March 2, 2007

Art in Review

By THE NEW YORK TIMES

WORKS ON PAPER
Seventh Regiment Armory
643 Park Avenue, at 67th Street
Through Monday

The 19th annual “Works on Paper” fair is yet another temporary mall for art, with more than 70 dealers from Europe and the United States offering drawings, watercolors, gouaches, posters, prints, photographs and rare books, whose creators range from European and Asian old masters to outlandish contemporary artists. Equally varied is the quality.

The number of galleries is down slightly this year, perhaps reflecting competition from so many other art fairs, seven last week in New York alone. But with its focus on material, “Works on Paper” is special, and it traditionally offers more affordable prices.

The fun comes from chancing upon exceptional displays among the rows of identical booths. A delightful work of modern American art here is an evocative mixed-media collage by Romare Bearden titled “Farewell to Lulu” (about 1981) at Aaron Payne. For fans, there is another great, late Bearden collage nearby, at Jerald Melberg.

Other outstanding single items include two pieces at Hill-Stone taken from an album of watercolors, studies for ceiling decorations done in the 1780s by François-Joseph Bélanger, a neo-Classical French architect and decorator who designed the coronation coach of Louis XVI.

Hirschl & Adler, a perennial participant, has several very beautiful and expensive works, including a gorgeous watercolor by Childe Hassam of the beach and Maidstone Club at East Hampton, N.Y.; a dreamy color woodcut of a moonlit pond by the American Modernist painter Arthur Wesley Dow; and a 1962 abstract color lithograph by Robert Rauschenberg, which from a distance looks like monochrome

streaks of silver but up close is marvelously detailed.

Most galleries fill their booths with a variety of artists, but a handful offer more focused single-artist presentations.

Jörg Maass has a compact show of multiples, prints and original photographs by Gerhard Richter, while James Graham & Sons devotes its booth to a small, inspiring show by Miklos Suba, a New York Precisionist.

Mark Borghi concentrates on drawings by Hilla Rebay, deaccessioned from the Guggenheim Museum.

The fair is richly supplied with children's book illustrations, caricatures and other oddities. Marion Meyer has a poster signed by Marcel Duchamp for the 1913 New York Armory Show, a rambling assembly of 1,250 artworks by more than 300 European and American artists that basically initiated Modern art in America. It was also, perhaps, the forerunner of the modern art fair. BENJAMIN GENOCCHIO

"Works on Paper" is open today, noon to 8 p.m.; tomorrow and Sunday, noon to 7 p. m.; and Monday, 11 a.m. to 5 p.m. Admission: $20; $45 for a three-day pass. Information: (212) 777-5218.

GILLIAN CARNEGIE
Andrea Rosen Gallery
525 West 24th Street, Chelsea
Through March 10

Gillian Carnegie's second solo show of paintings in New York is better than her first, but too self-conscious — occasionally brittle of surface and obscure in thought. At the gallery's entrance, a blow-up of an old postcard of a painting depicting a circus or carnival coming to town suggests that the whole show is a kind of joke, or at least meant to be taken as an installation.

To the left, the first painting is small and depicts a leafless tree painted in yellow on gray on a small canvas that might be an early Mondrian. The same tree recurs, wrought large in another painting and in the background behind a thickly painted gray gate in a third. The russet checkerboard of tiles in front of the gate is transferred to a drawn curtain in "Maison Merlin," the show's final painting.

Other paintings reveal that Ms. Carnegie has semiabstract landscape subjects, weirdly parsed flower still lifes and hard-to-read monochrome images under consideration. Furthermore, it appears that each of her exhibitions still requires a saucy rendering of

her bare bottom to remind us that she is not as old-fashioned as she often appears to be.

But some of these works are painted with real command, a capacity that can apparently be varied at will. Ms. Carnegie can either choose between the Conceptual and the painterly or keep trying for a more organic merger of the not-so-distant twain. But she seems to be moving in the right direction. ROBERTA SMITH

IAN DAVIS
Paintings
Leslie Tonkonow Artworks & Projects
535 West 22nd Street, Chelsea
Through March 10

At a moment when art veers between the extremes of social volunteerism and images suitable for New Yorker magazine covers, the paintings in the solo debut of Ian Davis fall into the latter category. They are funny and fun to look at, and they make you think, but their fussy scale also makes them feel like big, clever illustrations that would be as effective in reproduction as on a wall.

