



George Deem, *Yankee Vermeer*, 2007, oil on wood panel, 24" x 18". Pavel Zoubok.

George Deem

Allan Stone and Pavel Zoubok

This fascinating two-part show offered a full-scale retrospective of the underappreciated career of George Deem (1932–2008). Graduating from college in 1958, Deem was a surrealist-come-lately and an appropriator before his time. As even the very earliest faux-calligraphic canvases in these exhibitions—“Quotations” at Allan Stone; “We Were There” at Pavel Zoubok—demonstrated, Deem was so enamored of the marks that human beings make to communicate that he would camouflage imagery to look like writing.

The marks that most obsessed him were those made by other painters, at first in their sketchbooks or notebooks, and eventually in their finished works. Artists as diverse as Boucher, Courbet, Velázquez, and Raeburn made second-hand appearances in his work (and in this pair of shows), though it was Vermeer with whom Deem had the most sustained relationship. He clearly learned a great deal from Vermeer’s technique, but this was not Deem’s central concern. At one level, he treated

glimpse into an unusual intelligence.

—Robert Ayers

‘The New Abstractionists’

Walter Wickiser

The title of this little show of recent work by Michael Pinchera, Ron Clark, James Jenkins, and Peter Hoss was somewhat misleading. Certainly each of these artists makes pictures that fit within the vast terrain referred to as “abstract painting,” but each artist’s work adhered to a different abstract tradition. This,

Vermeer almost as a modest 17th-century apprentice might have, by not seeking to depart from the master’s example, but rather by emulating, borrowing from, and reassembling fragments of it to make what are effectively homages. At the same time Deem was acutely aware of the artistic possibilities of his own modern and postmodern times. Thus his reworkings of Vermeer are hybridized with color-field abstraction (in *Quartet*, 2008) or with figures out of Sargent (in *Sargent Vermeer*, 2008) or even with images from a baseball game (in *Yankee Vermeer*, 2007). The results are quite special and, in this memorial, they contributed to a dizzying

in fact, was what made the exhibition so absorbing.

Pinchera, a gifted and courageous colorist, is the least abstract of the four artists. His acrylic paintings on board begin where legible images start to break down, rather like Kandinsky’s “Improvisations.” At one end of Pinchera’s art is *Fairy Tale* (2008), which features a small luminous figure observing something mysterious amid groups of trees, while at the other is the almost entirely abstract *Healing Journey* (2007).

In contrast, there is no hint of representation in Clark’s uncompromising oils on canvas. Each of his pictures here was three feet square and featured a blotchy concentration of saturated color against a contrasting background. Overall intensity is clearly more important to him than complexity of detail.

Jenkins and Hoss both juggle gesture and geometry, although their results are quite different. Jenkins’s pictures have a try-anything-once exuberance: shapes curl and twist against one another, color is garish, lines are scribbled in. In comparison, Hoss—the best painter in this show—is far more contemplative. He employs vestigial grids, brushy arc motifs, a tightly constrained palette of black, white, grays, and an odd lemon yellow, and cut-up and collage techniques to explore the vitality at the cusp of balance and chaos. Although his art, like that of the other painters here, was devoid of novelty, it reflected a genuine assurance.

—Robert Ayers



Peter Hoss, *Forms on Structure*, 2008, mixed media collaged on panel, 39" x 48½" x 6½". Walter Wickiser.