies against a backdrop of delicate wallpaper and within their lacy layout they appear as harmless, delightful and seductive as safe sex.



(detail) *Untitled*, oil on wallpaper on paper, 30x22 inches, 2007

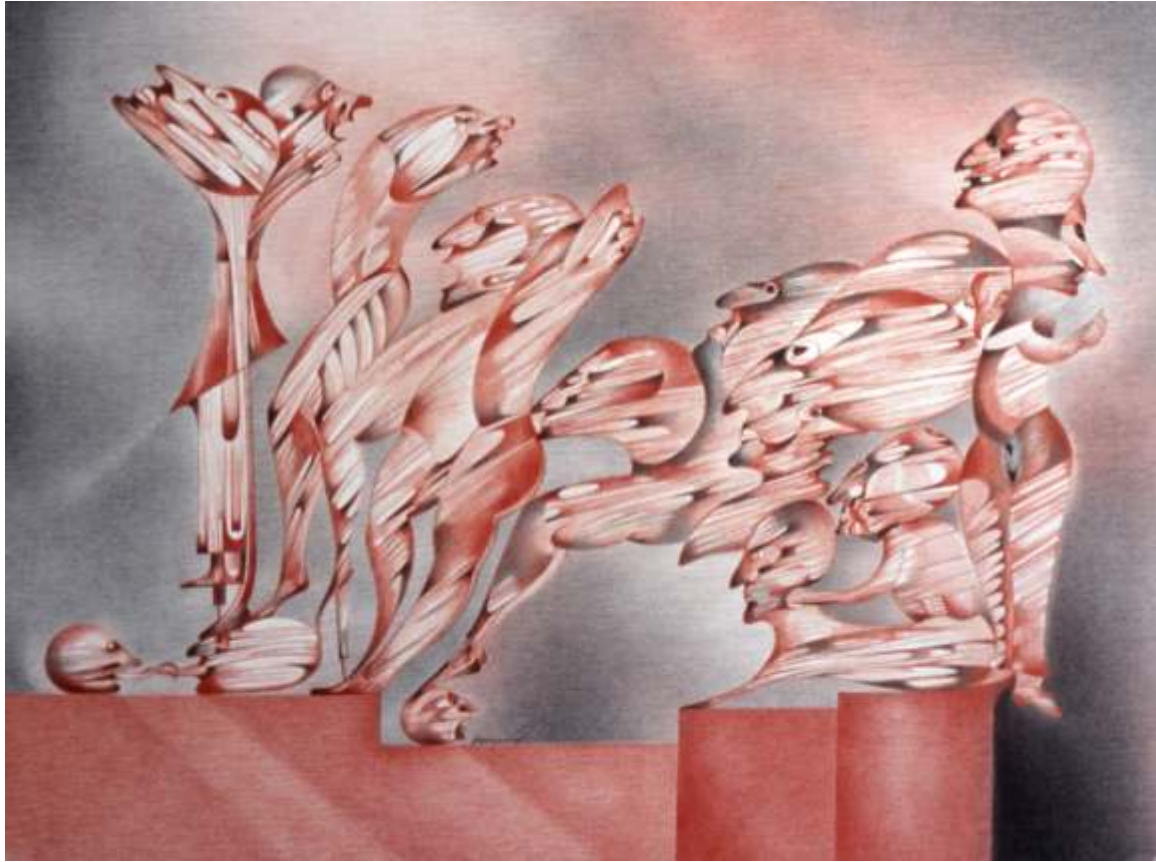
Daniel Hanequand

Weird Queer Freaky Xmas

Daniel Hanequand has thrown out the old and created a new sociological outlook with the swagger of a true French revolutionist. He has upturned existing, stuck and rather boring functional ways and invented a different breed of humanoid and then placed the beings in relationships and a context of his own making. When Paul Klee abstracted the figure, he turned from depiction, sorted the elements through cubism and then dove into the signification of abstraction and geometry. Hanequand distorts the figure from the inside to the outside so that the blur between the exterior and interior is more prominent. He is a 'curvist' rather than a cubist, softening the fractured space and creating a world view that is more akin to poetry than documentation. There is an abounding lyricism in his work - a lot of kissing going on. The figures seem entirely self absorbed and unthreatening, a little too bulbous to pose a serious opposition, their comings and goings relating to a sense of anti-gravitational play where speed is second nature, the result of uninhibited action. They are moving with internal combustion and the energy waves multiply within them, in ever changing and mutating swirls. They are ethereal, unconcerned with spatial definition but exchanging musculature, fluids and wind with each other. Twirling and cavorting on stages or in frames where their innocent coupling and orgiastic naïveté is exposed, they cavort with perfect guile, so preoccupied are they with their own imaginings. They have arrived, inhabited our consciousness and left an indelible imprint.

