

Art Letter (11/03/06)



Risk-taking. I wanted to discuss the upside of risk-taking, but an email I got complicated the issue. (More later.) I was going to deal solely with risk-taking aesthetically.

You know, like what we see in the work of [Phyllis Bramson](#). So many artists, when they get to be 50, start doing "greatest hits." Seems like a flight to safety. Less controversy. Less imagination too. It is refreshing to see someone take risks. Maybe this is something that happens when artists pass additional milestones, like turning 60 or 65 or older, those pent up creative juices kick in and there is less care for the judgment of society and more appreciation of honesty; just putting in out there. Besides Phyllis, look at Vera Klement and [William Conger](#) who are making the strongest work ever.



What a great new exhibition [Phyllis Bramson \(her site\)](#) has at Carl Hammer (newer work). This is brave art in which she reveals the influence and persona of her alter ego - Lady Ying-Ying -

who playfully and provocatively invades, alters, embellishes and subverts her art. These are charming vignettes; physical, shrine-like reliquaries, full of compulsion, and strange and insistent oddities. We are watching someone else's dream, in rich, textural color. I applaud the bravery and the vulnerability and am challenged to be brave and vulnerable myself.



(Oh, and one more thing. Carl Hammer Gallery made a mistake pricing this work. It should be twice what they are asking.)

I enjoy going to Douglas Dawson Gallery because it is the space I used to own and now it feels quite different. With architect Wallace Bolling, Doug has created



an excellent, beautiful, functional, handsome environment, in this case to showcase the work of Frank Connet. Connet is a Chicago artist, who works with fabric. He is the only living artist the gallery exhibits. Influenced

by ancient woven art and probably Sean Scully there's an elegant dance between the seductive stitched seams and the formal, abstract visual discourse. I like the pieces. **(EMPHASIS MINE)**



So I appreciate both Phyllis Bramson and Doug Dawson for going beyond what they've normally done. Perhaps this is a midwestern, Chicago demonstration of conviction, and the result of sticktuitiveness. That they've earned a level, that commands a sufficient amount of respect, that they can take a risk, that is guaranteed to be read in a benevolent context. **(EMPHASIS MINE)**



Risk can be bad too. Sometimes we are too gullible and our vulnerability betrays us. I got the following email from a Chicago artist I know:

Paul,

I just wanted to inform you of a scam that is targeting artists.

Unfortunately this happened to me and I am in shock over it. My bank has currently frozen all of my accounts and it looks like I will be out of money. I really can't believe this is happening but I wanted to warn others and thought you could post this online at artletter.

If you could please leave my name out of it that would be great. I don't trust anything anyone says anymore. Below is a link that describes the fraud.

http://www.artinliverpool.com/blogarch/2006/05/art_scam_alert.html



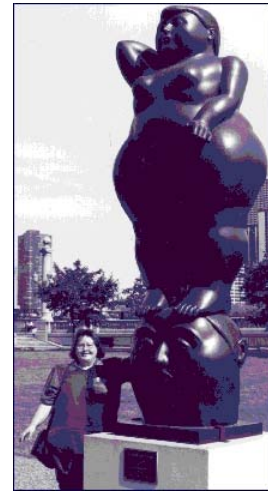
I tagged along on a really spiffy, Art Institute sponsored, Joan Arenberg sculpture tour and got to stop in on Methods & Materials, the folks who used helicopters to install the Botero's along Michigan Avenue, back in the olden days, and are now installing the 106 Magdalena Abakanowicz's on the South end of Grant Park. This piece is much better than I thought it was going to be. Open to more interpretations. Not depressing. More stoic, meditative, sincere. Good values. The dedication will

be soon.

And it was really nice to see the Louise Nevelson sculpture enclosed. I remember when it was first installed outside, way before they built this jewel of an enclosure, for the week or so before they decided that people might fall off the "pedestal edge" of the terrace and put



a shiny chrome banister / belt between the pedestrian viewers and the art. Gag. Now it looks good again, revealing the significant relationship between art and context, how a piece looks in its setting. Do you remember when



John Henry's sculpture was squashed up against a building on Congress, before it was moved to the curve in Front of McCormick, or when Virginio Ferrari's *Being Born* was placed on State Street before being relocated in 1996?

Thanks for reading along,

Please Vote.

Paul Klein