

GALLERY&STUDIO

Navigating the Pluralistic Pleasures of "Talent 2001"

Part of the fun of the annual Talent shows at Allan Stone Gallery, 113 East 90th street, is never knowing what to expect. The recent "Talent 2001" was more honed, focused, and less eclectic than some of its predecessors. Fewer artists made for a less carnivalesque atmosphere; yet the exhibition was not without its delightful oddities.

Bill Will's sculpture "\$100" was a cube made entirely of pennies, while his "Ten Loaves" was a similar structure created with Wonder Bread. Both works put a witty spin on Marshal McLuhan's assertion that "the message is the medium."

Daryl Abraham is another one of those eccentric talents who find a home at Allan Stone, where weirdness is welcome when it is supported by genuine vision. Abraham's "Old Farm," a mixed media box construction of a rural scene in a box filled with real earth, transcended quaintness by virtue of its quirky originality.

Another artist who takes a mundane rural subject as a starting point is John Goodman, who showed a series of oils on canvas, each depicting a single rooster. In each painting, the common



John Goodman, "Rooster"

fowl became an ironic foil for Goodman's bravura brushwork, striking a fine balance between the comic and the heroic.

Animals of various species made for a veritable bestiary within the exhibition: Carolyn Evans applied her own visual wit to an unusual subject in her oil on canvas, "Swim Meet," employing a large and little fish pass-

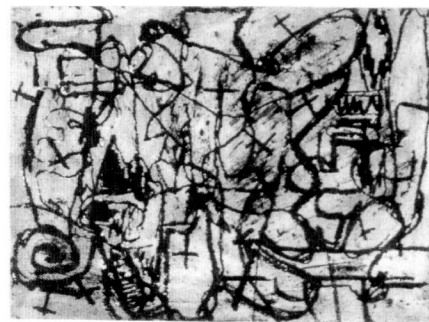
ing in the deep as an opportunity for showing off her painterly pyrotechnics. In "Poodle" and "Golden Retriever," Emily Epstein Vines captured the individual characteristics of her canine subjects in a meticulous watercolor technique. By contrast, John Balsey's "Dog," an aluminum sculpture of a mechanical pooch, was both amusing and aesthetically pleasing, with its sleek surface and ingenious use of mechanical elements.

Adam McPherson employed found scrap metal parts in his majestic large sculpture "African Woman." McPherson's lifesize piece captured the statuesque grace of the slender woman balancing a basket on her head, evoking a palpable presence in a semi-abstract style.

As always at Allan Stone, the painterly impulse was also well represented by various artists working in styles ranging from realism to abstraction: Robert Valdes, always an impressive painter, offered an exquisite small gouache on panel entitled "Odd Ball." A simple yet mysterious composition focusing on a ball decorated with stars set against a dark ground, it exemplified the combination of subtly surreal suggestiveness and sensitive paint handling that makes Valdes' work doubly pleasurable.

Latter day literati painter/poet Nguyen Ducmanh, fresh from a successful solo show in Italy, demonstrated his incomparable gestural flair in two characteristically calligraphic abstractions. In "The Phoenix" and "Letter 'D', no. 5," Ducmanh's bold strokes, enlivened by variegated primary hues, resulted in compositions marked by a unique velocity and panache.

Bo Joseph showed a work in ink, tempera, and oil pastel on paper entitled "Inferno: Passages" that was notable for its own kind of calligraphic intensity. With a serpentine black line employed gracefully to create a mazelike composition as convoluted as a



Bo Joseph, "Inferno: Passages"

subway map, Joseph convincingly evoked an abstract sense of Dante's lower depths.

Judy Molyneux's oils are built up in textures that approach bas relief. Her intense colors add further impact to canvases such as "Girl Running on the Beach" and "Red Cliffs and Surfers, their subjects harking back to the California Figurative School. John Turturro's ruggedly muddy abstractions, on the other hand, are more rooted in the New York school, with their bold forms and their scumbled, scratched, and scored surfaces stirring up an almost violent sense of immediacy.

Other surprises in "Talent 2001" included: Stewart Paley's large collage painting, gridded like a comicstrip bursting with antic images; a huge mixed media sculpture of a candy sampler by Peter Anton; some wonderfully warped ceramic vessels by Michael Denslow; Gina Minichino's exquisitely limned little landscapes and figure paintings; Jeff Britton's gritty realist oils of traintracks, tornados, telephone poles and other forlornly poetic subjects; Alex Itin's funky art brut heads, one with a gaping cut-out mouth revealing the gallery wall; an oddly baroque abstract canvas by Mourtala Diop; and Page Laughlin's painterly takes on elegant room interiors. —Ed McCormack