

## Perspectives

# One Artist, Six Paintings

By Robert Long

Veronika Anita Teuber, who was born in West Germany and studied both there and in Spain before coming to the States, where she studied at the New York Studio School, is having her first American one-person show at the East Hampton Center for Contemporary Art.

The six paintings on view have the look of German Neo-Expressionism but also show the dense texture and solemn tonalities associated with William Baziotes (pictures from the late '40s) and even with certain works by Bradley Walker Tomlin, paintings that incorporate the psychological content of Abstract Expressionism but mostly dispense with the urgency of the impulsive (or impulsive-looking) brushstroke. Ms. Teuber's big acrylics on canvas suggest that there is history of the personal kind as well as the art-historical variety behind them; they're loaded pictures. What makes them authentic the moment one sees them is, to a degree, their plain connection to past art of this style, but it is mainly their elemental authority, the feeling one has that one is being confronted with faces of nature, psychological forces, that causes them to ring true.

The elemental aspect of these large images lies not only in the artist's use of big, simple (but unusual) calligraphic shapes which play off biomorphic forms, but also her ability to create a range of complex textures and varieties of light across her surfaces. Often, the pictures have the look of stone (Theodoros Stamos's paintings spring to mind here), of weather and erosion. In an untitled 61 by 72-inch canvas, Ms. Teuber seems to have mixed some sand into the paint to enhance the scratchy texture of certain parts of the surface, and heavier areas of paint in other works also seem to have been built up with some medium.

Imagery here is, as I've said, both calligraphic and biomorphic. There is an overall quietness to the pictures despite the occasional dramatic title ("Scream," for example, which includes a jagged diagonal explosion of bright white paint and a long thin arc of bright white like a wishbone over an otherwise calm surface), and their quietness encourages the viewer to sit down and spend some time with them, which is fortunate: the more one looks, the more force the pictures gather, and the better they look.

"I Am the Spirit Who Always Denies" is a dark, 72 by 55-inch work which is structured around a shape something like an enormous inverted clothespin—an old wooden clothespin, not the kind with a metal spring. The clothespin shape, which is also vaguely fi-

gurative, simply anchors the overall flow of the picture, a play of textures, of darkness intermittently relieved by scratchy patches of light blue.

"Cosmic Flower" (72 by 51) is an unfortunately titled, marble-textured, rosy-pink and blue painting which is interrupted by a dark shape that wanders diagonally across the canvas less like a flower than like a body of water on a map (the light area of paint being the land mass). The dark image also looks like a one-piece woman's bathing suit with a handle, or else smoke pouring from a lantern. The title of the picture is sufficiently distracting to encourage one to identify its imagery, but if you can forget the title the picture is wonderful.

An untitled 61 by 72-inch work includes a horizontal human figure at the bottom of the canvas—a tentatively defined, mysterious figure which floats over a dark area, like someone doing the backstroke. Above, a reddish-brown arch, like the snaky superstructure of a tunnel, appears over a dark brown, roughly textured area, an interior space of some kind.

Another untitled work is the least successful of the pictures because it contains the too-clear image of a woman—her face is blacked out—who seems to be leaning back toward a pot or vessel of some sort. Here, the artist seems to be straining for some kind of "meaning," and the mystery we sense in the better paintings is absent. Texture in this piece is, again, what pleases—thinly brushed white and pink and yellow acrylic creates a burnished look under which we see darker paint.

"No Beauty Without Danger," a 46 by 82-inch diptych, is pure texture and brushwork, with occasional short slashes of palette knife or stick creating a staccato counter-rhythm at the bottom and the top of the picture. Small strokes of bright red, like punctuation marks, pop out of the muted (but highly worked and tonally subtle) surface of browns, white, yellow. Ms. Teuber is a painter to watch, and this is a fine show.

### Installation

Each season the East Hampton Center commissions an installation for the stretch of grassy yard just beyond its sliding glass doors, and this year's model is an untitled work by Grace Knowlton which consists of a number of rough, painted spheres of various sizes placed around the lawn. The spheres have a hands-on look; they're bumpy, and sometimes roughly drawn on, which gives them an engagingly personal appearance.

In a statement accompanying the installation, the artist writes: "This installation is about space and how it's defined by the sculpture within it. The empty spaces are of as much concern to me as the solid ones. By