The colors, monochromatic schematics or playground lightness enhance the dancing convolutions. There is a blending of body to body like the launch and receive of ballet. There is also a psychedelic inference, a peculiar pop memory of Sargent Pepper's Lonely Heart's Club Band and the 'blue meanies'. Hanequand conjures all that is fantastic from science fiction, with trends towards proboscises, feelers, anthropomorphism, and surrealistic truncations.

They're miniatures, endearing strange little beings. This is a world under cover of unassuming smallness. It is completely self generating, falling in love, procreating and inspiring attention. Exquisitely rendered (many sharpened pencils) with an elliptical naturalism, the beings have taken over and left Daniel Hanequand slightly bewildered and bemused that they are so independently sure of themselves once weaned from his careful upbringing.



Metamorphia Untitled, colored graphite on paper, 46x60 centimetres, 2003-07

Zachari Logan

Weird Queer Freaky Xmas

In previous drawings, the men were secondary to the narrative for Logan had placed them in a context that was general, perhaps historical (*The World is Flat*) or with a vague semblance of legend as in *The Voyage*. Even the men dressed in women's clothes were not seen as necessarily homo-erotic for the dresses, gowns, are identifiable with an era when cross dressing was closer to a parlour game than a sign of homosexuality.

Using history, mystery, the mundane and menace as wedges to open the doors of acceptance to the masculine gaze that turns upon itself, Zach Logan's male figures reinvent our references to masculinity. By concentrating on fine specimens of men, bodies muscled and taut, with handsome faces and a wholesome stance of advocacy towards homoeroticism, he brings forth a witty range of situations from muffled, masked love-making to lounging satyrs.

The later drawings bring the men into an arena that is unavoidably sensual and although they are not depicted having sex, the allusion is prescient and enticing. Able bodied, athletic, valenced and physically grappling, the actions edify the exchange of the male gaze. The recipient of the gaze or the object for the desire has all of the attributes of wholesome masculinity. The visually seductive figures could be compared to a proactive poster advocating gay rights. Even when the heads are draped in cloth and there is dynamite strapped to the figure, the viewer is not alienated but invited to identify. It has been the open door that Logan has used through out his work, a reasonable justification of images that are not meant to shock or alienate but to invite understanding. It becomes a plausible premise to partake in the witnessing of a sexual orientation that is still questioned, even condemned in certain factions of society.

This is a polite affirmation, a quiet gifting of interest, a sensitive hand forward. It is a message that is sent with the clear talent of a gifted draftsman and the dynamic of a confident artistic presentation.



Satyr, graphite on paper, 9.5x13.75 inches, 2007

Scott McEwan

Weird Queer Freaky Xmas

When two circles are eccentric, they don't share the same center although they do share the same space. Scott McEwan's work is within the circle of art - accomplished, current, informed and ardent; and yet it is slightly off center. It is this skew that catches, engages and provokes interest. The personal circle, Scott's circle, that is inhabiting the greater art circle, is centered. In fact it is holistic and the art work contains signifiers of a well rounded experience. The work is about wrestling, queer culture, pop iconography and graphic imagery. It tells us a story. Scott is one of the main characters.

The paintings on paper and canvas tell it all. He's an art teacher, a wrestler and he's gay. He has asthma. He hangs out with a colorful, cross-dressing crowd. He has brilliant taste and a fine hand. He is committed to his art practice and currently has a habit of drawing black ink portraits, varying in size. The smallest are drawn on the cards given out in gay bars to pass on telephone numbers with the hope of future assignments. There are also larger than life size formats, often committed to paper from memory, of all of the men that he meets. His world is lined with men, grappling and cavorting in masculine demonstrations of fitness and strength. The wrestlers, dressed like super-heroes exist in an atmosphere of clouds, flames and bubbles where every element is outlined in black - a cartoon and candy-colored depiction of a hairy, sweating, sensuous sport.

