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## ART REVIEW; Enter Youth, Quieter and Subtler

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SPRING, however reluctant, always brings a rise in the number of first shows, those gallery exhibitions by which artists young or unknown first dip into the ebb and flow of the New York art world. Such shows have been unusually abundant recently, and that is fitting, perhaps, for a season that, after a slow start, is concluding with a flurry of interesting shows by older, more established artists.

Most of the debuts to be seen this weekend are in SoHo, although several can be found in the outlying neighborhoods of the South Village and Chelsea. Taken as a whole, they don't form a representative cross-section of what younger artists are up to these days, which is pluralistic and likely to remain so. Painting, especially abstract painting by young women, which was so plentiful in galleries last month, is relatively scarce at the moment. Instead, there's a tilt toward video and installation, sometimes in combination, and different forms of realism, in both two and three dimensions, with a small, model-like scale often the central device. The influence of Conceptual art is everywhere apparent, but what else is new?

It is indicative of the art world's growing internationalism that this sampling includes artists from China, Poland, Iceland, Israel and Thailand, as well as both coasts of the United States. And with half of them women, the increasing egalitarianism in the field is apparent. If there is one common characteristic, it is a certain kind of restraint. No macho chest-thumping here, but something quieter and subtler, based on the conviction that there is more than one way to catch and hold the attention. Not surprisingly, this tour will also take the viewer to some of the newer galleries downtown.

### **David Zwirner**

One of the best exhibitions now on view, by a beginner or not, is the first show by TOBA KHEDOORI, at the David Zwirner Gallery. Ms. Khedoori, who is 32 and from Australia, stood out in last season's Whitney Biennial. Working in wax, oil and pencil, she combines aspects of painting and drawing to make images that have the impact of installation art. Her austere, abstracted realism may bring to mind New Image painting; her smallish images surrounded by enormous expanses of unframed paper can recall Joel Shapiro's tiny space-devouring early works, as well as Richard Serra's looming oil-stik drawings. In keeping with these 1970's references, Ms. Khedoori seems to be after a new kind of process art. Visual perception is paramount: attention is quietly drawn to every gesture and decision that went into these understated images of repeating doors, brick walls or chain-link fences. Each repeating unit is the same, but a little different; false starts can be detected.

This meticulous delicacy of rendering contrasts with the big loose strokes of transparent wax that cover each huge surface, like the ghost of a painting. And there are human ghosts, too. Her fragmented images are anonymous, and at times slightly sinister. Imprisonment is hinted at in these walls, facades and enclosures. The most painterly image in the show suggests a room without doors seen from above. As for the little shell of a house: is it the real thing or a child's toy? Is it half-destroyed or, like so many of the images here, simply incomplete? Ms. Khedoori's quietly imposing art navigates a tightrope between different media, and between different emotions, too.

### **Bronwyn Keenan**

The haunting desert tableaux of MICHAEL ASHKIN, which have been making their presence felt in group shows over the last year, also feature small instantly recognizable forms surrounded by expanses of space. But for Mr. Ashkin, making his debut at the Bronwyn Keenan Gallery, space is three-dimensional.

This show's single work is a 21-foot-long table sculpture of a tiny tanker-truck crossing a narrow causeway in what is undoubtedly a man-made lake of brackish water. A pipeline parallels the causeway, which is also punctuated by a little shed, and electrical lines run above it. It could be New Jersey or Kuwait.

Everything is convincingly rendered in perfect scale; themes concerning environmental pollution, human loneliness and global greed are conveyed with Spielbergian efficiency, and a hint of existential doubt.

As with the early 1980's images of Jack Goldstein and Robert Longo, the mind reacts to Mr. Ashkin's desolate, end-of-the-world vignettes with an almost instant scenario that includes, say, Steve McQueen sweltering at the wheel as the truck slices through the sizzling air.

### **Basilico Fine Arts**

BRIAN TOLLE likes his trompe l'oeil effects at full scale. His show at Basilico Fine Arts gallery outlines a breathtakingly convincing early American room: a brick fireplace beneath a hulking timber mantle and ceiling beams -- all rendered in carved and painted Styrofoam -- combined with leaded windows lined with photographs of bucolic country lanes.

These images are based on hand-tinted photographs by Wallace Nutting, a turn-of-the-century scholar, furniture collector and designer who helped spawn the Colonial Revival with writings that were part history, part wishful thinking.

