

Drawing Conclusions—Work by Artist-Critics

NY Arts Gallery December 12, 2003—January 13, 2004

Curated by Jill Conner and Gae Savannah

by Gae Savannah

In *The Open Work*, Umberto Eco notes, “to appreciate a work as a perceptible form means to react to the physical stimuli of the object, not just intellectually but also, so to speak, physically.” Through both tangible and intangible craft, the artist-critics in this show proffer a more poly-dimensional picture of each artist’s idiosyncratic vision.

Fragile eggshells clumsily form flat mountain peaks. Here, internally altering the routine *no-man’s land of permanent addresses, fixed thoughts*, and kitchen duties, Gushenn Calik, artist, (Lily Faust, writer,) meanders between language and landscape. Along the way in fact, *meanings peak here and there*, whisking the visual and verbal puns into an exquisite meringue.

Christopher Chambers makes writing and art akin to lyrics of a ballad. Inspiration is where you find it. “Sometimes you have to look pretty hard and other times it just won’t leave you alone,” he strums soulfully midstream a down-to-earth but poignant review. In both his writing and art, what stirs us is Chambers’ own brand of wry, seasoned vernacular. With minimal chords he really riffs on space and archetype.

Both visually and verbally, Ana Tiscornia portrays contemporary

life as shifting, contracting, and fusing layers of space. A house floor plan seen from above emphasizes how a home, which should be a warm, permanent, comforting entity, is also a cold commodity to be bought or sold, as is a beautiful, fine abstract painting. On another level, sensitively handling subtle, industrial, glowy tints, Tiscornia evokes a hazy fragile emotional basement that seeps up to the surface and beyond.

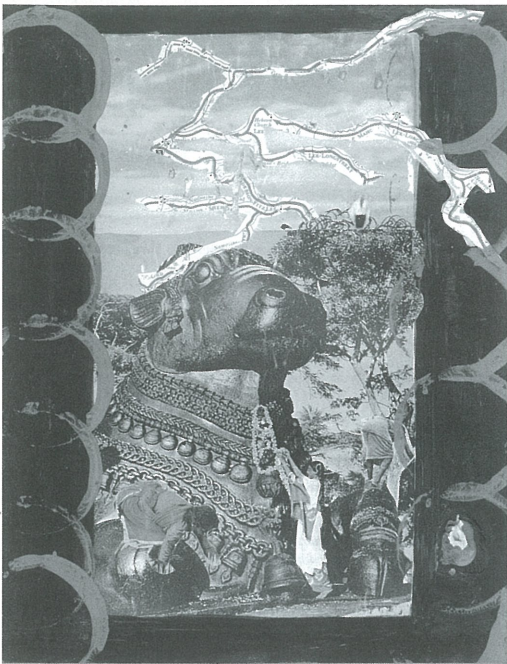
Words and images fill in alternate dimensions of Sabine von Fischer’s plugged-in panopolis. In her artwork, stark graphic overlays of dizzying patterns of sonic stimulation race around us as we again and again shoot up another dose of blissful technology. Tapping at the computer keys however, von Fischer forays into an underlying dread and angst over cold, barren, nature-less urban existence with copper wires and sewage as guts.

Alastair Noble’s sculpture is literally poetry. His drawing is shaped by a few lines of Mallarmé’s poem, *Un Coup de Des*. With the cut-out strips, the spare words of the poem, and the quadrangular shapes, the sails of sloops, the milky nebulous white space of the Japanese rice paper gently expands, enveloping us in the mist of timelessness.

Likewise, Noble uses language verbally to laud Christopher Wilmarth’s use of aqua glass and light to compose physical poetry.

Jennifer Reeves amuses us with pugilistic blurting out of sophomoric invective. Pitching conventional figuration, she depicts just the abstract gestures of communication, such as one’s leaning forward in defiance. In consumer colors such as Baskin-Robbins pink, Reeves, with wit to boot, dishes out flip and facile yet also telling judgements. Similarly, starting a review lamenting, “Dear Albert, Pay no heed to my letter. I had it all wrong,” Reeves utilizes histrionic shifts in the language we expect, to shock-’n’delight.

