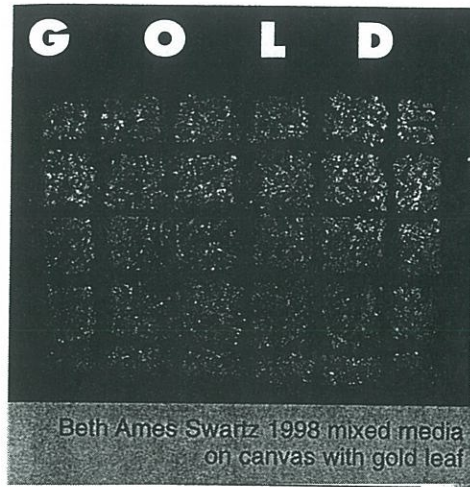


ignpeopled island to stare out to the ultimate space of the horizon...

**G O L D S T A N D A R D**



Beth Ames Swartz 1998 mixed media on canvas with gold leaf

**Beth Ames Swartz Surrenders to Beauty**

DONAHUE/SOSINSKI ART

Alchemy is a word used too often and too loosely today to describe the creative process. A found object or borrowed image recontextualized as an art commodity is, in current parlance, alchemy. Lead transmuted into gold. Few artists understand the term as Beth Ames Swartz does, however. The spiritual sublimation of the self through the act of making art has been a career-long pursuit of Swartz through years of studying Eastern philosophies and using this knowledge as the basis of her life's work. In the 1970s, with her *Fire Work* series, she combined the elemental forces of earth and fire as a metaphor for the eternal cycle of life, death, and rebirth. Later, in her painting suite, *A Story for the Eleventh Hour*, she conceived a life history to that of human development from origin to near-extinction and

ing. In her latest body of work, the *Shen Qi Series*, derived from her growing discipline following a near-fatal illness, Swartz employs a range of imagery in symbols to Gabalistic pictograms, placed against monochromatic fields of red or brilliant gold leaf.

es can in an instant appear to float above the surface, then a moment later

etry of the tree of life or the concentric rings depicting the four worlds. ancient alchemists intended: as a metaphor for spiritual perfection, akin to or total awareness. Unlike many Western artists who mine the wealth of al, Swartz wholeheartedly believes in the wisdom of Eastern mysticism and and the viewer who surrenders to its beauty.

ROBERT COSTA

**CHRIS COSTAN**

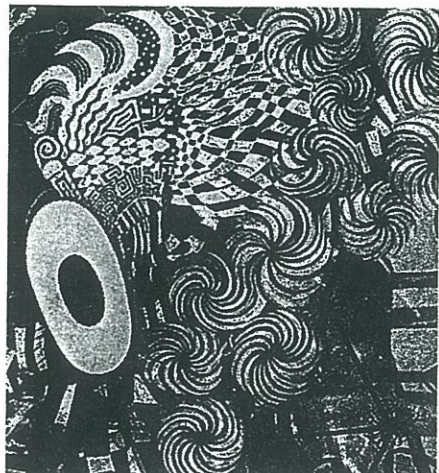
CHERYL PELAVAN FINE ART

Chris Costan began showing her work in the East Village during the 1980s. She's back in a very strong show at this Tribeca gallery. Despite ties to such artists as Terry Winters, Carroll Dunham and Beatriz Milhazes, Costan maintains a unique body of work, one flavored with nuance, edgy humor and duplicitous meaning.

Using the 80s technique of layering,

Costan employs visual material from complex decorative patterns, biological illustration and cartoons. What's mostly interesting and commendable in her work is how her sensibility turns on itself. Colors range from the limpid to the mushy. Forms are tears that become thought bubbles or exclamation points. Lines are ganglion or diagrams of neurological impairment. In paintings that are ostensibly abstract Costan is able to imply a palpably figurative subtext, one that points to the fractured nature of the contemporary psyche.

There is a probing intelligence here



Chris Costan *Twisted* 1996-7

held in check by good design sense, fun and more than a dose of Surrealist hysteria. It's as if the processes advocated by society: science, rationality, historicism and psychological integrity all unravel triumphantly before our eyes.

Costan's decorative is a place where things get caught. Be prepared. It's a slow burn that actually grows on you.

Joel Silverstein

**ALEXANDER KALETSKI**

DILLON GALLERY

In this time of trouble and tragedy, it is a relief to relax into the bold humor of satire, not as escape, but as wry knowing. Alexander Kaletski's mixed media paintings in his recent show entitled *Wallpaper Heroes*, shout out with the exuberant play of childhood and the courage of adult defiance.

Patterned fabric paper of lace over linen are the backgrounds on which are painted and collaged images of familiar people and gestures. A black swirling line of a microphone wire engulfing a white-suited Elvis Presley captures the energy, frenzy and self-obliviation of this iconic figure. President Clinton's back is to you as he is placed against a wallpaper of early American flags and eagles and hands with red fingernails.

Kaletski uses visually naive forms to make an ironic, sophisticated commentary on familiar archetypes and states of mind. A fiery red penetrates the flowered white face of the robes in "The Pope and the Fly." Surrounding his Holiness's blank stare is a dynamic abstract expressionist background. An emigre from Stalin and Brezhnev's Russia, Kaletski has been here since 1975, but to our benefit, the art of conveying multi-layered meanings polished during his formative years as an underground folk singer in Russia, are there for the seeing.

Marcia Newfield

**UNRELATED**

GALLERY X

Located in a charming Victorian row house in Harlem, Gallery X is one of the first in a new outcropping of galleries that are enthusiastically showing international and area talent. Director Gulsun Erbil has introduced five women artists in her summer show "Unrelated."

Elizabeth Agee's nighttime altars convey a mood of troubled history. Angels and old gate posts guard watertowers in scenes that evoke the melancholic flicker of urban noir combined with ancestral force. Her dryly scrubbed surfaces and somber hues further suggest a nostalgia