

March 2004



■ WORD FROM THE PUBLISHER

Thank you for visiting TheNewYorkArtWorld.com, the internet companion for the monthly printed magazine, M / The New York Art World.

This is of course a very busy month in New York, with the opening of the Whitney Show, important art fairs and countless supporting events including private visits to major art collections (arranged by The Armory Show VIP Services).

In case you plan to visit The Armory Show (March 12-15), please note that our magazine will have a booth at the fair, booth# 92-L02 (the first booth at the entrance to the fair on pier 92). Perhaps you might like to stop by and introduce yourself, and pick a complementary copy of this month's issue.

Best wishes for an exciting, art filled month of March!

Cover Caption

- Andrea Morganstern Daikini Dance, 2003. Oil on canvas 30 x 36 inches.
- Courtesy: Kimberly Venardos & Co., New York

■ News

Film Festival

The 11th New York Underground Film Festival (NYUFF) takes place March 10 –16 at the Anthology Film Archives (see Film Review on page 16). For more information and a full schedule of events, please call 212.505.5181 or visit: www.nyuff.com

Final Eight Weeks

MoMA will be presenting its final film and media program at The Gramercy Theatre next month, April 7. The closure of MoMA Gramercy is the first in a series of staggered closures at alternate venues, as the museum prepares to return to its familiar address on West 53rd Street (in a new building), later this year. For the weeks remaining at the Gramercy Theatre, MoMA Gramercy has put in place an ambitious film program, which is posted at: www.moma.org

New Gallery

Susan Conde has a new gallery in Chelsea, which opens its doors next month. (see Chelsea Listings)

Name Change

Linda Durham Contemporary Art is now called Lemmons Durham Contemporary Art. (see Chelsea Listings)

The National Academy of Design Museum is now called the National Academy Museum. (see Uptown Listings)

Art Fair

The Armory Show 2004: The International Fair of New Art will take place March 12-15, 2004 on Piers 90 and 92 in New York City. An Opening Night Preview Party benefiting the exhibition fund of The Museum of Modern Art takes place on Thursday, March 11, 2004. For more information, please visit: www.thearmoryshow.com

The hotel art fair called *scope* is scheduled to take place this month, March 12-15, 2004, at Hotel Gansevoort, New York. The newly completed Hotel Gansevoort is located at 9th Avenue and 13th St. For more information, please visit: www.scope-art.com

In Fond Memory

The exuberant art dealer and champion of emerging artists (and other humanitarian causes) Monique Goldstrom, died last month, February 12th, at Roosevelt Hospital, New York. She is survived by her husband, Gianfranco Caiazzo, her son, Michael, and her daughter, Chantal Claret. Monique was also a friend to this magazine, and we'll miss her.

■ Art Review

Big and Small / Anita Shapolsky Gallery

- By MARY HRBACEK
-  [E-Mail This Article](#)

- This salon-style group show, which fills two floors of Anita Shapolsky's town house gallery with abstract paintings and bronze sculptures; produced in gestural, color fields and geometric styles, presents a diverse overview of non-representational art.

The show's historical underpinnings derive from the early twentieth century art, when artists in war ravaged Europe drew a correlation between the industry of war and the heady logic of "rational thought," and subsequently sought new ways to channel mass emotions; innate aggressive instincts, into visible forms. The act of "direct painting" was seen as filling a basic human need to communicate across national and culture-specific boundaries. Today, we understand this as abstract art.

Some twenty-three artists are featured here, including among them, Nicolas Carone, Buffie Johnson, Ernest Briggs, Lawrence Calgagno, Peres Celis, David Crum, Joseph Fiore, Antonio Tapies and Clement Meadmore.

Standouts in the show include Nicolas Carone's mysterious *Untitled* (1959), whose subtle palette of pinks and gray blue hues rearranges the figure; with the torso separate from the adjoining abstracted lower portion of the body. Michael Loew's *Off Balance Rhythm* (1978), oil on canvas, employs small stripe-like rectangular shapes in soft lavender, coral, pale mint green and melon over a large creamy off-white ground. The shapes move over the surface in a rhythmic, musical composition that recalls Dutch painter Theo Van Doesburg's work.

