

Teuber's Affable Surrealism

On occasion, it can be easy to see an artist's work and on a superficial level dismiss it out of hand as just another example of whatever revisionist neo-_____ (fill in the blank) movement is being curatorially propagated at the moment. The resurgent commercial popularity of Surrealism at the auction houses has, in this regard, provided the impetus and a forum for a new generation of artists interested in investigating the mysteries within: the dreams and fears that influence psychological states and perceptions.

This kind of ambitious undertaking, whether the images and emotions are universally identifiable or obtusely personal, can unfortunately fall far short of artistic expectations. The end result quite often leads to the most obvious and turgid exercises in angst if handled with a heavy hand (as is seemingly common with most drugstore paperback self-psychoanalysis).

Difficult Endeavor

In the case of the work of Veronika

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Anita Teuber, however, the artist is able to successfully (albeit not always to the same degree) accomplish this extremely difficult endeavor. She is successful, where many others are not, in presenting a visual insight into different perceptions of reality without subjecting the viewer to an overdose of personal anguish. As a result, there is a sense of affability to the works that allows them to be viewed and appreciated without having an obvious narrative or message constantly hammered into the viewer.

The current exhibit of recent work by the West German-born artist is on display at the East Hampton Center for Contemporary Art through June 25. Educated in Berlin, Ms. Teuber came to the US and studied with Robert Bordo at the New York Studio School. She now works and lives in Manhattan.

Stylistically, Ms. Teuber owes a great deal to her roots in the Germanic and northern European cultures. The term Expressionism would not

be inappropriate in the manner in which she organizes space and emphasizes the constant presence of the artist's hand in the picture surface itself. This technical aspect doesn't dominate the work as in the cases of other recent Expressionist painters, however. One is reminded, for example, of the influence of Anselm Kiefer in her paintings but without much of his emotional overkill.

An Enigmatic Sense

The works are, nevertheless, imbued with a palpable although occasionally enigmatic sense of emotion that manages to convey the internal battle between "order" and "disorder" without toppling into the unfortunate realm of the terminally obvious.

In another sense, Ms. Teuber differs from other neo-Expressionists in that the central objects are rarely allowed to dominate the entire picture. Although they may physically overwhelm the surface, there is a sense of the objects being kept only partially earthbound, as if they possessed a less weighty and ethereal quality that is not evident at first glance.

This is due to the extremely subtle



A "SHAMANISTIC IMAGE" appears in this untitled work by Veronika Anita Teuber.

use of light and shadows that manages to provide a Yin and Yang sense of balance and relieves the work of any overt ponderousness. The artist credits this development in her work as having come from the influence of

her time in Spain and from what she refers to as her "... surprising affinity for the Spanish way of perceiving reality. What a Northern European might call 'Surrealism' is very much like the everyday Spanish reality. I

felt more at home among this apparent 'disorder,' where startling contrasts and strange contradictions co-exist side by side."

Shamanistic Image

Of the works in the exhibit, the most successful is a Tapies-influenced diptych titled "No Beauty Without Danger." This stands out as the least immediately "figurative" work in the show and differs in its use of tonal priorities. Whereas most of the other works utilize a subtle backlighting that seems to be breaking through the darker surface colors, this painting presents an interesting reversal and contrast. In this manner, an implied geometric structure is considered that also somehow hints at a sense of literary iconography.

This is echoed in an untitled work that features a highly abstracted female form that, although immedi-

ately recognizable, is evocative of a pictograph rather than a literal representation. It becomes a shamanistic image that, as in "No Beauty," calls to mind the earliest primitive painters for whom Ms. Teuber claims a certain degree of affinity that goes well beyond merely superficial appropriation. As she has written, "The process I go through while painting is what it must have been like for the early cave painters; I visualize my darkest fears, in order to gain power over them."

In the final analysis, Ms. Teuber shows a marked consistency of vision and sureness of hand in striving toward her objective. There is a sense of balance and subtlety to her work that allows her to avoid the pitfalls of many of her peers in that she is able to explore and recreate her own reality without being dogmatic or condescending.