

this phenomena, and it happily refers back to a long history of non-Western decorative arts, Art Nouveau, and others. It's an interesting range of color to compliment his rhythmic structure: sacred, luminous, merely bright, schematic, repetitious, iron bound, sallow. His paintings are mixed with a great deal of organizational skill in order to embrace a chasm of meanings.

This brings us to the issue of interpretation. Deriving from a solid list of blue-chip modernists, we may see Burton as "in the tradition of," and mark him as a very commendable and serious abstract painter. Another side to him: light, humorous, at times even PoMo friendly, is also in evidence. His most recent paintings like *RISE*, 1999 and the triptych *META* border on the ironic. Op Art is certainly evoked, but also the frenzied Sixties wallpaper that a generation of young people got stoned in front of. These kinetic patterns are currently in a fashion revival; exactly the kind of thing that a Postmodern painter would appropriate. Like Ross Bleckner's stripe paintings, they are emblems of dizziness pointing to low art references. Any further in this direction and his paintings would cease to be abstract experiences. They would merely comment on the flattening out of content within the abstract tradition. Burton, however, remains a believer and his paintings are always, first and foremost, journeys of travel and discovery.

High or Postmodernist, should we even be asking the question? Burton's very nature seems to dodge the answer. He has carefully developed an abstract language that seems correct for our times: serious and playful, compulsive yet meditative, calculated, but, above all, painterly. It's a contradictory

achievement shaded with subtlety. While contradiction may not equal heroism, in Burton's hands, it's a facsimile that in these times looks more and more attractive.

Gregory Gillespie

New Paintings and Drawings
Forum Gallery through December 31
BY JOEL SILVERSTEIN

OVER THE YEARS, Gregory Gillespie has employed a plethora of visual styles. Gillespie was part of a generation (which would include Jim Dine, Alex Katz and Philip Pearlstein) that rebelled against abstract formalism and it's Greenbergian legacy. He is still the kind of artist that separates shape-making for its own sake from storytelling, which is part of the narrative/figurative tradition. In fact, when he paints or sculpts a shape, his goal in his own words, is to imbue it with "character." The same qualities he has in mind for his portraits and landscapes.

Emerging from the hegemony of Abstract Expressionist orthodoxy, Gillespie, like the slightly older R. B. Kitaj is probably winking over his shoulder at the great formal freedoms of Picasso. His work look little or nothing at all like the great Spanish artist, but there's a similar "Damn it, I'll paint whatever I want" attitude that gives Gillespie's work a conviction, momentum and a sense of joy which carries it over its weaker moments.

Gillespie's interests are wide ranging. He's strangely drawn to Northern and Italian Renaissance painters like Bosch, Bruegel and

Uccello, those knotty, idiosyncratic masters who painted people like rutabagas and who were known as bristling and difficult colorists. They were also, given their various European and Christian traditions, painters of dreams, delusions and transformations through realistic metaphors.

If Gillespie can comfortably be placed within any artistic tradition, it is American Magic Realism, derived from European Surrealism. He shares the crepuscular shifting light and erupting surface qualities of Ivan Albright and the complex figurative compositions of Philip Evergood, two artists often overlooked today. Gillespie also combines the crusty ribbed surfaces and organic tangle of Max Ernst with the alienated loneliness of Yves Tanguy.

Gillespie's subject is consciousness. An avowed user at various times of mind-expanding techniques such as meditation, drugs and hypnotherapy, he focuses on how surfaces and images erupt and change. Even within figurative landscapes like *PROVINCETOWN*, 1999 or *LANI'S GAME*, 1999, a simple beachscape or baseball game within a grove of trees is transformed. Every stroke of foliage seems to bear a face which is in the process of coalescing and peering out. There are also metaphorical fantasies more akin to the northern European tradition, *RED SKY LANDSCAPE*, 1999, for example, where unnatural red-green combinations and mutating bodies take on a Dantean metaphysical slant.

