

ARTnews

Collecting in Cyberspace

• [Navigating the Online Art Market](#)

• [What's Selling on the Net](#)

• [How to Bid and Buy](#)

• [The Pros and Pitfalls](#)

• [Whither the Web?](#)




 #BXBBDFJ ***** CAR-RT SORT ** C-038
 #R0M0476B094 8#580004 CJ
 PL 00008 BN 00086 BAL JUN 00
 KATHLEEN ROW
 7FL
 476 BROADWAY
 NEW YORK NY 10013-2621

PLUS

Nam June Paik Takes Over the Guggenheim Museum Shows: Following the Money
Anselm Kiefer's Satanic Reverses

\$6 USA \$8 CANADA 01



0 73361 64607 1

1970s Western cult films, like Alexandro Jodorowsky's *El Topo*.

Unfortunately, the last part of *Cremaster 2* is overly occupied with Barney's tenuous subplot: the unlikely theory that Houdini was Gilmore's grandfather. The film's most witless moments occur in one of its few passages of scripted dialogue—Mailer's nonsensical speech to Gilmore's grandmother.

Overall, with its central story line and high production values, *Cremaster 2* moves Barney closer to film auteur than visual artist. For its effectiveness, much credit goes to Jonathan Bepler's score and Peter Strietmann's cinematography. —Rex Weil

John Currin

ANDREA ROSEN

John Currin's classically inspired nudes, with their high waists, distended bellies, attenuated limbs, and tapering fingers call to mind some familiar figures—Dürer's Eve; Botticelli's Venus; Cranach's women, too; not to mention 17th-century Dutch painting, Mannerist muses like Parmigianino's *Madonna with the Long Neck*, and an Ingres odalisque. The faces, however, are all Currin's: blonde, fresh American. It's a look we associate with high-school cheerleaders and Malibu Barbie rather than timeless beauty.

In the elegantly rendered painting *The Pink Tree*, reaching over six feet tall, two female nudes pose before an overly pruned tree. Its shorn limbs contrast with the nudes' gangly ones. Although one figure assumes the classical *contrapposto* stance, her friend crouches awkwardly. Drawing from different sources—20th-century faces seamlessly grafted onto mannered bodies and set against an ink-black background reminiscent of Dutch painting—Currin creates a gorgeous picture.

Currin gets more contemporary in *The Hobo*, where the Venus cum Valley Girl is clad in bra, panties, and a see-through top, a knapsack on her back and a walking stick in hand. (A companion piece, *Sno-bo*, portrays a similar scene, plus snow.) Currin also digresses, with a couple of banal domestic scenes depicting such activities as two people in a kitchen making spaghetti.

The predominant effect is not one of cool irony. Rather, Currin's figures can elicit empathy from the viewer. For here's a talented and provocative artist caught, or so it seems, somewhere between resuscitating figurative painting and making it his own, even if that means dumbing it down. Whether they derive from ambivalence or irony, Currin's paintings are quite impressive.

—Katie Clifford



John Currin, *The Pink Tree*, 1999, oil on canvas, 78" x 48".
Andrea Rosen.



Richard Patterson, *II*, 1999, oil on canvas, 84" x 65".
James Cohan.



David Row, *Chemistry of Desire*, 1999, oil and alkylid on wood, 48" x 60". Von Lintel & Nusser.

Richard Patterson

JAMES COHAN

Richard Patterson explores a strange territory between Abstract Expressionism and photorealism. Unlike Gerhard Richter, however, who balances abstraction and photorealism by simultaneously producing two separate bodies of work, Patterson manages to conflate the categories, allowing both styles equal time on a single canvas.

Patterson begins by physically defacing a miniature action figure, adding globs of bright-colored paint to the posturing form. This mutant shape then becomes the focus of the ensuing meticulously rendered canvases, every drip and blob captured with the specificity of a photographic image.

In the large painting *Male Nude*, for example, a single figure on a tabletop shoots a weird appendage into the viewer's face. The body is only partially in focus, as happens when miniatures are photographed within the limited depth of field of a standard camera lens. The effect is hallucinatory. Wild swirls of paint are captured with precision, while the figure itself remains fuzzy, slightly beyond our focal range.

Even more challenging is *The Last Detail*, in which Patterson poses the figure by a window looking out on a movie marquee. The messy strokes of color that make up the figure are in sharp focus against the softer background of neon lights that appear in the distance. Patterson handles this composition effortlessly, turning what could have been a tangled junk pile into an intriguing labyrinth of color and light.

Patterson's subject—the miniature men that boys transform into superheroes—could allude to the way art history has traditionally treated "heroic male artists." Patterson has not given up on his own fascination with "greatness." He rises to the challenge simply by aiming to outpaint everyone else, and to the degree that he succeeds, it's a mighty heroic feat.

