

Art in America

APRIL 2000

**EVE SUSSMAN
STAN DOUGLAS
DOUG AITKEN**

ABORIGINAL ART

TROPICALIA

**SINGAPORE
BIENNALE**

**WILLIAM
KENTRIDGE**



**\$5.00 USA
\$7.00 CAN £3.50 UK**

Monet's work after violence and beauty e. But Humphries to express, in visceral way, the tug between the is and the deceit in making.

—Julian Kreimer

ks & Freiser

recent paintings by o lives and works e a Magrittean flau- tive objects and J, usually upright, cape—as in the alist's *Golconde* ront of a barely nochrome ground. icts may be a ll of toilet paper, mug, a bottle of an open book. The d or naked, are rance, while the gs look as if they the West, hinting at estern commodities culture and allud- economic boom. ng Hao's paint- iat Westernization e, and that material ecessarily bring he works with grounds, the small rposelessly at dif- fore a metaphori- tiness, and where s included, they c and powerless. s his oil technique in

a prosaic, matter-of-fact manner that helps to convey a feeling of alienation. His people and things look as though they have been lifted from a children's picture book inviting the reader to name them and to imagine their relationships. But here we get no sense that the depictions are linked in any significant way—as in my belongings reflect my desires—and thus they give us no comfort.

Time is money, as Zeng Hao's titles, consisting of a date and hour of day, imply. The large (79-by-94½-inch) *16:00, 28 February 2006* shows objects arranged almost equidistant from one another in different zones in front of a gray-blue field. Inexplicably, given the complete absence of a convincing space, some objects are rendered far more blurrily than others, as are the television and chair depicted at the very bottom of the composition. Others cast little wedges of shade, thereby throwing some additional confusion into the mix. When compared with the objects, a figure seated in profile, left of center, is diminutive in scale, appearing toylike, frozen and consequently disposable. In a culture of excess, we suppose, goods and people are interchangeable, and one buyer is as good as another.

—Michaël Amy

Fran Siegel at Margaret Thatcher

Fran Siegel's fourth solo show at Thatcher, titled "Observations of Light and Matter," included a 50-foot fine-line graphite wall drawing

suggesting eroded surfaces and cracked earth, as well as a group of sculptures composed of brightly colored or reflective materials such as mirrors, foil disks and colored, transparent plastic film. Mobiles swinging from the ceiling and wall pieces with many elements included, Sarah Sze-like, humble plastic products. Siegel took over the room with intelligence and aplomb, creating a marvelously intricate environment.

The show in some ways functioned like a three-dimensional drawing mapping out an artificially constructed space. But it also included transformations that seemed keyed to atmospheric effects.

Originally based in New York, Siegel has moved to southern California, close to the water, and it is clear that she is referencing some of the nature she is experiencing there. Near the entrance, for example, the mobile *Land* (2006), consisting of white plastic airplanes, looked very much like a cloud formation as it slowly rotated in the air and threw wavelike shadows onto the floor.

The show's main attraction was *Expanded Contour* (2006). Part of it consisted of drawings on two of the space's four walls, with the lines gathering in density toward the corner. The atmospheric drawings were a bit difficult to make out behind silvery, reflective wires decorated with foil circles that connected one wall to another near the gallery's entrance, and that were layered from the walls nearly to the center of the room. Although the wires, which were strung both high and low, created an ephemeral atmosphere, they also acted as a delicate barrier preventing viewers from coming close to the drawings or seeing them in detail.

Part of the goal of the show seems to have been to engage the audience as much as possible in complicated acts of perception. *The Eye of the Contour* (2006), for example, is an assemblage of many components; here it was placed in the corner



View of Fran Siegel's *Expanded Contour*, 2006, mixed mediums, 132 by 108 by 120 inches; at Margaret Thatcher.

opposite the wall drawings. From a small white shelf supported by a single strut and attached to the wall sprouted and streamed black-and-white, ribbonlike paper cutouts. The piece also included a green, lenslike, translucent plastic disk rimmed with a red band. It was placed at eye level, attached to the wall but projecting in front of the wooden shelf, as if it were meant to be looked through. Siegel reminds us that art needs time, a requirement in this case embodied in the visual challenge of these works, the result of both wide-ranging imagination and exquisite craft.

