2-1-1997

AS220 State of the Art

Peter John Boyle

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HELEN PARMENTIER KNOWS EVERYTHING WHEN SHE SEES IT!

In the millesecond of chit chat which I was permitted with the artist at the opening reception, Ms Parmentier managed to inform me in very short order regarding the nature and priorities reflected in her current works. First of all they are not prints, they are not paintings, they are drawings. They are drawings because the artist reveres the empowerment of line above all other formal forces. "LINE IS EVERYTHING" she managed to enthuse before being whisked away to another scmoozing maneuver. Now, after regarding her works again in light of this insight, I am inclined to say Ms Parmentier clearly knows everything when she sees it.

Would it detract from the magnificence of this exhibit to say that in millennia to come, the horizon line will be recognized as the saving grace of abstraction? Just as the sanity of earth can imbue the most airborne head with something approximating GRAVITAS, so the lay of the land, intimated by a horizontal smudge or undulant element can save the most pure plastic composition from the vertiginous plummet into the abyss of DE STIJL.

Fortunately Ms Parmentier is well aware of this fact and thus all of the abstract drawings featured in this show are firmly anchored with at least one omnipotent horizon.

As is my want, I spent some time drawing these Paysages fantastiques the following week and found myself very shortly "drawn" into a world where thinking and seeing inhabit the same mechanism: AN EARTHBOUND LINE. Sliding with panoramic awareness around spacial features, optical phenomena and periphrastic constructs, this thinking line at work accomplishes a fusion of visual delight and intellectual curiosity. The resultant inquiry by the viewer thus gives up effortlessly the pleasure of both focused concentration and spontaneous discovery. Even in the thumbnail sketches I made of these works there is a clearly an intelligence to these compositions which is as rare as it is inexplicable.

A small part of the miracle of having a show like this at AS220 is the fact that it is possible to invest in looking carefully at these works, where as they would merely read as representatives of a genre in another gallery. Also, give the sold out exhibitions of dolls and gargantuan cartoons happening elsewhere in the complex, this set of sober mindscapes is a staunch reminder of the huge power of sustained inquiry by an artist indifferent to novelty and fully engaged in the tradition of formal study and its consequent revelations.

She is the last dry Kleenex
POETRY ABUSE AT THE PORK CROP LOUNGE

Was a time when the term "poetry" implied a superlative condition (like "art"). THE most potent use of language possible. The paragon of articulation, the most elegant amalgam of connotation, the ultimate application of the most divine aspect of human consciousness "noble in reason, infinite in faculty".......

No longer is this the case. Blame it on the best poets for making it look easy or blame it on the beat poets for making it look fool proof-but either way the expression "bad poetry" has replaced "medical health-care" as my favorite and most ultimate example of the redundant oxymoron. When I hear the word poetry now, I think of writing done by people who can't write. Even worse, words strung together by people who cannot even think. Humans for whom the composition of poetry has become a form of cerebral bowel movement, the content of which is irrelevant waste which needs only to be expressed, or, in this case, excreted, in order to accomplish its purpose.

To illustrate this point I began to compose "a poem" about defecation using the "cerebral-bowel-moment-mindset". Unfortunately I had already doomed my attempt to excessive literary properties simply by the awareness that it was metaphorical. Its hard to decide whats more abused than metaphor in these examples of the poetics of solipcism. One work I endured at a recent Sunday show contained the repetitive motif "HORNY YOUNG MEN". "Horny young men" "Horny... Young... Men".

In fairness I should say that the abuse of poetry is in no way limited to the pork chop lounge (where they abuse all art forms equally) nor for that matter to AS220 as I encounter the same appalling redundant oxymoron at every level of this endeavor. On a television show about a national poetry festival they featured work by a "poet" whose "compositions" consisted of lists of the antidepressant drugs she had taken over the course of her life. "Elavil, Trazadone, Famular, Prozac..." SHEER POETRY!
KEITH MUNSLOW: WHITE MIND/BLACK HUMOR—
The work ethic as gigantic sub-freudian cartoon character.

Whatever else Keith Munslow believes in I would be hard pressed to say, but I can say this without hesitation. **Keith believes in work!** Though it may very well be news to him, they say in West Warwick, “so isn't everythin' which involves ratiocinated gnosis”

The range and nature of the work in which this artist's most implacable faith is placed is quite varied. Keith will stick his head (repeatedly) into a giant latex booger with a big nose for money! He is also known for using his noggin to navigate from a SMOKING JACKETS gig in Westerly to a NEO NINETIES show in Providence.

Perhaps not the most thoughtful of artists, in his latest show in the cafe gallery Keith has found a new use for his head—spawning a herd of architypal freudian projections. And thus I am empowered to say that I have discovered an aspect of the Munslow ouvre which can only be described as *mental*.

Contained in this oversized cartoon collection is a lexicon of the most classic caucasian neuroto-fixations. Dental decay, sexual ambivalence, animate reversal, freuds cigar, arsemenion big honker, stuffing yer bird, and a general assortment of motifs fusing the seven deadly sins with thin wit some surprisingly artful painting.

Wrapped in giant canvas burritos these cartoonz contain all the elements of what I will call “the white mind”—Previously incarnated as “the white mans burden”, “the protestant work ethic” and “the military industrial complex”. Munslows “white mind” is a beastiary illustrating the classic fixations of the post-modern suburban peckerwood, presented with a big dose of black humor.

Ever the ironic social critic, the artist carried the theme of these “black and white” paintings all the way to the snacks served at the opening. Cheeze-itz and Night Train Express.

SMOKING JACKETS "SPOTLIGHT" SESSIONS: More horsepower than ever but dragging a busted muffler

The AS220 SPOTLIGHT SERIES finally resumed for 1997 with a bunch of sunday evening recording sessions with the BEATNIK LEAGUES homegrown barrelhouse band, THE SMOKING JACKETS. Like all the AS220 in-house bands, I follow the evolution of their line-up of musicians with a peripheral interest which becomes focused only when an individual performance becomes either better or worse to a degree sufficiently exaggerated to become apparent to a “motley bum of musical understanding”, such as myself.

I remember a very early gig at cafe zog where accordion was the featured instrument, but then I lost interest until the AS220 MINISTRY OF HORMNS lent some of their mighty brass to the endeavor. At their latest show my ears perked up when I noticed that the band has lately acquired a wailing sax maniac who made the hair on the back of my neck stand up.

Lyrically they have also made some quantum leaps, my previous favorite called “I am a Hack” has been replaced by an ode-to-a-tit-bar which contains the line “you go home and beat yer meat till you go blind!”.

Only problem I can see is that snare drum artiste Paige Van Antwerp is so obviously bored with this venture that she should perform under a cartoon dialogue balloon which reads “whatever”. This otherwise fabulous and multi-talented fashion plate drags behind the rest of this very hot band like a dangling muffler on a muscle car.