



ART GUIDE

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HELEN FRANKENTHALER, "Lighthouse Series," Knoedler, 19 East 70th Street, (212) 794-0550 (through Jan. 12). Ms. Frankenthaler seems to be channeling the spirit of Turner in her washy, medium-size acrylic-on-paper works. In colors from incandescent red to foggy gray, the legendary Color Field painter created pictures that hover between luminous seascape and pure abstraction. Some works give way to free painterly gesturalism; most hew to a horizontal order. All are more decorous than adventurous (Ken Johnson).

TOM GOLDENBERG, Salander-O'Reilly, 20 East 79th Street, (212) 879-6606 (through Dec. 28). An appealing if not ground-breaking landscapist, Mr. Goldenberg paints rural scenes in a patchwork, architecturally ordered, busily textured style, using cheerfully bright greens and yellows with a not-too-fussy brush (Johnson).

* "INHERITING CUBISM," Hollis Taggart, 48 East 73rd Street, (212) 628-4000 (through Jan. 12). Cubism inspired interesting efforts by American painters, as this fine selection of about 40 American paintings from 1909 to 1936 demonstrates. The show is studded by gems, including a tiny, hyperactive watercolor of New York Harbor by John Marin, a townscape glowing red and green like a stained glass window by Oscar Bleumner, a riff on sailboats by Charles Demuth that is like shattered glass and a small, angular, vigorously painted and richly colored still life by Arshile Gorky (Johnson).

* ROY LICHTENSTEIN, "Early Black-and-White Paintings," Gagosian Gallery, 980 Madison Avenue, at 76th Street, (212) 744-2313 (through Dec. 22), and "Brush Strokes, Four Decades," Mitchell-Innes & Nash, 1018 Madison Avenue, near 78th Street, (212) 744-7400 (through Jan. 12). Lichtenstein's touch in his early Pop days has come to look not anonymous and machine-manufactured but particular, quirky, even strangely vulnerable, which is to say human with its imperfect, slightly vulgar handmade imitations of mechanically reproduced objects, advertisements and other cheap commercial images. At Gagosian, Lichtenstein's early black-and-white paintings of automobile tires, ice cream sodas, socks and peanut butter cups exude the Proustian aura of brush, youthful gambles fondly recalled. At Mitchell-Innes & Nash, his "brush stroke" paintings, most from the 1980's and 90's, are freeze-dried versions of the Abstract Expressionist cliché, the hot-blooded brush stroke. They have a snap, crackle and pop that goes far beyond the one-line joke. The results include big, swimmy, complicated abstractions blending the familiar cartoon forms with wet, squishy marks, the multilayered pictures coming as close as

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Lichtenstein ever did to letting it all hang out (Kimmelman).

HIRO YOKOSE, Winston Wächter Mayer, 39 East 78th Street, (212) 327-2526 (through Jan. 12). Mr. Yokose's misty, luminous seascapes spoof a certain style of hyper-romantic quasi-19th-century romance, yet his dreamy visions of pellucid waves rolling gently onto peaceful beaches under big, Turneresque skies -- sensuously painted in waxy glazes -- are not without a genuine yearning for some Edenic never-never-land (Johnson).

Galleries: 57th Street

JAKE BERTHOT, McKee, 745 Fifth Avenue, (212) 688-5951 (through Dec. 22). The former abstractionist is now making small, murky pictures of trees and moonlit glades under the contradictory influences of Cézanne and Albert Pinkham Ryder. One looks for either more rigorously clear form or more visionary mystery (Johnson).

* KEN PRICE, Franklin Parrasch, 20 West 57th Street, (212) 246-5360 (through Dec. 22). For sensual pleasure, formal gratification and comic uplift, it's hard to beat this West Coast ceramicist. Most of the pieces on view have low, blobby bases that morph like taffy into forms like ocean waves and cartoon hands. It's like primordial matter surging to life in an impulse of orgasmic exuberance. By sanding through multiple layers of acrylic paint, Mr. Price gives these zany forms a gorgeous polychromatic complexity (Johnson).

"WESTWORLD," Mary Boone, 745 Fifth Avenue, (212) 752-2929 (through Dec. 21). Even the critically reviled Damian Loeb looks good in this cool and punchy emerging-artist show, selected by Max Henry. Along with Mr. Loeb's panoramic hotel room with nude, it includes Hillary Harkness's Magic Realist lesbian war painting, Kiki Seror's vertiginously digitalized pornographic texts, Doug Wada's trompe l'oeil windows, Katharina Bosse's crystalline photograph of an operating room, Dexter Dalwood's 1960's-style view of Patty Hearst's apartment, Jay Davis's glossy sci-fi abstraction and a stack of terrariums by Michael Phelan (Johnson).

Galleries: Chelsea

* KAI ALTHOFF, "Impulse," Anton Kern, 532 West 20th Street, (212) 367-9663 (through Dec. 22). Mr. Althoff is a peculiarly gifted artist with a wide imagination. There is an intentionally anonymous, once removed quality to much of the work here. Various pictures look as if they might have come from thrift shops. (One of them did.) The style shifts from Biedermeier delicacy to Die Brücke with occasional nods toward early Hockney and Richard Hamilton. What the work means is mysterious. But the touch is deft, the use of materials clever and the tone darkly humorous (Kimmelman).

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