In his round mixed media canvas, Perez Celis' *Plano Astral* (1986), utilizes overlapping dark triangles scarred with a variety of linear markings; arranged in a field of warm red, bronze and subtly brushed orange hues that suggest African influences. Similarly, Lawrence Calgagno in his painting entitled *Forest*, (1949), uses multiple overlapping dark strokes and short, cropped squiggles over a warm ochre, coral and pink-cream textural ground. This work evokes the enigma of an undecipherable, archaic language.

David Crum's small-scale *Untitled* (2002) acrylic on canvas presents a highly personal image, comprised of wide ribbon-like semi-transparent brush strokes on a cream and mocha trapezoid that rests on a black background. In two small bronze maquettes entitled *Furthermore* (1999) and *Frolic* (1997), Clement Meadmore uses thick, rope-like, curled forms that create interesting "in-between spaces". These sculptures bring an understated, anchoring presence to the show.

As a survey of second generation Abstract Expressionists, this exhibition presents an impressive range of moods, poetic rhythms, emotions and spatial relations, that are conveyed through the works on their own merit; without any imposed limitations of figurative, literal subject matter.
Through 3/27.

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▪ Jan Dunning / 31 Grand

By LILY FAUST

- [✉ E-Mail This Article](#)

- This curious show, appropriately titled, *Eerie*, looks at the shared boundaries between fact and fiction. Utilizing pinhole photography, which is one of the earliest known methods of capturing images, Dunning creates a visual juncture where improbable dreamscapes materialize into colorful reality. Her photographs depict mostly mythological, hybrid creatures that are caught in the process of transformation; or exist in their own right, isolated in fields and wooded areas. Through the layering of clashing images and the juxtaposition of "arrested" movements, Dunning's photographs work as convincing portraits of a cross-section of the mythic unconscious.

Arachne (2003), a color pinhole photograph, shows a woman lying on ruddy autumn leaves, set against a background of viridian trees. In Greek mythology, Arachne was a maiden who challenged Athena to a weaving contest and was subsequently transformed into a spider. Dunning re-creates Arachne as a "spider," with four legs and four arms, a feat achieved by using two-staged posing, visually capturing the arms and legs in the slow take of the pin hole camera's long exposure. In the creation of this mythical being, the artist compresses both present reality and the collective past into her own, personal framework. By borrowing from ancestral stories handed down across the centuries, she links the imagined to the actual, nudging the viewer along with documentary-like "evidence" of that past.

Similarly, *Woman with Two Heads* (2002) depicts a woman whose neck is attached to two heads, each turned to the other side. A mirror placed at the upper section of the photograph reflects the image of the young woman, as if to reiterate its veracity. Distinguished by a composition that constructs the pictorial space in an even balance, the photograph is classically informed. The red damask upholstery on a nearby chair whose corner sticks into the picture frame; together with the woman's soft flesh tones and the subtle, diffused lighting, give this work an unmistakable aura of seduction. The fictive mutation, in this charged setting, seems almost mundane. The exposure time in these photographs varies from 30 seconds to two minutes, yet a great deal can become persuasively evident in that brief moment. The prints have a grainy, misty look, a result of the pinhole camera's ability to capture increments of movement over an extended length of time. The slightly off-focus appearance helps to convey alternative truths of imagination; the images come alive as believable evidence of that which does not exist.

Not all of the prints in the show are driven by myth, however. Some have the formal quality of traditional still-lives. Utilizing the same method of pinhole photography, for example, three works, *Raccoon*, *Pheasant*, and *Small Brown Bird* employ the subject matter of dead or dying animals. These prints, interspersed throughout the exhibition, serve as contrasting images that introduce (or conclude) the transformation process depicted in the rest of the works on view. *Raccoon*, a photograph of an apparent road-kill scene, shows the lifeless body of the animal lying on its side, its face to the camera. The yellow divider line on the road, adjacent to the carcass, extends into the horizon; a firm marker of physical nature. The death act, and subsequent onset of decay, though not visible, is implied. The physical is challenged by the course of its own logic; birth, growth, and death. And the artist, as if paying earthly homage to her mythical creatures, plays with the visible, revealing and concealing what "is".
Through 3/14.