—Barbara Pollack

David Row

VON LINTEL & NUSSER

David Row's signature oval forms broke deliriously loose in this elegant and animated show. Slaloming over the surface and off the edges of these eleven new paintings and works on paper, Row's fat roller-coaster line

takes the viewer on a trip through space. Underpinning it, though, is a complex, geometric framework. Each painting is a diptych, with a vertical seam joining the canvases or wood panels, which are painted different colors or in alternating bands of color running horizontally across both panels. In a sharply contrasting color, the elliptical line starts its journey, but

tracing its trajectory becomes mind-teasing, as it loops over and under itself or shifts tone as it weaves through different color fields.

In *Sidewise*, for instance, a white figure eight, evocative of the symbol of infinity, twines around angled poles on a black ground and continues off sides. The tones reverse themselves though, black on white, across the midsection, creating the effect of positive and negative photographic exposures suggesting alternating universes. This piece is lyrically reprised across the room in *Ovalisque*, a clever abstraction in both name and form. Its composition is a mirror image of *Sidewise*, but Row uses a more highly keyed palette—vibrant orange on deep blue, flipping to blue on a peachy pink-and-white plaid, and back again.

Less monumental but very playful is *Chemistry of Desire*, with two discreet lines—one pink, one white—snaking down each half of the black ground. While never touching, the white drips curve over the center seam, as if to spoon in the arc of the pink, and lower down, the pink moves across the center line to kiss or butt heads with the white. Beautifully, mathematically, almost musically, Row's calculated abstractions let the infinite reign.

—Hilarie M. Sheets



Joseph Stella, *Church in Italy*, ca. 1930, watercolor, gouache, and pencil on paper, 40" x 23".

Debra Force Fine Art.

tures the sails of fishing boats glowing red on the lagoon beside the Campanile. Whistler's influence was everywhere, not least in a moody sunset painted by Thomas Alexander Harrison and a hazy moonlight view of San Marco by Samuel Coleman.

Among the show's surprises were a charming pastel-and-watercolor landscape by Arthur B. Davies and a delicate minimalist view of Venice as a fragile oasis between sky and ocean by Colorado illustrator Leslie James Skelton. A splendid large watercolor and gouache by Joseph Stella, *Church in Italy* (ca. 1930), sounded the only modernist note in this show in a clear and lovely tone. —Bonnie Barrett Stretch

Wei Dong

JACK TILTON

In the works of Beijing-based painter Wei Dong, flabby women often in states of undress cavort in traditional Chinese landscape scenes or, in interiors, in front of paintings of such images. More than mere exercises in erotically charged absurdity, Wei's pictures are both satiric, symbolic portrayals of China's growing pains and expressions of his childhood fantasies.

In some pictures Wei's women, wearing People's Liberation Army uniforms and looking dissolute and unhealthy, loom large against these strangely sexual dreamscapes, which are always lushly rendered with just paper, ink, and brush. Flesh is doughy and profuse; material falls in luxuriant folds.

Wei's women give his pictures an up-to-the-moment, surrealistic edge. Clothing ensembles such as Mao jackets, Chinese opera costumes, and Western lingerie are completely incongruous. Jarring, too, are the beer bottles, lipstick tubes, and antique back scratchers that are strewn about. The women's strangely sweet expressions are charming, almost disturbingly so.

Surely the most obvious—and provocative—feature of Wei's pictures is that the figures are never fully naked. A breast is bared here, a buttock revealed there; often no thought is given to trousers. The partial nudity conveys a heightened sensuality, even with blue veins bulging. In the two series "Outing in the Spring" and "Landscape as a Stage," bacchanalian revelry consumes entire classical mountainscapes. These women, with their eccentric fashion sense, are full of surprises. What we don't know, of course, is whether they represent the detritus of the Cultural

"American Artists in Italy"

DEBRA FORCE FINE ART

At the turn of the last century American artists conducted their own grand tours of Europe, just as generations of English had done before them. Italy, especially Venice, remained a major destination. However, unlike many of the English, who purchased vast canvases depicting the Grand Canal from the likes of Canaletto and Francesco Guardi, the Americans were more inclined to paint their own visions.

The scenes of sunlight, water, and elegant leisure in this show may have seemed as nostalgic and fanciful 100 years ago as they do today. But the artists here, both great and obscure, captured moments that will not be seen again.

Probably the finest work on view was John Singer Sargent's watercolor *Oxen on the Beach at Baia, Bay of Naples* (ca. 1902), boasting a rare mastery of composition and technique. But lesser-known painters also weighed in here, most notably John White Alexander, whose *Canal in Venice* (ca. 1879–80) offers a peaceful, intimate, timeless vision. While sketches by Maurice Prendergast and Childe Hassam depict the public places of Venice, William Stanley Haseltine's *Venetian Twilight* (ca. 1883) cap-



Wei Dong, *Two Lonely Women #2*, 1999, traditional Chinese and Japanese inks and pigments on rice paper, 33 1/2" x 26". Jack Tilton.