Mr. Davis's subject is maleness, whose omnipresence, ineffectiveness and herd instinct he conjures up in small identical figures that he deploys with the marshaled repetitions of a Minimalist. The figures can be businessmen, hundreds of whom sit passively in convention halls or stand on banquet tables with their hands raised, as if enacting some inane ritual. Or they can be British redcoats who march across fields of graduated grays, or strip trees of their branches for no apparent reason.

Mr. Davis's efforts become especially like illustration when he turns to monstrous factories that seem intended to convey the insanity of big business. Otherwise, his images have a clarity of theme and economy that constitute a good place to start figuring out how to be less cute. ROBERTA SMITH

ROBERT MANGOLD
Column Structure Paintings
PaceWildenstein
545 West 22nd Street, Chelsea
Through March 10

When it comes to artistic means, the painter Robert Mangold has barely budged in more than 40 years. He is still working on mostly shaped canvases to which he adds a quiet but ringing monochrome and a few spare ruled and freehand lines that make everything pop.

Mr. Mangold's subject is essentially the making and the apprehension of the making of his paintings. His latest works take the measure of themselves with a combination of transparency and mystery that is hard to resist. Titled "Column Structure I" through "Column Structure XII," these 12 canvases each have a central vertical trunk measuring 10 feet high and 2 feet wide that is subdivided by straight, horizontal lines and appended with squares or triangles that jut from the sides, usually near the top.

Redolent of fractured letters or numbers, architectural beams and, of course, columns and capitals, each is traversed bottom to top by two abstract lines — one single, one double — that undulate or curve regularly or irregularly, but usually visit all the painting's subdivisions, like a cursory circulatory system.

Thus a series of contrasts, buffered by color, is orchestrated between ever-expanding linear categories: between the different curved lines; between the curved, drawn lines and the straight ones; and between all the lines and the angular outlines of the paintings themselves.

These works offer a tune-up of the mind-eye connection. They put "less is more" into an active tense by repeatedly and in different ways showing a little doing a lot, and then some more. It seems that disclosure can't get much fuller than in these paintings, even as you realize that you won't be getting to the bottom of them. ROBERTA SMITH

ASPECTS, FORMS AND FIGURES
Bellwether
134 10th Avenue, between 18th and 19th Streets, Chelsea
Through March 10

What a different-looking group show João Ribas and Becky Smith have conjured up at Bellwether. Object-based Conceptualism with a spacey lift is one way to characterize it. The effect is somewhat reminiscent of that of Catherine de Zegher's levitating sculpture-as-drawing exhibition at Marian Goodman last summer. High praise.

Everyone is still terrified of the word spiritual in relation to art; the gallery news release settles for "numinous." But the idea is that all the work at hand in some way speaks a language of auras, immateriality or otherworldliness, not necessarily celestial.

A 1977 sound piece by Jack Goldstein is one touchstone: it's there but not there. And a very-there bronze sculpture by Nathan Mabry of a sort of pre-Columbian deity is another. Stephen G. Rhodes's "Broken Continuum, Custodial Host," with a copy of

the Communist Manifesto perched atop a self-supported broomstick, is somewhere in between.

Carol Bove and Alice Könitz contribute furnishings for a house of the future that is also the house of the past: in their art, as in much art now, what went around once is coming around again, but feeling changed, slightly sad and silly. Christopher Deeton's poured black-and-white paintings are like Franz Klines with meteor trails; Gordon Terry's fluid abstract pictures suggest cellular life or galactic crystals. The rocks in Adelina Lopes's photograph might be moon rocks.

There's more new-old art history. Jonah Groeneboer's corner string sculpture locates Eva Hesse in the mystical fourth dimension. Anthony Pearson's solarized photographs are like Ad Reinhardt's "black" paintings opening onto deep space. A 1974 John McCracken upright, with painted patterns somewhere between Pollock and Army camouflage, is the "2001" slab in a post-2001 world, where its aura is mostly market-generated.

Of course, whether you're talking aesthetic or spiritual, it's all theater. Aaron Curry's ensemble of two collages and a curtainlike sculpture suggests as much. And Emily Sundblad has a theaterlike room of her own, with wafting fabrics, folding chairs, a Beuysian wall drawing (now erased). On Sunday at 4 p.m. she will perform there, channeling the spirit of an early-20th-century artist, Anita Berber, who, the gallery reports, dressed scantily and drank heavily.

