

A Constantly

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The following group of shows, if taken in one dose, could leave one with an unclear idea of what art is. Like Alice in Wonderland being faced with a constantly changing reality, one may come away enlightened, but also somewhat confused.

Closest to reality as we know it are the paintings of Shirley Gorelick, on view at Soho 20 Gallery, 99 Spring Street until April 28. These are portraits of two psychoanalysts shown in a range of interpretations of both their personalities and their relationship.

Among her subjects in the past was Freida Kahlo, the Mexican painter, crippled and frail all her life, who managed still to make beautiful and disturbing art about her own nightmarish experiences... This show of portraits is removed from that prior fascination with the physically crippled, and one may more readily perceive the art, detached from the sadness the other work evoked.

The handsome paintings put the viewer in conversation with the subject because Gorelick brings one up close, painting her subjects larger than life, closer than one would ordinarily come. The manner in which she has chosen to crop the images adds to this sense of familiarity.

In the past one might have felt an awkwardness in her brush strokes, but these works have a richness of surface and of the painter's touch which is a happy distance between the smoothness of photorealism and the irrationality of expressionism. Now, the trembling in her stroke brings the work to life. In the painting, "Dr. Tess Forrest", we see a woman with traces of pain in her face, something often present in Gorelick's work. Ironically perhaps, the bookshelves behind hold such titles as "The Dictionary of Eroticism" next to Jung.

*"...bucolic
portrayal..."*

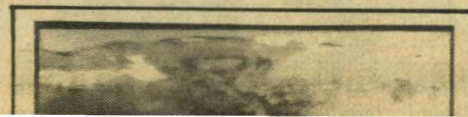
At the Ashby Gallery at 18 Cornelia Street



Shirley Gorelick "Dr. Joseph Barnett", at Soho 20



Caro Heller "Altar to Baron Samadi, Spirit of Hu Cemetery" at Atlantic



painting that one could live with from childhood to old age. "Wellesley Autum" is another large work (approximately 36 x 40 inches) richly full of what we fantasize life should hold. These paintings come out of a time different from our sophisticated art world. However, they have a kind of inner honesty and quality of organization that makes the best of them Art and the few awkwardly painted ones unimportant.

*"...incredible counterfeits
of archeological finds."*

The assemblage sculpture of Caro Heller on view at Atlantic Gallery at 458 West Broadway until April 18 is quite another reality. The sculpture is presented like ancient artifacts from another culture and is, in fact, based on Voodoo Rituals and altars. The work verges on surrealism in some pieces and social and cultural commentary in others, though at moments, the titles seem like cheap jokes. A doll in a radio is called "Can a Poor Girl from a Little Mining Town Ever Get Out?".

Commentary of another sort is inherent in a work entitled "Extant". This assemblage, creating the skull of a unicorn, and others constructed as masks of feathers, shells and beads, are incredible counterfeits of archaeological finds. One, "African Boar's Head Mask", is a treasure with faint skeletons of leaves laminated to its surface. The all black "Altar to Grude, Spirit of Death" and the all white "Altar to Eruli, Spirit of Love" have a debt to Nevelson in them, but go beyond into the world of spells and passion. The objects used in her black altar make more sense to me than the corncocks in bottles and the bowl of popcorn of the white, "Altar to Love", but perhaps I should look more carefully and trust that the spells they prescribe might work. Heller is an artist of ideas which seem sometimes silly, sometimes serious but, regardless, her