Gillespie is fearless in his formal juxtapositions, and he casually shifts if and when it fits his purpose - from the altarpiece and votive reliquary of *SEVERED HEAD*, 1999, which includes wood construction, bright graphic color, window screening and a floating self-portrait, to the erupting, near pornographic internality of *MALE ORGASM*, 1999, to the series of brightly

colored mandalas decorated with figures and plasticity intestinal shapes in *CATHOLIC MANDALA*, 1999 and *RED/GREEN MANDALA*, 1999.

Gillespie's best when he slows his paintings down. He has demonstrated that he can masterfully interweave complex subject matter, dazzling color, traditional religious forms, clots of worked over paint, tiny details. On the surface he can be loud, jokey and flat-footedly sexual, but there is a deeper, more profound side to the artist. He is able to wax poetic, for example, on the meaning of otherness. In *THE LAKE*, 1999, a simple rock grotto reminiscent of Courbet lies over a reflective pool of water. Autumnal foliage is scraped and hacked with crinulations. A patch of airy blue pokes through the top of the canvas. The rocks, gaping hole, foliage and trees are as palpable and as quiet as a Rembrandt self-portrait. The tranquillity shifts over time. Violence and sexuality from the unconscious intrudes upon the scene. It is indeed, the voice from within the surface, that issues forth and is held in check.

Another technique that Gillespie favors is to find a historical fragment (Medieval or Indian miniature) and use it as basis for gestural improvisation. A successful example of this is *MANGER SCENE*, 1999. It's composed of the oblique open box shape favored by Sienese and Florentine Trecento painters. A Bruegelesque town protrudes from the left hand corner. There are three nude figures straining in various poses. A forth, squatting on the manger is translucently whited out by tape-like shapes. An Indonesian mask, resides on an armless large breasted torso. This figure is leaning on a blackened and gaping doorway. Beneath the left hand side is a whitened area of internalized hieroglyphic drawing. If this is a

manger scene, this Christ is a transcultural, hydroencephalic baby-monster brought to life and directed by David Cronenberg or David Lynch.

Like many other veterans of the Sixties, Gillespie is enamored with Asian art, sexual mysteries and the Sacred. His figures often have the rubbery bend of the positions of the Kama Sutra or the cave paintings of Ajanta and Allura. *YONI/PHALLIC SHRINE*, 1999 is a bristling mass of dragged paint in the form of a blue-and-white vagina floating on a flatly painted, edgy red. In the center is a penis overtly demonstrating (or satirizing) the sexual union. Elsewhere there are intestinal shapes, flying genitalia of every persuasion, even artificial ones. This is played against the painted structures of the sacred. Gillespie as a Western contemporary artist, sees sex as tantric and godly in itself, but dually as schizophrenic, alienating, mutating and eviscerating. He derives a black line used to cut open his forms from Outsider art, as well as a hatched demarcation similar to Robert Crumb of *Fritz the Cat* and *Zap Comix* fame.

His is a strange sensibility that jostles for attention. The juxtapositions of paintings on the wall sometimes work and sometimes are uncomfortable. For all the flat graphic outlines and linear inscribing, I am most appreciative when Gillespie contains his weirdness to a landscape format. It seems that the landscape in his hands is a container for his formal improvisations and his personal narrative obsessions in believable ways. When he shifts to the votive reliquary format, the paintings feel a bit too self-evident and goofy. But, perhaps in the end, goofiness, or the issue of bad taste, may be just another Rubicon for the artist to cross and conquer. For now, for Gillespie, it all just seems part of the natural mix.

Sandra Lerner

*Full and Empty
Paintings*

Through January 4

JUNE KELLY GALLERY

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Manabu Yamanaka

Gyahtei

Stefan Stux Gallery through January 22

BY HERBERT REICHERT

WHENEVER I discover some unusual or especially powerful photograph, whenever I am caught in mid-motion and am forced to stop and reconcile the image I am looking at, my next psychic step is always to ask myself: Why do people make photographic images and call them art? Why do we look at them? Are they really art? Can they ever equal the mystery and profundity of painting? I know these are old questions; they are old for me, too. But sometimes I can't stop myself. Manabu Yamanaka's full-scale images of very old naked women compelled me to seriously re-examine my feelings

furious potency to spark and ignition the spirit, to bring the soul of the recipient to some quality of the spirit who made it. Art does not evaporate with its maker; it is not subject to the degradation of the earthly. It is an unnatural thing, and it possesses the greatest power attainable on this earth – it remains.

