

DALLAS

Jackie Tileston

HOLLY JOHNSON GALLERY

Jackie Tileston layers images expressed in a pluralized vocabulary. In a single painting, she will typically combine photographic transfers, atmospheric fields of rubbed-on dry pigment, painted details appropriated from classical Chinese landscapes, and boldly incongruous slabs of color. Her recent show in Dallas, "Phenomorama," comprised seven mixed-media paintings on linen and five works on paper that reflect her varied background (the artist was born in the Philippines, raised in a number of countries in Asia and Europe, and now lives in Philadelphia). But her wide-ranging pictorial vocabulary is due to more than her multinational life; her painting practice is not simply a matter of scrapbooking tourist mementos. Rather, it suggests an inventive engagement with the world.

The Uppermost Highest . . . (all works 2008), is a five-by-six-foot collision of soft, airy spaces and crisp, sharply rendered forms. A stylistically jarring item that lies somewhere between a ruffled robe and a stylized rock formation dominates the painting's left side. With its clean contours and bright, opaque coloring, the form appears to float on areas of mostly unpainted linen. A staccato rhythm of flames moves low and to the right, while left of the "robe/rock" a small, translucent photograph transfer shows a golden Buddha and numerous tiny Chinese figures.

In *Nirvanopolis*, collaged photographs show scenes from a contemporary market in South Asia in which a painting of the Hindu god Vishnu is being sold. Stark, near-vertical bars of color mass together beneath the photographic images, forming a wall between them and the viewer. In all these paintings, the collage elements nestle into the space of the picture plane, and so are overwhelmed by the colorful,

sometimes explosive, oil applications around them. It's rare that collage, a medium often employed to produce pictorial ruptures, can be made less disruptive of pictorial space than traditional painting elements, and yet Tileston consistently makes that happen.

With so much overlaying of abstract and figurative imagery and representational modes, Tileston's paintings risk becoming undone, and yet they maintain a fragile unity. Their ability to hold such disparate strategies in suspension might be partly attributed to the artist's having structured them in ways that suggest sweeping movement. Throughout the canvases in this show, she deploys an energetic pictorial activity and evokes an almost cosmic sense of tumult. The world of these paintings churns in a Heraclitean flux. Clouds, stones, the ground, even

Jackie Tileston,
Nirvanopolis, 2008,
oil and mixed media
on linen, 60 x 48".



space itself, seem to shift. Sometimes the movement is as fast as light, sometimes glacially slow, but always things move.

Tileston's formal resolution to the problem of holding her paintings together injects the work with a hint of sobering narrative. In the midst of cosmic flux, her tiny figures go about their business. Figures of piety and commerce, evidence of globalism, and routines of daily life coexist here as minor events, dwarfed in a world of vastly more powerful forces.

—Michael Odom