—Jonathan Goodman

Frank Bowling at G.R. N'Namdi

Frank Bowling's recent exhibition presented over 30 years of works by this Guyana-born abstract painter, who frequently advocated for abstraction by black artists in writings of the 1960s through the '80s. Elected in 2005 as the first black member of England's Royal Academy, Bowling studied at the Royal College in the early '60s and has been exhibiting for over 40 years in both the U.K. and the U.S., including a solo at the Whitney Museum in 1971.

The Chelsea show included work from two periods: atmospheric paintings made around

28 February 2006, oil on canvas, 79 by 94½ inches; Freiser.



1980 and more geometric ones from around 2000. The earlier examples, reminiscent of Frankenthaler and Poons, tend toward organic compositions growing out of an accretion of paint. Their muted palettes, in variations of rich grays and browns, are arrived at through a dense layering of bright, contrasting colors—yellows, pinks, sour-apple greens—that cancel each other out. Where the undertones are left uncovered they appear as bright-hued bursts. Ten of these pictures have tall formats, about the scale of a closet door, and the compositions loosely follow the drips and stains of a slightly askew vertical stripe running down the middle of each. *Boulder (Rocks in the Bed)*, 1979, with its ghostly geometric shapes emerging from grimy, pearlescent colors, has a surface that ranges from thin washes to bubbly encrustations, with pours of paint cracked along it like a parched riverbed. The painting looks like a cloudy aerial view of a landscape, with natural formations left behind by melting snows and receding lakes.

Unlike the more suggestive spaces of the earlier works, those created later strike a balance between collaged and brightly painted geometric shapes dotted with thick globs of gel medium. The emphasis is on structure, in both form and material, with pieces of canvas glued onto the surface and gel medium troweled on in ridged semicircles.

One of the most striking pictures was both the earliest and most recent in the show, *Just Above the Equator* (1975-2005), a rectilinear canvas banded at the top by a

stripe, a wash of orange on the left and green on the right, and murky colors at the bottom. Dominating the center is a large swath of glued-on canvas featuring a viscous, upside down, green-and-magenta pour about 18 inches wide and 6 feet tall that has the gooey look of melted ice cream. The work manages to be both garish and quietly evocative and, like the retrospective itself, expertly mixes bold playfulness with a sense of slow, cumulative processing of material and thought. The painting leaps to the eye, with plenty to keep one looking for a long time.

—Julian Kreimer

Robert Richenburg: *White Abstract*, 1957, oil on canvas, 28½ by 25½ inches; at Baruch College.



Frank Bowling: *Boulder (Rocks in the Bed)*, 1979, acrylic on canvas, 78 by 68½ inches; at G.R. N'Namdi.

Robert Richenburg at the Sidney Mishkin Gallery, Baruch College

This retrospective of the late Abstract Expressionist Robert Richenburg (1917-2006) covered some 50 years of the artist's production, from paintings that reflect his flirtation with European modernism in the late 1940s, when he studied in New York with Amédée Ozenfant, to galvanized wire constructions

and tumbleweed-like spheres of the 1970s through '90s that seem borne on Fluxus and Minimalist currents. Coming under Hans Hofmann's tutelage in 1948, Richenburg belonged to the circle of New York School painters, exhibiting, for example, in Leo Castelli's seminal "Ninth Street Show" in 1951.

Works of this period, such as the Hofmannesque *Ecce Homo II* (1950), in which bright, broad-brushed patches of color seem to jostle against one another in a composition organized around a central figurelike form, soon gave way to Richenburg's developed style: heavy, often fuliginous paintings with surfaces built up of several layers of pigment, sand and/or applied canvas strips. In these works paint is typically scraped away in places to reveal underlayers of racy zips and poured or dripped colors. Some canvases bear a superficial similarity to the abstract paintings of Ad Reinhardt and Mark Rothko, but the way one layer occludes another serves as a material analogue to scenes from the world that, through clouds or dark night, are only dimly perceived. Such is the effect in the nearly all-black, tenebrous *Slumber* (1950), in which a Goyaesque violence seems buried beneath the intensely expressive surface. *Lactescence*, of the same year, is creamy yellow and white but hardly any airier,

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Zeng Hao at Fredericks &

Some striking Zeng Hao, w in Beijing, ha vor, with dim people floatir against a city Belgian Surre (1953)—or in modulated m Among the o bookcase, a an armchair, Coca-Cola o people, cloth Asian in appe inanimate thi were made ir the influx of V into the globa ing to China's

However, Z ings suggest comes at a pi goods do not happiness. In monochrome objects drift p ferent levels l cal sea of em there are figu are oddly bla Zeng Hao use

Zeng Hao: *16:01* at Fredericks &