Ed Note: 31 Grand is located at Thirty One Grand Street, Williamsburg Brooklyn, New York 11211. Tel: 718.388.2858

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▪ Vincent Desiderio / Marlborough

By NICOLLETTE RAMIREZ

▪ [✉ E-Mail This Article](#)

- Desiderio, an artist whose figurative paintings garnered much attention in the 1980s, presents here three triptychs and several large and small paintings in a highly organized exhibition of more recent work. Of the three triptychs, *Pantocrator*, (2002), which translated from Greek means "Ruler of All," stands out for its poetic resonance between all three panels. The left panel shows a nude woman in the shower, obscured by a transparent curtain covered with colorful images of fish. The subtle color and texture of the woman's skin shows through the curtain, the shape of her back and buttocks clearly visible as she immerses herself in the watery world.

The center panel depicts a spaceship against the backdrop of outer space; filled with multi-colored stars, the lens of the extraterrestrial vessel's huge mounted camera trained on the viewer. In the third panel, a Byzantine chapel's colorful cream and green geometric patterns and brick red conical top create a harmony that evokes the original Renaissance chapel, Santa Maria del Fiore. It's as if these three panels speak of past, present and future; encompassing the human body, technology and art.

This past-present-future (human body-technology-art triumvirate) is also seen in the triptych *Academy*, (2001), where we see an old man in a house robe lying among open art books strewn on the floor. He is bandaged around his waste, and stares vacantly into space. In the middle panel a young female nude, full-bodied and youthful, stands with her palms facing up, against a stark black background. The third panel depicts the skeleton of a baby, seen as if through an x-ray.

The centerpiece of the show, *Cockaigne*, (1993-2003), presents an aerial view of a dinner scene (after the dinner), in which the remains of the meal; bones, red wine, broken bread, stained linen, empty cups and plates, are depicted with an attention to detail that calls to mind a Vermeer painting. There is a perfection to this work that is echoed in its use of circles. From the center of the work, and moving centrifugally outward, the leitmotif of the perfect circle can be seen in the table, the candle holders, the plant, the plates, cups and books spread out around the table.

Mysticism pervades *Sleep*, (2003), a work in progress. In this panorama of sleeping nudes, Desiderio depicts the figures in various poses of rest in a muted palette of greys, whites and pinks. This theme is continued in *White Dress*, (2003). Here, the sleeping subject, a woman whose body forms a gentle diagonal from her head, on the bed, to her foot which touches the floor. The balanced composition is further enhanced by the symmetry of the woman's arm, which is bent at the elbow, and her opposing leg that bends at the knee. The color palette of this painting (subtle earthy green wallpaper, brown wood, white dress) creates a mood of summer siesta.

The combination of Desiderio's skill as a painter, and his contemplative vision of time and space in the daily rhythm of human activity, gives this work an epic dimension.
Through 2/7.

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▪ **Andrea Morganstern / Kimberly Venardos & Co, Inc.**

By MARY HRBACEK

▪ [✉ E-Mail This Article](#)

- Utilizing both representational and abstract images to convey an apparent spiritual belief in a unity that underlies all forms in nature, Andrea Morganstern's new series of oil paintings, dubbed *Nature's Pulse*, reflects this artist's understanding of a world that is intended to be in a constant state of flux or transformation. She expresses this idea through forms that are conversely amorphous; in a perpetual state of creative transformation. The four subjects of the work included here range from bamboo stalks set in varying spatial relationships to each other, oak trees (from New York's Central Park), birds in flight and abstract works that display cracks, breaks and fissures in varying textured media. These recurring networks of shapes emulate the growth process that underlies change, transition and regeneration found in nature and developed in art. They are unified by a feathery moss-like pictorial ground.

