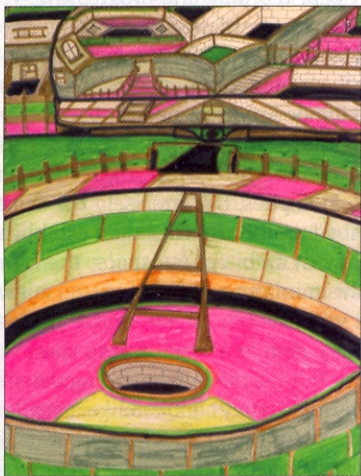


Thomas Burleson

Luise Ross

If Thomas Burleson (1914–97) doesn't exactly fit the popular image of an outsider artist—self-taught, solitary, and obsessive—he comes close. Burleson began making art while working the night shift as a shipping inspector at Lockheed Missiles and Space Company, and some of the strongest pieces in this intermittently gratifying show were done on the job, with the materials closest to hand—ballpoint pens and company notepads.

What emerged from these spontaneous exercises are compulsively rendered works filled with semiabstract mechanical imagery, as in *Untitled (man parachuting)*, 1990. The drawing depicts a stick figure plunging from a rickety structure



Thomas Burleson, *Untitled (fortress view)*, 1974, colored inks on paper, 11" x 8½". Luise Ross.

of conveyor belts and stairwells. It's as though Burleson were staging an absurd assembly-line comedy in the creaking joints and tiny rivets. Similarly, *Untitled (bird on structure)*, 1971, features a tangle of bad plumbing, which could be seen as a metaphor for the human body, leaking and inconsolable.

Burleson's drawings, especially those done with a ballpoint pen, are all contour and cross-hatching, and they fairly bristle with energy, nerviness, and color, running from gamma ray pinks to electric blues. Proof that the artist, notably hermetic, wasn't totally isolated or immune to mass-cultural influences lies in the psychedelic colors that entered his work in the late 1960s.

Many of Burleson's drawings are sim-



Marc de Montebello, *Corner of the Studio*, 2007, oil on board, 7¼" x 10".

W. M. Brady.

ply inscrutable, full of hidden meanings and symbols that only he could have understood. A prime example is *Untitled (fortress view)*, 1974, with its cinder-block imagery and contradictory network of lines. Burleson has locked us out.

—Alex Taylor

Marc de Montebello

W. M. Brady

Marc de Montebello's small landscapes and cityscapes rendered in abbreviated planes of radiant color are focused meditations on places both familiar and exotic. Whether revisiting the scene inside or the view out of his Manhattan studio or capturing snatches of water, trees, or rooftops during travels from Maine to India, the painter beautifully crystallizes fleeting light.

De Montebello's paintings are pleasing for their modest scale and means. With the exception of a scene filled with densely stacked rectilinear buildings and cliffs in Jodhpur, and a view of the horizon line at Frenchman Bay—each measuring several feet across—these paintings are petite, some no bigger than 6 by 4

inches. The size is appropriate to the intimacy of his subject matter—an armchair in his studio or a corner stacked with boxes.

The juxtaposition of orange and peach shades and of pale blues and violets in these domestic vignettes called to mind the glowing inner life and palette of the paintings of Fairfield Porter, an artist de Montebello admires, along with Corot. De Montebello returns often to the view of the Hudson River from his studio window, framed by the flattened shapes of the cityscape bathed in harsh midday winter light, the rosy hue of dusk, or the resplendent pale orange glory of sunrise. Quickly brushed and without extraneous detail, these snapshots were captured memories.

—Hilarie M. Sheets

Ugo Nespolo

Walter Wickiser

Ugo Nespolo's art is witty, adventurous, optimistic, and flawlessly conceived. Well known in his native Italy, where he paints, makes movies, designs sets, and



Ugo Nespolo, *Sol-Met*, 2007, embroidery, 24" x 37". Walter Wickiser.

illustrates books, he is now, in his 60s, first being shown in a New York gallery.

While clearly versed in the work of artists such as Andy Warhol, Robert



Judith Belzer, *The Inner Life of Trees #1*, 2007, oil on canvas (diptych), 20" x 136". Morgan Lehman.

Delaunay, Fernand Léger, and the Italian Futurist Umberto Boccioni, Nespolo has mixed these influences to arrive at a distinctive, contemporary style.

Nespolo works with a vivid palette, whether he is painting on wood or designing embroidered canvases. Figures are often set against art, as in the wonderful embroidered *Still Andy* (2007), which features a man with a dog on a leash, standing before a series of Warhol flower paintings. The dog peers balefully out of the picture, his shadow mingling with his owner's.