The larger point, about the past's elusiveness and history's implicit insufficiency, is made, but not as sharply here as in the fake and weirdly altered antiques that constituted Mr. Tolle's previous work.

Again, however, one is drawn in by his technical skill, and the lengths he goes to demonstrate that history is continually recreated by the present.

### **Boesky & Callery**

The paintings of DITI ALMOG, a young Israeli artist now living in New York, on view at Boesky & Callery, veer between real and miniature scale.

Sometimes her quiet stripes, zips, squares-within-squares and monochromes are paintings; sometimes they are paintings of paintings, their white grounds suddenly reading as gallery walls. Thus conjuring the "white cube" of modernism's ideal exhibition space, Ms. Almog builds on Peter Halley's and Sherrie Levine's appropriational abstraction, while her stock formalist vocabulary evokes Barnett Newman, Mark Rothko and Agnes Martin.

What saves all this from dreary post-modern self-consciousness is pristine execution; elegance of surface, color and proportion, and a bit of radiance that is more modern than post.

## **Deitch Projects**

The first New York outing of CHEN ZHEN, a 41-year-old Chinese artist living in Shanghai and Paris, is a polemical installation piece plagued by its similarity to Nari Ward's junk-filled environmental work, seen at Deitch Projects two months ago. Mr. Chen's "Daily Incantations" refers to the ritual emptying of the wooden chamber pots that have been a feature of Chinese life for several centuries. Dozens of these handsome lidded pots hang in a bleachers-like arrangement, encircling a huge sphere made of discarded computers, stereos and television sets like a small stadium. This globe of instant obsolescence might also signify Western capitalism, which the citizens of China have often been encouraged to denounce on a daily basis.

The work is accompanied by a loud drumming -- the sound of the pots being emptied -- that is both musical and ominous, suggestive of the obedient enthusiasm of a carefully staged political rally. The accumulation of time-worn objects and the contrast with high-tech garbage is obvious and easy, but also has enough impact to make one interested in Mr. Chen's next effort.

## **Tanya Bonakdar**

The power of the real is also tapped, and rendered beautifully ephemeral, in the first show of OLAFUR ELIASSON, an Icelandic artist now living in Cologne, Germany, whose work has an affinity with the art of Robert Irwin and James Turrell. Mr. Eliasson's favored materials include water, light and moss. Here he creates a sparse, dramatically lighted waterfall. Water dripping from the Tanya Bonakdar Gallery's ceiling falls into a long pan on the floor; its descent is lighted only by strobes, which slows everything down and makes each drop gleam like a diamond. For a second, a magical beauty prevails, but after that you may want more. Reproductions of other installations by Mr. Eliasson, available in a notebook, suggest that more may be possible.

## **Gavin Brown's Enterprise**

UDOMSAK KRISANAMIS, a young painter from Thailand who sometimes substitutes for his fellow countryman Rirkrit Tiravanija in that artist's cooking-performance-installation works, is making his own debut with one big painting wedged into Gavin Brown's Enterprise, a micro-gallery just beyond SoHo's western border.

Mr. Krisanamis takes a passive approach to achieving a variation on the all-over composition usually associated with Jackson Pollock. He pastes thousands of little strips of newsprint to canvas and then blackens it all out with a felt-tip pen -- except, that is, for every "O" or zero. This exercise in mindless precision actually yields something worth looking at: a big dark sparkling surface that suggests a night sky or a teeming city while remaining adamantly abstract, in part because it is so clearly handmade. It is yet another meeting at the intersection of craft and painting, not to mention being and nothingness. And, as with the work of Ms. Khedoori and Mr. Ashkin, here is another artist attracted to silence and finite demonstrations of the infinite.

## **Casey M. Kaplan**

The mixing of media by AMY ADLER is so seamless that you don't know what you're looking at. Her series of images titled "What Happened to Amy?" is based on snapshots taken of the artist at the age of 13, and they show her wearing a sun dress and crouching on a boardwalk, sitting in a swing or a child's wagon. To make the works in the series, Ms. Adler, who is now 29 and living in Los Angeles, translated the snapshots into big pastel drawings that she then photographed. After developing the film, she destroyed both the drawings and the negatives. Thus these hybrid images -- mechanical reproductions of handmade pieces -- become unique artworks in the end, an interesting progression that unfortunately requires a lot of explaining.