Morganstern carefully hones her means of expression to a few carefully modulated colors and precisely painted forms. Employing a mottled pictorial ground in all of her works, she relies on purely visual, non-verbal means to communicate her perception of unity in nature. By avoiding specific details, and by isolating the forms from identifiable surroundings, she allows her subjects to remain open to interpretation. For example, eliminating the surface pattern in her closely cropped oak trees accentuates the appearance of animal heads with eyes that seems to peer curiously at the viewer (at least this viewer). She employs glowing creamy tones that produce harmonious color relationships with her green and turquoise pictorial grounds.

In another group of paintings Morganstern focuses on a few bamboo stalks, varying the spatial relationships between the stalks and alternating their colors; sometimes using pale yellow-green, and in another painting, deep Prussian blue. The stalks are related visually only to each other and to the meticulous, tempered hues that comprise the pictorial space. With no other visual references offered, these images seem mysteriously isolated. As she adjusts her color choices for the stalks, however, the emotional expression varies accordingly; the forms may stand out clearly, or recede to a deeper pictorial space.

Morganstern employs the same type of sophisticated differentiated ground in abstract paintings that display patterned cracks and fissures. These elements establish patterns, which readily move the eye through the pictorial space. When the lines transform into larger shapes, they begin to resemble insects or tiny soldiers rather than cracks or breaks. They are metaphors for the changes caused by time and weather to human beings, plants, animals and the larger physical world.

Rift, split, or disjunction are some words that add clarity to the meaning of the term "fissure." Instead of making use of an emotionally expressionistic approach to the concept of change, Morganstern takes a lyrical look at the stirring of new directions. Paradoxically, she entirely avoids accidents; no distress or anxiety is to be found in these paintings, only attunement to the natural processes. While her works display an affinity with time-worn surfaces in, for example, the classical ruins of Greece or Pompeii, they retain a fresh, contemporary component. She appears, instead, to be more interested in the organic growth processes that are found in the cycles of nature and the changes that develop gradually over time; from exposure to the elements.

The painting, *Four Green Bamboo* (2000), presents four pale yellow-green stalks set at varying distances across the pictorial space. The muted image elicits a soothing, emotional response. The two *New York Oak* (2001) works both depict luminous, whitish yellow trees that evoke associations with joyous, curious animals. Using a more intricate abstract language in *Canticle of Creatures*(2004), Morganstern employs sensitive warm, golden and turquoise hue relationships, and tiny cracks, that imply the small linear soldiers found on ancient Grecian urns. Similarly, in *From the Marsh* (2004) a purple-green background, with large orange fissures, moves

the eye readily through the pictorial space. Her paintings of soaring, almost identical birds suggest a distant glimpse that feels as if they are being seen from an aerial perspective.

The themes in evidence here involve an idea of freedom and the nature of change; gradual change that takes place slowly, even imperceptibly, over a long period of time. This is not about emotional upheaval, or the strain that one might be inclined to associate with a changing world; rather, this work lives in the quiet alterations that occur within the corridor of time passing, somewhere between the biological and the spiritual.
Through 3/13.

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■ **Lee Boroson and Ward Shelley / Pierogi Gallery**

By **NICOLLETTE RAMIREZ**

■ [✉ E-Mail This Article](#)

■ This tongue-in-cheek, conceptual show consists of two projects, Contrails and Clusters, by Lee Boroson, and a performance and sculpture by Ward Shelley entitled We Have Mice. Shelley "lives" inside a specially built wall in the gallery for the duration of the show, only coming out at night to eat, and so on. He is visible via video monitors set up in the gallery space. Shelley's daily routine consists of adding pieces to his ever-growing sculpture; which includes a chair, a hanging model of a man made from found objects, aphorisms written on paper and stuck to the nearby walls and a mechanically driven series of artworks (akin to a rotating picture sign), called Famous Artworks You've Never Seen. Each of these "Famous Artworks" is maneuvered (in turn) into viewing position in a small opening carved into the gallery wall for this purpose.

Boroson's Star Project reconfigures stars, planets, galaxies and asteroids from a photographic map of the universe by sucking the "space" out of them, so that they coagulate into atomic formations. Set in the center of the picture, these colorful clusters of light contrast with the white void on which they have been set; thereby questioning assumptions of what space is. In another work, Contrails, Boroson has constructed forms out of hollow glass spheres, reminiscent of the crystallization that occurs under certain atmospheric conditions in clouds. Mounted high above, they affect a sense of walking among the clouds.

