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ART GUIDE

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Correction Appended

(Page 2 of 5)

* "DAGOBERT PECHE AND THE WEINER WERKSTÄTTE," Neue Galerie, 1048 Fifth Avenue, at 86th Street, (212) 628-6200 (through Feb. 10). This survey of the Austrian designer Dagobert Peche (pronounced DAH-go-bert PEH-kuh) is a case study in the use of material objects to effect cultural reform. And the installation is as lively as any design show New York has seen. Peche, who died in 1923 at 36, represented the second generation of the Wiener Werkstätte, whose designers regarded decorative objects as ideological vessels. But his highly ornate work is in full contrast to the spartan aesthetic associated with the movement. With more than 400 drawings and objects on view, the show is a tumble of stylized flora and offers an equal range of materials: fabric, wallpaper, metals, ceramics, wood and glass. How did Peche get away with it? Though Baroque in sensibility, his work was not historicist. It was a light, individual interpretation of a massive court style. Like Philippe Starck and Ettore Sottsass today, Peche designed rooms of inner nature, enclosures for emotion. Hours: Fridays, 11 a.m. to 9 p.m.; Saturdays, Sundays and Mondays, 11 a.m. to 6 p.m. Admission: \$10; \$7, students and 65+ (Herbert Muschamp).

* "THE QUILTS OF GEE'S BEND," Whitney Museum of American Art, 945 Madison Avenue, at 75th Street, (212) 570-3676 (through March 9). The most ebullient exhibition of the New York art season comes in the unlikely guise of a show of hand-stitched quilts from a remote, historically black community along the Alabama River. For generations the women of Gee's Bend have passed down an indigenous style of quilting geometric patterns out of old britches, cornmeal sacks, Sears corduroy swatches and hand-me-down leisure suits -- whatever happened to be around. Imagine Matisse and Klee arising not from rarefied Europe but from the soil of the rural South. The best designs, minimalist and spare, turn out to be some of the most miraculous works of modern art that America has produced. Hours: Tuesdays through Thursdays, Saturdays and Sundays, 11 a.m. to 6 p.m.; Fridays, 1 to 9 p.m. Admission: \$12; \$9.50, students and 62+ (Kimmelman).

Galleries: Uptown

LARRY BEMM, Kimberly Vernardos, 1014 Madison Avenue, at 78th Street, (212) 879-5858 (through Feb. 8). An infectious buoyancy animates paintings by this Seattle artist. Painting without much fuss, and depending mainly on a vocabulary of colored circles and stripes, he creates playfully patterned compositions notable for their slightly muted and

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slightly dissonant colors and their punchy frontal impact (Ken Johnson).

"NICOLE CHARBONNET, "Places You Take Me," Winston Wachter Mayer, 39 East 78th Street, (212) 327-2526 (through March 1). Ms. Charbonnet makes layered, faded paintings that physically reflect the deterioration of old stucco walls in New Orleans (where she lives) and metaphorically suggest elusive memories. Blocky letters spelling mostly illegible texts merge with images of animals -- a tiger, a rhinoceros -- vignettted landscapes and flickering collage elements, together producing a mildly nostalgic atmosphere (Johnson).

PIERO DORAZIO, "Watercolors and Drawings, 1957-62," Achim Moeller, 167 East 73rd Street, (212) 988-4500 (through Jan. 31). This quietly seductive show focuses on works made by an Italian Modernist during a fertile transitional period. Early pictures set up contrapuntal relations between wide brush strokes and darting, calligraphic marks; they are lively and elegant. Then he began producing fields of densely layered lines in black and in multiple colors, culminating in "Pink" (1962), a rectangle of interwoven pale red bands, which is luminous, sensuous and orderly (Johnson).

"ITALIAN SCULPTURE: FROM THE GOTHIC TO THE BAROQUE," Salander-O'Reilly, 20 East 79th Street, (212) 879-6606 (through Feb. 1). An intriguing assemblage of 30-odd works, from the 14th to the 17th centuries, with some by such major talents as Luca della Robbia, Desiderio da Settignano, Benedetto da Maiano, Agostino di Duccio and Baccio Bandinelli. But the show's unquestionable star is a splendid small terra cotta model of a figure for the Fountain of the Moor in the Piazza Navona in Rome, attributed to the great 17th-century sculptor Bernini. The wonderfully worked Baroque figure depicts a river god with supposedly Moorish features struggling with a fighting fish. None of the other works rival the dynamic bravura of the Bernini, but there's still a lot more to delight in (Glueck).

* "LE CORBUSIER BEFORE LE CORBUSIER: APPLIED ARTS, ARCHITECTURE, PAINTING AND PHOTOGRAPHY, 1907-22," Bard Graduate Center for Studies in the Decorative Arts, Design and Culture, 18 West 86th Street, (212) 501-3000 (through Feb. 23). With everything from farm furniture and peasant ceramics to frighteningly austere city plans, which thankfully were never built, this dense, brainy show sheds new light on the precocious polymath who became, as the introductory text panel states, "arguably the most influential, admired and maligned architect of the 20th century." It is accompanied by an excellent 57-page exhibition guide, which should become a model for other exhibitors (Smith).

[< PREVIOUS PAGE](#) | [1](#) | [2](#) | [3](#) | [4](#) | [5](#) | [NEXT PAGE >](#)

Correction: January 29, 2003, Wednesday *The Art Guide* column in *Weekend on Friday* misstated the address of P.P.O.W., the Manhattan gallery where work by Walter Martin and Paloma Muñoz is on view through Feb. 8. It is 555 West 25th Street, not 525.

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