What's there for the seeing is the strangeness of the final images, which dovetails perfectly with their ambiguous subject: a portrait of the artist as neither child nor woman, but somewhere in

between.

### **Jose Freire**

The first solo show of JANICE KRASNOW , at Jose Freire, is a series of word paintings forming a kind of body art that initially feels a little too close for comfort. "Narrow white teeth and tiny weak feet," announces one canvas; "dirty yellow hair," states another. But sometimes the kingdom is more plant than animal, as with "dense deep green glossy leaves" and "tender sweet bright orange flesh." These verbal close-ups, which the artist calls portraits, cause a pleasant confusion, and two bright, posterish flower paintings expand the pleasantness without providing much indication of what Ms. Krasnow might do next.

### **Lombard-Freid and Art Projects International**

MACIEJ TOPOROWICZ, a Polish-born artist living in New York, likes neither the subliminal messages of advertising nor its obliviousness to the harsher facts of life, and he uses one against the other. For his debut, at Lombard-Freid Fine Arts, he exposes the affinity between sculpture and architecture of the Nazis and the advertising campaign for Calvin Klein's fragrance, Obsession.

He creates a fragrance of his own, "Lure," along with advertisements featuring not images of suggestively posed models, but real Asian women who work in massage parlors in Thailand. And he replaces the clean, happy infants in Baby Gap ads with their dirtier counterparts from a Thai orphanage. The air is thick with a rather slick if well-intentioned didacticism. Best by far is the four-minute video at the center of the Obsession piece, which juxtaposes the beautiful young men and women of the Klein ads and commercials with snippets from Visconti's "Damned," Pasolini's "Salo," Liliana Cavani's "Night Porter" and Riefenstahl's "Olympiad," all to the cheerfully martial music from Peter Greenaway's film "The Cook, the Thief, His Wife, Her Lover." Didactic or not, it's a bull's-eye.

Also on the same floor as Lombard-Freid, at Art Projects International, is the debut show of JUNG HYANG KIM, a Korean-born New York painter whose skillful if generic canvases contrast fields of abstract motifs with more naturalistic forms, in a style of juxtaposition initiated by David Salle.

### **Greene/Naftali**

LUCY GUNNING is one of a number of promising young women from England drawn to video and rather eccentric notions of performance. An earlier work seen at the Greene/ Naftali Gallery gently satirized the equine interests of young English women by taping several of them demonstrating their ability to whinny. This show includes a piece in which Ms. Gunning takes a singing lesson. Her teacher, full of critiques, suggestions and encouragement, is seen on one monitor, while the artist gamely responds to instruction on another.

More impressive is "Climbing Around My Room," a video projection of an athletic young woman, presumably a dancer, scaling the vertical surfaces of a room without once touching the floor: climbing from bookshelf to wardrobe to radiator to coat hook to doorknob to molding. Think of someone inspired by Matthew Barney, and trying it at home without all the props. It's funny, spatially disorienting and exciting to watch. The climber wears a fancy red party dress, as if a song recital were next on her list.

### **AC Project Room And Monique Knowlton**

Finally, two solo debuts that close tomorrow.

At the AC Project Room can be seen the somewhat pretentious, but still engrossing "Self Portrait as Still Life," by AKI FUJIYOSHI, a combination of videotape and photography in which the

artist creates a found-object still life and tells you all about it, creating a layering of images and narratives reminiscent of Joan Jonas's early performances.

And for amazing technical skills put to conservative ends, there's the "Rood Loft of the Drunken Beekeeper," by NICHOLAS KAHN AND RICHARD SELESNICK, at the Monique Knowlton Gallery. The artists, both 31, have worked together since college and know as well as anyone that history is largely fiction. In honor of the beekeeper, they've created a hivelike temple lined with faux-Renaissance portraits. Also, here are religious relics of dried bread, a mandala of glazed ceramic, elaborately reworked wide-angle photographs that seem to have just emerged from the attic, and myths galore. They have also covered three walls with vials of honey and labels explaining the honey's curative powers. Almost none of it is true, and neither is any of it original. But it is all definitely worth a visit, if only to come face to face with some of the moment's hottest ideas and devices in unusually mannered form. Where the Artworks Are Here are the galleries in the order mentioned in the accompanying review, with the names of the artists currently being shown and when their exhibitions end.