The juxtaposition of these two artists' works, in this combination of performance art and visual art, produces a creative tension between the celestial and the earthbound that feels like an authentic Art Happening from another era.
Through 2/9.

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■ **Rita Ackerman / Andrea Rosen**

By **JOYCE KOROTKIN**

■ [✉ E-Mail This Article](#)

Recalling the psychologically potent and eerie landscape of Surrealism, Rita Ackerman's fourteen new paintings are like dreams bordering on nightmares in which reality has gone awry. Imagery here stems from the murky, interior psyche, and is informed by collisions between the metaphors and symbols of fairy tales, myths, the Brothers Grimm, Aesop's Fables, Shakespeare and Brecht; indeed, between anything and everything that one absorbs into the fertile unconscious, where it takes root and feeds the imagination. Falling untidily into the juncture between imagination and reality, Ackerman's imagery displaces and disguises recognizable elements, which then re-emerge in portentous, sinister situations full of inexplicable symbolic meanings. Ackerman's images are as allusive as they are elusive.

In Shaman, a top-hatted figure in a black coat reminiscent of the perverse Kundera in Cabaret, sits on the crouched buttocks of a half-man half-beast about to devour a baby. Amalgams of different styles and techniques, ranging from expressionist impasto to the smooth, mirror-like surfaces of Dali, co-exist with the light, stylized touch of Florine Stettheimer, or with Ackerman's own earlier work of highly stylized cat-like bad girls doing bad things.

In Dance of the Wild Hunt, this is particularly evident. A translucent thinly washed scrim of shimmering, incandescent orange-yellow flames culminate in an expressionist puddle of red and yellow blobs that become a burst of flames. Against this backdrop, delicately painted, ethereal maidens — the bad girls recapitulated, perhaps — dance in the woods, nearly nude with liquor bottles balanced on their heads.

Sometimes normalcy is only slightly skewed, but psychic inference is heightened, as in the chilling Fassbinder. In this homage to the eponymous filmmaker, a topless woman hovers, smoking, in a dark alleyway, a pile of spent matches illuminated in the darkness at her feet. Her cigarette tip is lit as if with a flame from Hell.

Listen to the Fool's Reproach is perhaps the most emblematic of this series of charming but disturbing works, with its shrouded figures in white surrounding the Fool as the skies open, threatening to engulf all into heaven or hell. Simpleton or Seer, the Fool (Ackerman's alter ego?) stands poised to see the truth through veils of confusion.
Through 1/17.

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■ **Ian Wallace / American Fine Arts**

By **JACK SAVAGE**

■ [✉ E-Mail This Article](#)

Vancouver based photo-conceptual artist Ian Wallace, whose huge canvasses explore the tension between abstract and figurative art in the 20th century, invites a closer look at this issue in a selection of work called the Barcelona Series. The series was originally created for a group show that toured Barcelona and Madrid in 1992, and addressed the then just emerging debate over globalization, displacement and the relationship between architecture and the individual. The current show, which is built around essentially the same work, serves to deepen our understanding of these same issues, with the benefit of hindsight.

Since the mid 1980s, Wallace has shown a penchant for juxtaposing the seemingly opposite genres of abstract painting and documentary-style photography. His color photographs of construction sites in Barcelona show

laborers erecting sleek, modernist structures that would soon house athletes competing in the 1992 Olympics, which was held in Barcelona; and which marked a crucial turning point for the city. The photographs are laminated onto canvas, with broad areas of white painted on one side of the image, so as to create diptychs. Separating the images from the non-images are vertical stripes of wood grain, in a metallic tone.

At first glance, these works appear to be dispassionate documentary portraits of urban life, examining social issues such as poverty, displacement and the pervading perception of a loss of national identity (which often accompanies such global redevelopment projects). But the individual works actually comprise only one half of the diptych, playing against minimalist monochromatic fields of pure abstraction. Wallace's diptychs and triptychs pick up the thread begun by Cubists and Constructivists; not by eradicating the "tyranny of image," but instead by accepting the inevitability of the representational image in art, and then using it their to their own ends.
Through 3/20.