Finally, Joel Silverstein plays high-and-low tag with viewers as he drives us through two continents on a faux mystical journey. On the itinerary are numerous postmodern monuments including those of kitsch, pastiche, and the flavorful mundane. Humble cow is made sacred god, highway-map roads mimic exalted Expressionist brushstrokes, unsensational mechanical reproduction meets exotic seaside. Likewise, in his review Silverstein adroitly navigates us through the multifaceted installations of Deborah Sperber.



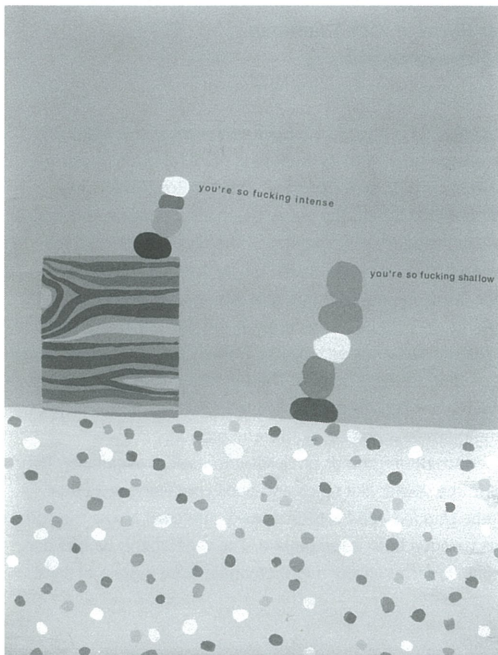
Joel Silverstein, Untitled, 2003, collage, mixed media

Sculpture Magazine
December 2001 Vol. 20 No. 10
Review by Joel Silverstein

New York

Devorah Sperber takes small modules or units of industrial production denoting the detritus of society and builds them into fantastic installations of visual aggregation and multiplicity. Mimicking old four-color reproduction, television, and contemporary computer imagery, she uses a special computer program to scan landscape photography into pixilated digits. These are blocked as coded color squares, which can be matched with a suitably toned industrial module. Viola! A sculptured mural of weight, gravity, and lyricism. The bridging of cheap industrial materials and epic size, scale, and a visuality lends Sperber's work a unique high/low impact not easily forgotten. The title piece, *Virtual Environment* (1999-2000), is composed of thousands of spools of thread. The image of a rural rock wall coalesces with the aid of the viewer's perception. It evokes 19th-century pointillist techniques, as well as the fractal, incremental nature of our own era. Color luminosity and richness of tone exist within the thread itself, yet they also serve as the equivalent of an abstracted brushmark loaded with pigment, the signifier of that planar form of expression, illusionist two-dimensional painting.

Joel Silverstein, excerpt from review of Devorah Sperber in Sculpture magazine Dec. 2001



Jennifer Reeves, Untitled, 2003, drawing

Stella's New Name
by Jennifer Reeves

Dear Albert,

Pay no heed to my last letter. I had it wrong. I had it all wrong. When I first saw the Stella sculptures I was enamored. I told you they were too beautiful not to love and too cruel not to stay away. They were like bleak Lucifers bearing no obfuscation. The second time I saw them, I had reservations, but I didn't understand them and I didn't understand why.

The coolness of the air this morning is disturbing my skin. The petunias and vines in the flower boxes, which I hope you shall see, are making a recovery. Their leaves were eaten off due to the slugs. Due to my taking forever to plant them and for leaving them in harms way on the patio by the stonewall. Finally, though, all the rain we've been having has abated. So the roots have had time to dry out, ridding themselves of another problem. Rot. And now in the undercurrent, I feel another storm coming. The emptiness of the air is thick with wet. My intuitive eye can see it and the flowers sense it too. Far from the slugs, they are safe in their negative spaces. I feel strangely warm. Bring on the thunder.

Even though Ken Johnson of The New York Times gave recognition a stellar go, his roots got rammed in the muck. True, Stella gives us sci-fi machines but not inadvertently or to his detriment. It is deliberate. Not the sci-fi. That is not quite the right description. These sculptures are aggressive like monsters in a different sense. They are musical battle plans meant to chew up evil spirits with the elegant indifference of tractor blades. They are distressing because they seem like Edward Scissorhands without the vulnerability and they are hard in the way a man thinks he owns a woman just because she loved him once. They appear to be unsuccessful because they are all about justice without an ounce of kindness. But really, they are beasts stabbing themselves to death with their own obsessiveness.

Jennifer Reeves, excerpt from review of Frank Stella in NYArts magazine Sept. 2003