

GALLERY & STUDIO

Of Love and Other Dangers at Monserrat Gallery

Two gifted young women artists explored the bittersweet pains and triumphs of romantic relationships in recent solo shows at Monserrat Gallery, 584 Broadway: Deb Schlouch is a rare and original talent, a young artist who bravely bypasses all the accepted aesthetic strategies to strip bare the self in a brilliantly unachooled style. Her work is without pretense, politics, or politesse, but it is all about the human heart and the hard knocks it can take and still survive. In fact, big, fat, juicy red hearts play an important part in the personal iconography Schlouch has evolved to convey a host of powerful emotions, existential yearnings, and psychological conditions. She also employs crosses quite frequently in her figurative compositions, along with nude figures, some with their mouths sewn shut by big black stitches that bespeak the forces that would stifle the kind of no-holds-barred personal expression at which this intrepid young artist excels.

Of all contemporary artists, one might most accurately compare her to Francesco Clemente for her almost narcissistic concentration on the body, conveyed through inventive figural distortions. However, Deb Schlouch has her own unique set of symbols, as seen in "Lost and Found Souls," where faceless figures wander

among huge hearts containing big, black keyholes, or "My Silence is Not Golden," where a man with his mouth stitched shut stands beside another heart overlaid with a huge black "X."

Both pictures demonstrate the raw semi-otic directness that makes Deb Schlouch such a powerful and promising young painter.

Gabriela Szavedra has her own highly original set of personal symbols which she employs with great inventiveness and wit. She renders them in mixed media with considerable finesse in small formats reminiscent of Indian prints. Szavedra is an exquisite visual poet whose tiny, gracefully delineated figures are depicted in intricate interiors or fanciful landscapes enacting ritualistic dramas with intriguing titles such as "We Dream of Love and We Overlook it When We're Awake," and "Distance Is Not How Far Apart We Are Now. Distance is if We Cannot Come Back Together." Her figures, invariably seen in profile in shallow space, have an Egyptian simplicity. Indeed, they function like hieroglyphic characters in dreamlike narratives, making love, romping with companionable dogs or other animals, or reclining on a table in a Frankensteinian Laboratory to submit to a Rube Goldberg contraption called "The Memory Eraser."

Wildly imaginative and highly inventive, the diminutive paintings of Gabriela Szavedra evoke a fascinating alternate reality.

Also at Monserrat Gallery, were three other solo showcase exhibitions by two strong abstract painters and a talented photographer:

Norma B. Heiler showed large canvases that demonstrated the ongoing vitality of lyrical abstraction. In "White Forest," rhythmic strokes of blue and white created the sense of snow-capped pine trees seen from above, but could just as easily suggest turbulent ocean waves. By contrast, "Emerging Light," as its title suggests, has a more ethereal quality, with its vigorous streaks of white and yellow more loosely dispersed, creating a lyrical sense of movement in space.

Then there is "Blood and Fire," a dynamic overall composition in vibrant red hues which is every bit as violent and visceral as its title, yet possessed of a simultaneous elegance and grace.

Christine Awad is another abstract painter whose canvases are densely layered with bold serpentine bands of color that form muscular compositions in which subdued color and strong form conspire to captivate the viewer. Awad, a well-known artist and teacher based in Dallas,

Texas, creates a remarkable visual interest and variety with a severely limited arsenal of colors and shapes. Her abstract motifs range from the colorful, frenetic "Mistmaster," to the serene, monochromatic "Mandala." All are distinguished by Christine Awad's impressive painterly authority.

Then there is Nory Qareeb, a young photographer from Japan whose large color prints of subjects such as a flock of white doves or palm trees set against a luminous orange sky are surrounded by ornate carved wood frames that work in concert with the image to enshrine and elevate the banal in a particularly postmodern manner. There is a sly conceptual aspect to Qareeb's work that can be devilishly deceptive, as in his color print "This is Our Situation," where two holes in a stone wall suggest windows to an alien world, rendering a dazzling day in a public park strangely dreamlike. "Change One's Mind," a serene image of sepia-toned clouds, and "Advance," an exhilarating image of a single gull in flight, both have a Zen-like simplicity that takes on an intriguingly ironic dimension in those ornate frames that function as an integral element in the work of this innovative young photographic artist.