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■ John Waters / The New Museum

By JACK SAVAGE

■ [✉ E-Mail This Article](#)

■ The success of John Waters' films from the 1970s, such as *Pink Flamingoes* (1974) and *Desperate Living* (1975), which chronicle the eccentric lives of people who more or less function in the margins of American society, propelled the once underground filmmaker into a decidedly un-underground spotlight. Though not quite ready (or willing) for mainstream, Waters has always managed to keep one foot in the art world and the other in Hollywood. This show at The New Museum in Soho, (see Soho Listings) dubbed *Change of Life*, has the quality of a retrospective, in that the viewer is treated to an abbreviated survey of Waters' output over the years; three rooms in the exhibition run continuous loops of his early films, like *Eat Your Makeup* and *Female Trouble*, while elsewhere in the show his sculpture and a few large installations are also presented.

But the real focus of this exhibition is Waters' photography. He is said to have "stumbled" into photography while looking for a film-still from one of his early black and white films. When he couldn't find the image that he was looking for, he screened a video of the film and photographed his own "film-still". The process proved somewhat addictive, however, and Waters has since taken to photographing images from movies and TV as well; with all of the inquisitive zeal of, say, an Alice in Wonderland, who happened to bring along her camera.

Like his films, Waters' photographs explore themes of celebrity, mass media, voyeurism and crime. In this series of color film-stills (shot from the screen) he appropriates scenes from popular entertainment classics, which he re-arranges into different sequences that yield entirely new narratives. In doing so, Waters depicts a kind of parallel universe in which droll and often sordid stories are played out against the looming backdrop of Tabloid America.

For example, in the photo series, *INSANE* (2001), Waters pays homage to 1970s era made-for-TV movies, which tackled "taboo" subjects such as Anorexia, drug addiction and mental illness. The results are disturbingly funny; we see long forgotten TV actresses tied up on gurneys, screaming in hospital corridors. In *PEYTON PLACE*, Waters utilizes shots of rushing streams, frozen lakes, and New England church steeples to evoke Studio Era symbols of sexual arousal.

Taking on the big screen, Waters' *LANA BACKWARDS* (1995) presents a series of glossy color prints of the 1950's film legend, Lana Turner, who is depicted here in varying optical depths of field, with her back to the camera. This austere composition foreshadowed the formal techniques of Ingmar Bergman; the Swedish auteur whose films would challenge the Hollywood star-making machinery. Pursuing this theme further, Waters' *DOROTHY MALONE'S COLLAR* focuses on a detail of the Hollywood starlet's sartorial trademark (yes, her collar), ignoring the rest of her identity.

A keen observer of film history; while at the same time, one of the medium's creative lights, Waters knows which side of the Looking Glass is more fun.
Through 2/14.

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■ Frank Dituri / Rosenberg + Kaufman Fine Art

By JOEL SIMPSON

■ [✉ E-Mail This Article](#)

Moonlit scenes are notoriously hard to photograph, yet they are among the most haunting of images. Frank Dituri set out to capture the subtle dark grey on darker grey scenes in an earlier show at this gallery (Rosenberg & Kaufman Fine Art), called *Lux Lunae*, or "light of the moon". Some of those images are reprised in this new show.

This time, however, Dituri manages to confront the ambiguity of things almost seen (possibly imagined) head on, leaving his figures; a face, a head of hair, a child and in one case an ironic sunflower, blurred in the foreground. These are time exposures, after all, and humans cannot be expected to stand still. His cornfields and tree shadows on snow, partially splashed with moonlight, capture a preternatural stillness; reminding one that the meadows and woods that give us so much pleasure during the day endure other, more solemn, patient phases. We rarely linger when we catch a glimpse of them under these circumstances; the night is too full of uncertainty, even fear, unless we give ourselves over to it, flexing our aesthetic muscles or defying mythographies of loosed chthonic forces.

