



July 6 –12, 2007/Vol. 29/No. 33

Sensuous Strokes

Norman Bluhm, Monique Van Genderen, Jeff Gambill

New York painter Norman Bluhm evolved from an abstract expressionist to an abstract voluptuist, his arcs and waves of spattered paint frothing into baroque bulges and tumescent swaths of candy-heart color. But Bluhm lost none of his expansiveness and joyous fury in the transition, and his later “work,” like de Kooning’s, is as convincingly sexy as it is not (only) because of its curves and colors, but because of its thoroughgoing erotic passion, its concupiscent effulgence, its conflation of sex, violence and ice cream. Bluhm painted with gusto from the git go, but in his late, great paintings it was his gonads that got going.

Monique van Genderen’s latest paintings inherit a lot of Bluhm’s fervid organicism, and not a little of his exuberant palette, but in van Genderen’s case her muscular concoctions are at once spontaneous and controlled, impulsive and calculated. For instance, two paintings, one horizontal and one vertical, display the same image: a cockeyed blue-yellow flower silhouetted against an inky field, a painterly image reproduced improbably by a sure hand. It’s van Genderen’s own “Rebus”—replicating Rauschenberg’s replication of supposedly on hand “replicate” the ab-ex extravagance Rauschenberg questioned—and Bluhm rode wildly to the end of his days. Van Genderen deftly employs mental and manual bravado in her celebration of, and challenge to, yesterday’s heroics.

Jeff Gambill’s does his own celebrating of past achievements—one of the paintings in his show pays wistful homage to a Max Ernst deaccessioned by LACMA—and exhibits its own bravado in its willful flouting of any sort of stylistic “look.” Gambill twits any expectation of conventional stylization; indeed, this eclectic show of stand-alone paintings feels—reads—like a collection of short stories. *Norman Bluhm at Manny Silverman, 619 N. Almont Dr., W. Hlywd.; Tues.-Sat., 10 a.m.-5 p.m.; thru July 21. (310) 659-8256. Monique van Genderen at Happy Lion, 963 Chung King Road, Chinatown; Wed.-Sat., noon-6 p.m.; thru July 7. (213) 625-1360. Jeff Gambill at Sam Lee, 990 N. Hill St., Chinatown; Wed.-Sat., noon-6 p.m., thru July 7. (323) 227-0275.*

---Peter Frank