

ART

NEW ENGLAND

REGIONAL REVIEWS

V e r m o n t

**Furchgott & Sourdiffe Gallery/Shelburne
Gail Salzman**

If we were to compare paintings to hair, Gail Salzman's would be Rapunzel's in a world of mostly crewcuts. She is exceedingly generous with her oils, transcending the two dimensions of canvas and paper, and this luxuriant layering adds to a primal sensuality.

Nearly all the fourteen new paintings are female nudes in water. They swim in tidal pools of paint that are boldly swabbed on: hands, feet, and features are often gestural approximations. Despite her urgent brushwork, Salzman's subjects are remarkably calm, unselfconscious, at ease in their bodies and their world.

These women convey no fear: their intelligence is unquestioned. In short, they are powerful expressions of unfettered femaleness, removed from the real world context of relationships. These paintings speak of and to archetypal Woman. Salzman has imagined an eroticism where no gendered subtext is necessary.

In *Tidal Dream*, a work in oil on paper, the woman is floating with head thrown back, confident in her solitude. In *Swimmer 2*, a meditative figure with closed eyes treads water as a school of bright fish swirl around her. Like most of the women here, she is the center of her own vortex. These postures are both intimate and universal.

Salzman renders her figures in volcanic tones that play off the blues and greens of water and land. With the swooping depth of the pigment, this results in images that resonate with the fiery belly of the earth. The artist's black-ink drawings on paper manage to conjure up attitude through form alone – a subtle feat.

...The metaphor Salzman has sought – the “poetic intersection” in the human spirit where personal and universal converge – has been found, and it is elating.

–*Pamela Polston*