This series of photographs is essentially Dituri's invitation to do just that. Here, light takes on a new role. Now, rather than blurred foreground figures against well-defined moonlit backgrounds, Dituri blurs entire images, thereby directing our attention, for example, to the negative spaces among tree branches. He thus effectuates a foreground/background reversal, in which the shape and tone of skylight becomes the subject.

Blurred photographic subjects practically comprise a distinct school. But photographers who employ this technique usually do so to generalize or iconicize a subject. Dituri, however, uses blur in a more aesthetically urgent way, consigning the trees to the background and making the forms of abstract light the new subject. There is nothing new about finding abstraction in nature; what is new is that Dituri finds it not in objects but in backgrounds. If the trees had been in focus, we would have strained to see their details and missed these light forms.

He goes beyond trees in a few striking images. *The Reader*, for example, depicts a luminous open book (hand-held) against a dark, subtly nuanced background. Blur renders print irrelevant and invisible; one sees only the page, and it appears as a light source, a virtual beacon. Dituri had used this technique in an earlier image

depicting a cyclist stopped across the road. But here he concentrates the effect; as well as the viewer's mind. Through 3/13.

Michael Mulhern and Gary Haven-Smith / Reeves Contemporary

By JACK SAVAGE

[✉ E-Mail This Article](#)

- This two artist show; abstract paintings by Michael Mulhern and stone works by sculptor Gary Haven-Smith, invites a dialogue about contemporary abstract art and its predecessors, while also looking at the basic building blocks of painting and sculpting.

Mulhern's bleak, oversized canvasses are a long way from the Abstract Expressionist and Action Paintings of the 1950s and 60s, where lines and colors and forms were angry, decisive and forthright. These paintings seem to be all about what is not there. Under a nearly uniform aluminum surface, hints of decisive linear form are glimpsed between wide brushstrokes, which threaten to close off the painting.

Using aluminum pigment, Mulhern paints gestural labyrinths, tracing over line drawings in charcoal and black acrylic. The resulting silver images look monochromatic and minimalist from a distance, but when observed closely, they reveal frenzied networks of lines underneath that are partly obscured by the over-painting. As such, these paintings suggest a synthesis of object and surface.

Haven-Smith's massive stone installations, created from naturally occurring elements near the artist's studio in New Hampshire, interact, visually, with the hulking stone installation pieces. His large, "found" stones bear traces of their original form; vertical structures honed and buffed to a glassy sheen on one side, but left raw and untouched on the other. If Mulhern's paintings are about paint and painting, then Haven-Smith's works convey a similar consideration of what it means to sculpt in stone, going beyond the idealized, art historical notion of "releasing" the figure therein. Through 3/16.

▪ Film Review

- 11th New York Underground Film Festival / Anthology Film Archives

By LILY FAUST

[✉ E-Mail This Article](#)

- With a full roster of film documentaries, experimental art films, features, shorts, installations, live music and multimedia shows, the 11th New York Underground Film Festival illuminates the screen once again at the Anthology Film Archives. Picked from over 1,500 submissions, this year's selections chart diverse viewpoints; including films rich in attitude, social and poetic justice, erotic and homoerotic textures, debauchery and sociopolitical, issue-oriented film and video work by emerging filmmakers. Notable for its support of the outer fringes of independent cinema, the New York Underground Film Festival is a particularly important event in both the international as well as the local avant-garde circuit. The festival opens with the U.S. premiere of *Certain Women*, directed by Bobby Abate and Peggy Ahwesh. Based on the 1957 Erskine Caldwell pulp novel of the same title, this melodrama takes a keen look at the lives of four women who have to struggle against provincial values in order to stake personal and sexual boundaries. Mocha Jean Herrup's *A Few Good Dykes*, which will have its world premiere here, documents a clandestine, lesbian mock military unit where attire and attitude rein supreme. And the delightful Icelandic documentary, *In the Shoes of the Dragon*, by Hronn Sveinsdottir and Arni Sveinsson, offers viewers a spontaneous run of the beauty pageant catwalk through the eyes of its protagonist, the filmmaker herself. Ms. Sveinsdottir entered the 2000 Miss Iceland Pageant as a contestant to explore and experience, first hand, issues of individual identity versus notions of gender and beauty. The film offers an intimate portrait of the filmmaker as contestant / woman, confronting her need for individual control, and her need to win. In the *Shoes of the Dragon* was banned in Iceland, due to a lawsuit by the pageant organizers, but it won the Best Documentary at the Eddas, Iceland's National Film Awards. Roddy Bogawa's experimental documentary, *I Was Born But...* also premises identity as a factor of assimilation, and focuses on the Asian-American experience and punk culture of the 1970s and 80s. Featuring an original score by Chris Brokaw (of punk the bands *Come and Codeine*), *I Was Born But...* will premiere at the Closing Night of the Festival, Sunday March 14th.

