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by John Mendelsohn

"Contemporary Navajo Weaving" and "Woven by the Grandmothers" at the National Museum of the American Indian, New York City

Oct. 6, 1996–Jan. 8, 1997



Rose Owens,
Round rug with
baskets and
feathers, 1992.
Denver Art Museum.

"Contemporary Navajo Weaving" features 38 rugs and tapestries from Arizona and New Mexico. The artists who made them have subtly transformed traditional motifs into signs of personal expression, ranging from the hypnotically geometrical to the figurative. The show, organized by the Denver Museum, and its accompanying wall text allow the women who created this woven art to speak eloquently for themselves about the persistence of a living culture.

"Woven by the Grandmothers" displays a variety of 19th-century Navajo textiles from the National Museum of the American Indian's collection. A dazzling selection

of wearable blankets reveal sacred geometry as an enveloping structure. Also on view are examples of these serapes, dresses, and chief blankets interpreted by contemporary weavers.

Bill Komoski at Feature

Oct. 18-Nov. 23, 1996



Bill Komoski,
5/11/96,
acrylic and mixed
mediums on canvas,
46 x 32 in.

The most interesting paintings push critical language to its limits. Bill Komoski's paintings approach this limit partly because of their complexity and partly because of their strategy of deception, concealed under the guise of giddy display. The paintings' covert subject seems to be the contingent, shifting quality of experience, as expressed through competing visual systems, and their own apparent entropic decay. Each painting is a kind of scorched trompe l'oeil field of sprayed spectrum colors, lumpy surface protrusions and disintegrating skins of paint. Their vivid combination of virtuality, psychedelia, hysteria and wit make them perfect images for New York in 1996.



Harriet Korman,
Untitled, 1995,
oil on linen,
72 x 72 in.

Harriet Korman at Lennon, Weinberg

Oct. 15-Nov. 16, 1996

In these white, gray and black paintings a kind of rough geometry prevails. Somber and elegiac, they make order from the structuring of gestural brushstrokes. That order yields zones that hold all manner of visual energy: restive, flickering, coiled, sprung. Although often pictographic with a sign-like rhetoric, these paintings resist being read. They are instead abstract



Roland Flexner,
Untitled, 1996,
ink on paper,
c. 29 x 23

situations, dominated by acts of weaving, dividing and locking together. These large-scale works don't want to be about anything else; rather they aspire to be raw and elegant figures of painterly speech.

Roland Flexner at Deven Golden Fine Art

Nov. 1-30, 1996

Roland Flexner's exhibition is a tripartite affair, with each of his very different modes of working serving a similar end--as a way to make an image that suggests both presence and absence. First are the monochrome diptych paintings, with one panel having the finely wrought image of a completely draped, medieval funerary figure. The other panel carries only a nearly matching expanse of color. Next are small graphite drawings from whose grainy surface emerge vanitas images of skulls, crystal spheres and classically derived portraits. Finally there is a series of cunning drawings created by the bursting of ink-laden soap bubbles. All together, this is an intriguing introduction to this French artist's work.



Lisa Yuskavage,
Hamass, 1996,
oil on canvas
board, 6 x 8 in.

Lisa Yuskavage at Boesky & Gallery

Oct. 12-Nov. 16, 1996

If your female inner child were to grow swaybacked, with pneumatic breasts and a flying rump, and find herself in a lurid, oil-painted hell, then you might get an idea of the characters which populate these paintings. The figures are conceived as plaster figures (also on display) that make even more explicit their identity as caricature, with its exaggeration of the





David Shaw, *Open Seat*, 1995-96, wood and holographic laminate, c. 35 x 32 x 39 in.

physical as a method of social satire. The figures bear a close family resemblance, like a new line of sad, sexy dolls. Painted with glossy cartoonish realism, this work's nasty humor sags under the weight of a particularly rancid form of narcissism.

David Shaw at Caren Golden Fine Art

Oct. 17-Nov. 16, 1996

David Shaw's work possesses a kind of pop spookiness that works. The effect may be ephemeral, but for a while at least there is the sensation of being caught in someone else's fugue state. Covered with holographic laminate, a bench, an Adirondack chair, and an upside down table are all silvery spectral reflection. On the walls are multiple photographs of a glowing light. In still another sculpture, a wax-work baby bird struggles in a galvanized steel pail of simulated milk (made of resin). The freakout d'resistance is a standing sculptural figure, apparently all clothes and no flesh, made headless by the orange sweat shirt he is removing.



Albert Oehlen, *A Prehistoric Hand*, 1996, mixed

mediums on canvas,
79 x 120 in.

Albert Oehlen at Luhring Augustine

Oct. 19-Nov. 16, 1996

Albert Oehlen's new paintings at first seem like demonstrations of the inevitabilities that people keep telling us computers have created: the triumph of cyberspace, the spreading of human/machine interface, the proliferation of self-replicating systems and a revolution where no one gets hurt. There is an undeniable glamour in Oehlen's computer-derived, mechanically produced paintings. Lovely, manic effects layer over



Lucy Gunning,
*Climbing Around
My Room*, 1996,
video still. From
"Ceremonial"

each other creating a kind of unbelievable, electronic space. Skeins of bit-mapped lines range across shifting candy-colored zones. Even the black-and-white images have a baroque intoxication. For all their currency, these paintings, in their picture-making and their hand-drawn graffiti lines, have a kind of built-in nostalgia: for the world of the future, for abstract painting and for what used to be called the real.

"Ceremonial" at Apex Art

Oct. 24-Nov. 23, 1996

The exhibition that Barry Schwabsky has curated at Apex Art is a rebus made from individual works, whose collective meaning is left for the viewer to puzzle out. It's not that there aren't plenty of clues along the way, discontinuous as they may be. Motifs of clothing and exposure, of color and of the erotic become a kind of medium of exchange between disparate objects. Throughout the exhibition are intimations of how art can speak in a secret language of affinity and immanence. Chief among these annunciations are Brenda Zlamany's painted portrait in profile, Ghada Amer's embroidered porn schematic and Lucy Gunning's video of a woman in a red dress literally climbing the walls.

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