Ms. Sundblad's performance is certain to be magnetic, though I can't predict exactly how. That's a remarkable thing about her as an artist. As with the winds of change, you never know the direction she will take. She has no signature. For her, art is a float, not an anchor. HOLLAND COTTER

HELLEN VAN MEENE
Yancey Richardson
535 West 22nd Street, Chelsea
Through March 17

Puberty, as represented in Hellen van Meene's photographs, is like a long-term but temporary physical defect. The body is disproportionate. The face becomes a canvas for pimples. Breasts develop embarrassingly early or frustratingly late — except in boys with gynecomastia (a swelling of the mammary glands whose incidence spikes during puberty), who could probably live happily without them altogether.

Ms. van Meene's work captures the purgatory of adolescence with more detachment than sympathy. Her specialties include partly nude close-ups of androgynous

teenagers and pubescent mothers. The selection here, taken from 2004 to 2006 in Russia, Latvia, Morocco, Japan, the Netherlands and England, finds teenagers and tweens wearing a bit more clothing and posed in color-saturated but somewhat claustrophobic settings.

As always, Ms. van Meene exaggerates what nature has already bestowed, dressing butch girls and femme boys in clothes that further mask their sex or posing teenage mothers with their midriffs bared to reveal distended bellies and stretch marks. Other photographs depict dreamy and dazed adolescents staring into points beyond the picture frame.

There are obvious touchstones for this work: Diane Arbus and Rineke Dijkstra. Like Ms. Dijkstra, Ms. van Meene focuses on teenagers, often at the margins of Europe. Human vulnerability and the plucky dignity summoned by people of all ages to compensate for their limitations are mainstays in Arbus. Formally, Ms. van Meene splits the difference, printing her work in color but at what is, by contemporary standards, rather small scale. The glaring distinction is that Ms. van Meene's work, while accomplished, does not feel particularly groundbreaking. MARTHA SCHWENDENER

LIMELIGHT
Gallery and Coffee House,
1954-61

Triple Candie
461 West 126th Street, Harlem
Through March 18

From 1954 to 1961, Helen Gee, photography maven and skilled photographic retoucher, ran the Limelight, a coffeehouse at 91 Seventh Avenue in Greenwich Village that became a gathering place for writers, editors and photographers. It also housed New York's first gallery devoted to postwar photography. In seven years, Ms. Gee mounted an impressive roster of solo shows: Berenice Abbott, Ansel Adams, Gordon Parks, Edward Weston, Minor White and others.

Drawing from Ms. Gee's 1997 book, "Limelight: A Memoir," Shelly Bancroft and Peter Nesbett, founders and curators at Triple Candie, have constructed a homage in the form of a plywood-walled space inside the gallery with cafe tables and chairs and self-service coffee, available at a 1950s price of 25 cents a cup.

A cubicle inside the structure recreates, roughly, a 1959 Limelight show titled "The History of Photography," which included artists like Lisette Model (with whom Ms.

Gee studied briefly), Alfred Stieglitz, Edward Steichen and Robert Frank.

Ms. Gee's 1959 show consisted of original prints lent by the George Eastman House in Rochester; Triple Candie was denied a similar loan and has resorted instead to photocopies mounted on cardboard.

A similar situation arose last year when Ms. Bancroft and Mr. Nesbett set out to mount a retrospective of the work of David Hammons. According to the gallery, the artist wouldn't cooperate, so they installed "David Hammons: The Unauthorized Retrospective," an exhibition consisting solely of black-and-white reproductions of his work. The unorthodox show was oddly in sync with Mr. Hammons's own oeuvre, raising interesting questions about art and representation, reproduction and authorship.

"Limelight" doesn't rise similarly to the occasion. The cafe is a light exercise in nostalgia (and not the first tribute: Sarah Morthland mounted a "Limelight" show in 2002), and the photocopies, unlabeled and unaccompanied by a checklist, impose the organizers' frustration with George Eastman House on the viewer.

It all makes you wish that Triple Candie would return to its original mission, to show the work of Harlem artists, many of whom would be thrilled to exhibit their work in this scrappy, cavernous nonprofit space. MARTHA SCHWENDENER

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