The program also boasts a series of road movies, in which filmmakers pursued various kinds of travels in the United States to convey facets of life in America. Standouts among these films include: *Unknown Passage: The Dead Moon Story*, by Jason Summers and Kate Fix, a documentary about the punk band, Northwest, mostly shot on tour; *Goldstein: The Trials of the Sultan of Smut*, by James Guardino, a documentary that follows the notorious publisher of *Screw Magazine* (a porn tabloid that has since folded) through a civil lawsuit brought against him; and *This Ain't No Heartland*, by Andreas Horvath, in which the Austrian filmmaker travels through the American Midwest in an effort to learn what "everyday Americans" think about the war in Iraq.

One exceptional film in this category is the factual and even-toned documentary, *A Certain Kind of Death*, by Gover Babcock and Blue Hadaegh, which looks at the fate of individuals who die without any next of kin. Following the un-sentimental trail of clues right up to the point of their terminated mortal existence, beginning with the death scene (lonely little hotel rooms, dingy bachelor pads), the documentary follows every aspect of the bureaucratic circuit; from the coroner's office to the morgue, and so on, giving pause to our own fleeting mortality.

On the lighter side of death (so to speak), there is Giuseppe Andrews' *Tater Tots*, (German for "Killer Deaths"). This film is actually more typical underground material.

A low-budget, foul-mouthed comedy, *Tater Tots* introduces us to two heroin addicts who "trip" through a universe run -amok- by a Charles Manson look-alike.

Some of the film artists whose works have been selected for the New York Underground Film Festival have also been selected to participate in the 2004 Whitney Biennial; among them, Cory Arcangel, Bradley Eros, Deborah Stratman and Sam Green.

Green's documentary, *The Weather Underground*, nominated for a Best Documentary Oscar, was featured at last year's festival. Also participating in this year's Whitney Biennial is James Fotopoulos, whose hypnotic blend of

video and film, Esophagus, and his 16 mm film, The Nest, are among the feature-length works presented in this year's festival.

Esophagus simmers on prolonged visual and aural perceptions that subtly shift to imply altered states of consciousness. Bordering on alienation and paranoia, the work is constructed as a succession of segments that ruminate on pure sensation. It utilizes electronically "drawn" lines, and articulates conversation in robotic monotone, enhancing and distorting the conventional toward the absurd and the neurotic.

In contrast to Fotopoulos' fictive terrain, the real-time "wonders" depicted in Whole, by Melodie Gilber, presents a disturbing look at individuals who obsess about becoming amputees; documenting those who have, indeed, "successfully" maimed themselves

This year's festival also includes new shorts by filmmakers Guy Maddin, Seth Price, Kelly Reichardt, Matt McCormick, Bill Brown, George Kuchar, Naomi Uman and Ian Svenonius. A live music and video show featuring the group, People Like Us, with London based artist Vicki Bennett, and another band, Tree Wave, are among the added attractions. Tree Wave, from Dallas, Texas, is comprised of vocalist Lauren Gray and programmer / artist Paul Slocum. Slocum creates electronic instruments by hacking into and reprogramming antique computer technology, including, among others, an Atari 2600, which doubles as a hypnotic image-generator. 3/10 through 3/16.

Ed Note: The Anthology Film Archives is located at 32 Second Avenue, New York, NY 10003. (By subway: take F/V train to 2nd Ave. stop) Tel: 212.505.5181 www.anthologyfilmarchives.com

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