Particularly in *Solitude* (2007), in which three figures wander through a contemporary gallery, Nespolo proves himself a master of stylistic illusion. Although they have no facial features, they are individualized by the slope of their shoulders or tilt of their heads. Similarly, in *Sol-Met* (2007), two men gaze on a Sol LeWittian installation of swirling colors. A happy homage to the Pop gods, *Pop Time* (2007) depicts a woman and child caught between two full walls of wild color. The figures' stillness provides an amusing contrast to the excitement on the walls that almost overpowers them. Celebrating the sheer dynamism of art, Nespolo may also be implying that art is more alive than its viewers. —Valerie Gladstone

Ekatherina S.

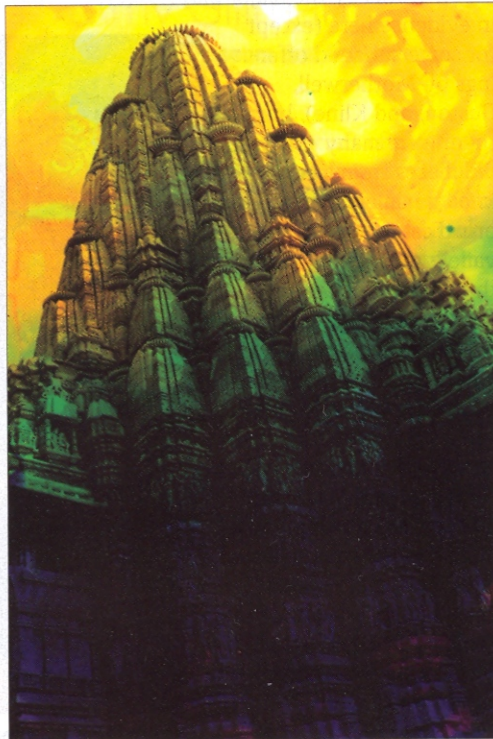
Jain Marunouchi

Born in Russia, Ekatherina S., as she calls herself, lives in Germany and New York, and has exhibited in both the United States and in Europe. Most recently, she spent time in India, becoming familiar with and photographing the country's great spiritual centers. She uses these photographs as the basis for these stunning, brilliantly colored works (all 2008). By painting over images of classic temples and robustly carved stat-

ues, she imbues them with an otherworldliness, often adding lines of calligraphy or graffiti to intensify the mystery.

In the deep pink-purple *India 1*, the frieze of voluptuous goddesses, photographed from below, is interrupted by squiggly white childlike tracings that bring the scene up to date and subtly unify past and present. More majestic and almost humbling, *India 11*—which along with *India 7* is among the most gorgeous works in the exhibition—shows an elaborate temple soaring from deep blue into a golden light. Oddly, the paintings conjure up a futuristic landscape as much as they do an ancient one, and this may be the artist's objective. She has chosen a very tantalizing and seductive way for viewers to see India, not so much as a geographical place but as a richly layered and nourishing state of mind.

—Valerie Gladstone



Ekatherina S., *India 7*, 2008, painted photograph, 35½" x 23½". Jain Marunouchi.

Judith Belzer

Morgan Lehman

The small canvases in Judith Belzer's exhibition "The Inner Life of Trees" were filled to the edges with dynamic swells and currents based on the graphic patterning of wood grains. These baroque, striated forms—tightly cropped and almost claustrophobic—suggested close-ups of fur, water, eyes, sand, feathers, and sky as well as trees, and they underscored the sense of a universal life force coursing through nature.

Belzer, who lives in northern California, based this series on eucalyptus trees, a dominant presence in her landscape. Beautiful and majestic, the eucalyptus is also highly invasive and flammable, contributing to the region's devastating fires. Belzer skillfully captures the tree's contradictory associations in these engaging, suffocating pictures. Avoiding the picturesque and eliminating any horizon or sense of a wider context, she pulls in very close to her subject.

A series of four small canvases in parched shades of ochre and brown evoked more of a desert topography, with swirls recalling volcanic formations, nipples, and crevasses. Another grouping of six works in a luminous palette gave an impression of atmospheric events—heroic cloud formations, a sunset reflected on water—that on closer inspection yielded to the rhythms of the wood grain. Belzer is clearly fascinated by the repetitive patterns in nature and how they parallel our own.

—Hilarie M. Sheets

Lucrecia Troncoso

Garson Baker Fine Art

Paper towels are surprisingly elegant and expressive in the hands of Lucrecia Troncoso. While most artists might use them to blot, dry, or clean, she makes delicate paintings and sculptures with them. In the same vein, favoring nail polish or food coloring over paint, the artist transforms the commonplace—even the