—Andrew Loomis



The World of the Working Artist, New York, September/October 1999

Gallery & Studio

Of love and other dangers at Montserrat Gallery

BY ANDREW LOOMIS

Two gifted young women artists explored the bittersweet pains and triumphs of romantic relationships in recent solo shows at Montserrat Gallery, 584 Broadway: Deb Schlouch is a rare and original talent, a young artist who brashly bypasses all the accepted aesthetic strategies to strip bare the self in a brilliantly unschooled style. Her work is without pretense, politics, or politesse, but it is all about the human heart and the hard knocks it can take and still survive. In fact, big, fat, juicy hearts play an important part in the personal iconography Schlouch has evolved to convey a host of powerful emotions, existential yearnings, and psychological conditions. She also employs crosses quite frequently in her figurative compositions, along with nude figures, some with their mouths sewn shut by big black stitches that bespeak the forces that would stifle the kind of no-holds-barred personal expression at which this intrepid young artist excels.

Of all contemporary artists, one might most accurately compare her to Francesco Clemente for her almost narcissistic concentration on the body, conveyed through inventive figural distortions. However, Deb Schlouch has her own unique set of symbols, as seen in "Lost and Found Souls," where faceless figures wander among huge hearts containing big, black keyholes, or "My Silence is Not Golden," where a man with his mouth stitched shut stands beside another heart overlaid with a huge black "X."

Both pictures demonstrate the raw semiotic directness that makes Deb Schlouch such a powerful and promising young painter.

Gabriela Saavedra has her own highly original set of personal symbols which she employs with inventiveness and wit. She renders them in mixed media with considerable finesse in small formats reminiscent of Indian prints. Saavedra is an exquisite poet whose tiny, gracefully delineated figures are depicted in intricate interiors or fanciful landscapes enacting ritualistic dramas with intriguing titles such as "We Dream of Love and We Overlook it When We're Awake," and "Distance Is Not How Far Apart We Are Now. Distance Is If We Cannot Come Back Together." Her figures, invariably seen in profile in shallow space, have an Egyptian simplicity. Indeed, they function like hieroglyphic characters in dreamlike narratives, making love, romping with companionable dogs or other animals, or reclining on a table in a Frankensteinian Laboratory to submit to a Rube Goldberg contraption called "The Memory Eraser."

Wildly imaginative and highly inventive, the diminutive paintings of Gabriela Saavedra evoke a fascinating alternate reality.

Also at Montserrat Gallery, were three other solo showcase exhibitions by two strong abstract painters and a talented photographer.

(continued)



Norma B. Heisler showed large canvases that demonstrated the ongoing vitality of lyrical abstraction. In “White Forest,” rhythmic strokes of blue and white created the sense of snow-capped pine trees seen from above, but could just as easily suggest turbulent ocean waves. By contrast, “Emerging light,” as its title suggests, has a more ethereal quality, with its vigorous streaks of white and yellow more loosely dispersed, creating a lyrical sense of movement in space.

Then there is “Blood and Fire,” a dynamic overall composition in vibrant red hues which is every bit as violent and visceral as its title, yet possessed of a simultaneous elegance and grace.

Christine Awad is another abstract painter whose canvases are densely layered with bold serpentine bands of color that form muscular compositions in which subdued color and strong form conspire to captivate the viewer. Awad, a well known [sic] artist and teacher based in Dallas, Texas, creates a remarkable visual interest and variety with a severely limited arsenal of colors and shaper. Her abstract motifs range from the colorful, frenetic “Mixmaster,” to the serene, monochromatic “Mandala.” All are distinguished by Christine Awad’s impressive painterly authority.

Then there is Nory Qareeb, a young photographer from Japan whose large color prints of subject such as a flock of white doves or palm trees set against a luminous orange sky are surrounded by ornate carved wood frames that work in concert with the image to enshrine and elevate the banal in a particularly postmodern manner. There is a sly conceptual aspect to Qareeb’s work that can be devilishly deceptive, as in his color print “This is Our Situation,” where two holes in a stone wall suggest windows to an alien world, rendering a dazzling day in a public park strangely dreamlike. “Change One’s Mind,” a serene image of sepia-toned clouds, and “Advance,” an exhilarating image of a single gull in flight, both have a Zen-like simplicity that takes on an intriguingly ironic dimension in those ornate frames that function as an integral element in the work of this innovative young photographic artist.