MacIver's works are the candles she has put against the darkness, and from them, we know of her what Millay said elsewhere in the same poem: "More precious was the light in your eyes than all the roses of the world." And as well, the light she has put into our eyes. Go and see this exhibition; spend a moment to carry this light the artist has left us.

Think of Loren MacIver.

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UnrePRESSED

Functioning Sculpture: The Press as a Work of Art and Prints Created From It

Atelier A/E through January 30

BY JOEL SILVERSTEIN

NEW YORK OFFERS A wealth of spaces and venues in which challenging exhibitions are presented. We tend to get jaded, expecting the *de rigueur*, white-washed bomb shelter, air plane hanger or automobile showroom functioning as a gallery space, that we often lose contact with the intimacy of a work of art.

Granted, there are times when intimacy or even connection within the context of the art environment is not necessary. Certain kinds of transgressive avant-garde works thrive

on large alienating spaces in which disconnection, ennui and confusion is the rule. Then again, the older idea of large abstract-expressionist pictures requiring large inviting spaces so the bled, poured and scumbled edges of the canvases can embrace and wrap around the viewer. Today, more often than not, however, galleries mimic industrial spaces or impersonal stores. How much remodeling did all those Euro-trash clothing mongers actually have to do in SoHo after they took over the art galleries? The answer is, not much. Look for twelve black dresses hung like a minimalist installation at Chinati and you'll know what I mean.

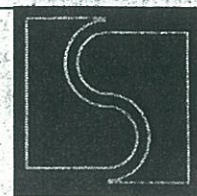
Tucked away within a row of brownstones in Chelsea is Atelier A/E. It's a gallery housed in a beautifully restored living space by artist/curators Anson and Ellen Peckham. This married couple restored the building themselves over twenty five years ago. They began the gallery to connect artists to collectors and organize artist-based exhibitions. What's fascinating is to see intimate works placed in a home and not have them be merely decorative.

There's a staircase, a living room, a solarium and a study. Light floods in from both ends of the brownstone. While the space itself obviously poses challenges and problems, seeing works of art in this environment is highly refreshing. It's a throw-back to early Modernist traditions. Think of Gertrude and Leo Stein, or Gertrude Vanderbilt Whitney, or even Peggy Guggenheim. The work reflects the environment and visa-versa.

The current exhibition at Atelier A/E begins with a nimble premise: Suppose a sculptor wanted to rethink the artist's printing press? Suppose he wanted to transcend mere functionality

and decided to make it a work of art in itself? A conceptual idea, but one laden with many formal possibilities. The sculptor Micheal Ince is the lynch-pin to this whole plan. Ince spent many years in Asia and has more recently worked restoring boats and building furniture. These skills and experiences have paid off as his wood constructions are truly beautiful. There are smaller models of the presses present at the gallery, but the full-scale models are demonstrated in a videotape directed by Gail Jansen, which can be viewed upon request. In the video, the artist discusses the inspiration for these works, as well as demonstrating them in cooperation with three other artists who used them to make prints.

Ince is drawn to traditional Chinese forms. Not it's so-called high art, but utilitarian objects: the wheelbarrow, which the Chinese used for battle, the mouse-trap, the rocker and the battering ram. Each of Ince's sculptures objects have simple moving parts and are made of jointed wood, rope, hemp and stones for counter weight. Ince's *WHEELBARROW* is enormous. It must be lifted, pushed forward, while the print is made by striking it's wheel. In *THE MOUSE TRAP*, a counter weight is dropped from a considerable distance, striking the print upon impact. One uses Ince's *ROCKER* to make a print by standing on



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