There are pansies throughout - that antiquated derogatory term once used for homosexual men. Yet like the resilience of the gay culture, Scott too has reclaimed, with punchy pride, the slur and worn it on his heart sleeve. 'Queer' at one time described a mentally unbalanced, deranged or qualmish individual and then extended into a slang derivation for 'homosexual'. The homosexual community adopted the term and, with fey bravado, ran with it. This is where Scott McEwan shines. He shies away from nothing. He allows the combination of brash colors, whimsical lyricism and an enchanted oeuvre free-range in the world of wrestling. Starting with a random word from the lingo of the ring; he builds on it visually, inserting his characters into a turbulent, active world where excretions spurt high and explosions, just like in the comics, are a matter of course with no more significance in the echelon of masculine attributes than the veined petals of a pansy.

His skew is clearly stated, his circle is intact and he's spinning but not out of control. Like a dervish, he twirls and as the sequins catch flashes of ambient light, he sparkles.



Ending - acrylic & ink on arches paper, 30x22 inches, 2007

Claudia Nagy

Weird Queer Freaky Xmas

Eccentric Realism - if the phrase is not in existence it has just been christened with a splash of champagne on the head of one of Nagy's creature sculptures. The creations deserve a welcoming for they rise above suspicion or doubt as to their credibility by virtue of their unconventional authenticity. There is a subtle difference in their physicality, an odd departure from what is usual or normal as if they have been birthed by one who is mildly insane or touched. They appear self absorbed and interested to an extreme or unreasonable degree with their own individuality. They are like wraiths inverted so that rather than being a ghost of one who once was, they are now resident in the virtual world as substantial forms for imaginative beings.

They are small enough to be friendly with materials that beg to be touched like the luscious coat of *Emperor of the Dynasty Mink* yet they also possess a potential to turn, to snap or pounce. Often posed arrested as if caught in a sudden flash of human awareness that leaves them stiff with fright or adjusting their sight to a novel sense of light, it feels as if they have been here before but the ability to see them needed a heightened presentation of their existence, a febrile hallucination of pristine exquisiteness. They imply sounds- mews, spooky breathing sighs, or toe nails tip-tapping on a late night kitchen floor alerting an insomniac to the little body illuminated by the light from inside the fridge door. They beg to be met alone, in a darkened street or an abandoned attic. They are romantic and lovely like a deformed princess or an enchanted sprite. They are the progeny of crazy dreams where couplings are crystal clear and irretrievable.

Claudia Nagy's work is about poetry, emotions, Freudian impressions and surreal associations. The unearthly or supernatural strangeness of her creations have a second sense to them. Using both exotic and common materials, she creates beings that inhabit a world yet unknown where a mute, bizarre appeal is more akin to beauty than psychologically disturbing. They are odd, freaky sites of otherness to which we are related through our fascination with our own human sensibilities.



Manuelita - mixed media, 11x11x6 inches, 2007

Craig Ziper

Weird Queer Freaky Xmas

Both carry weight, Subject and Technique, to become indivisible aspects of Craig Ziper's *Dead Bug Series*. Bugs, the Subject, and creepy crawliness get under the skin and send a shiver up the spine. They have been of interest since we have been children, a miniscule world that we can control with a squash but which also can sneak up and get us with nearly equal advantage with a bite, sting or deadly injection of venom. Their presence causes an insidious niggle of awareness that they are *here* - surrounding us, outnumbering us, as ever-present as dust yet they exist primarily just outside the range of our perception.

To bring them into range, Ziper has used an eye far more powerful than our human capabilities, that of the camera, the Technique. His bugs are not a discovery, found in their natural states, but clinically isolated against a sterile white background, similar to the clean environments of modernity. And as they lie (dead) under the scrutiny of a mechanical eye, they assume a contemporary aspect related to design, engineering, systems, architecture and the sophisticated range of civilization where advanced technology aids humanity in reaching beyond personal physical space and perceptual limitations. The freaky and grotesque associations with these air breathing arthropods - their antennas, segmented legs and exoskeletons filled with foreign juices assume a more dignified position in the elevated realm of the photographed context. They become line, form and composition as they have been cropped, suspended, posed but always 'on view'. Unnatural, (another aspect of their 'strangeness') in their stillness, they are no longer able to get us. Instead, they achieve an iconographic beauty.

As their fragilities are revealed through a macro perspective, they provoke contemplation on the perfection of insects and replace the shiver of horror with a thrill at the marvels of existence. Ziper, with a background in naturalist photography (the Museum of Natural History in New York) has honed his technique to our advantage. And it is in this respect that the series elevates above the more utilitarian documentation of the natural sciences and assumes a rightful place in the greatest of cultural quests - that in which the object-hood of the art piece reveals a philosophical truth, that there is more to be seen than immediately meets the eye and in that seeing, we become more enlightened.



Fly - photograph on archival inkjet print on paper, 14x17 inches

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