



Denver + Marfa rulegallery.com  
info@rulegallery.com 303-800-6776

# Rocky Mountain News®

## EXHIBITIONS ADDRESSING ART AS HEART AND AS POLITICAL PASSION

By Mary Voelz Chandler, January 27, 1995

Suzy Gablik, in *Has Modernism Failed?*, writes thoughtfully on the need of today's art to address the problems plaguing the world.

I have mixed feelings about that proposition: Politically driven art certainly can be powerful, even to the point of leading people to re-examine their opinions or motivations. There is, though, still a need for plain old beauty in art, whether or not it has an edge or whiff of danger to it.

That becomes apparent in two shows that opened recently in galleries a block apart on Wazee Street.

Both levels of CSK Gallery and Open Press are devoted, through March 5, to serigraphs (silkscreens) by area artists, from familiar pieces by Tony Ortega to a haunting series of five works by Gary Sweeney, "My Mother's Life in Six Parts," in which Sweeney links maternal benchmarks to earthquakes in Los Angeles (that there is no "Part VI" tempers Sweeney's usual humor with sadness).

It is on the lower floor, though, that message and the political machine take over, as Greg Esser rings the walls with 18 startling images shivering with anger. Known for work that touches on repression in Northern Ireland, Esser, in this *Tres Crayons* series, uses black, red and white to explore violence and rage.

One piece plays tricks on the eyes with side-by-side rectangles in red and black, although a black gun against the red background tends to put things back in register; another piece, looking like a defiant declaration of freedom, fills Hebrew letters with wild lines.

Some of Esser's earlier work had a convulsive, scattered feel to it, as if the emotion ran too high to find a center; in *Tres Crayons*, he has given fury a focus, in spare lines, minimum color and precise technique.

("Serigraphy: Hand Pulled Original Prints" is on view through March 5 at CSK Gallery and Open Press, 1637 Wazee St.; 436-9236.)

\* Joellyn Duesberry is a practitioner of the plein-air school, hauling the canvas, linen or panel outside to paint landscapes with an eye toward the reality of light and motion.

As you walk up to and away from each canvas, it becomes apparent that her works are impressionistic, yet so attentive to detail. How they change, and how you can get lost in them, these oil-on-linen views of the West and scenes

from Maine and Massachusetts; an image drawn from her own *Partly Shaded Garden* is the most striking painting in the exhibition.

Yet in a show of this size - in both number and dimensions of paintings - things begin to feel repetitive. That is, until a viewer heads to the space devoted to Duesberry's monotypes. These pieces crackle with color and the tension of abstraction. In *River and Cottonwoods IV*, Duesberry makes a creek so blue it seems to freeze everything around it; in *Buffalo Pass, CO III*, a fiery yellow curves up and around the mountain.

Duesberry's use of color and composition - especially in her prints - speak to order and the lack of it in the outdoor world.

("Joellyn Duesberry - New Terrain: Paintings and Prints" is on view through Feb. 25 at Robischon Gallery, 1740 Wazee St.; 298-7788.)

\* Short takes: The Art of Craft, 1736 Wazee St., heads into the two- dimensional world of painting through Feb. 8 with works by Gary Paul; most notable: a cubist take on periods of style and color, in the predominantly blue and rose Pablo's Studio (292-5564). . . . Lisa Spivak left the directorship of the Art Students League to concentrate on her own art. Some of the fruits of that labor can be seen through Feb. 10 in the Philip J. Steele Gallery of the Rocky Mountain College of Art and Design, 6875 E. Evans Ave. Spivak's paintings here work around themes of birds flushed into freedom, spirit vessels swooping across a masonite ground and mouths frozen in a scream (or conversation); best bets: wooden "house" constructions evocative of the best of folk art (753-6046).

\* And at the co-ops: Core's annual "W.O.W. (Wide Open Whatever) Show" is certainly wide-ranging; through Sunday, the gallery at 1412 Wazee St. is jammed with paintings, sculpture, even a mosaic made out of grain. Juried by Core members, "W.O.W." is open to area artists, who have turned out the serious, such as Harry Tulchin's graphite and charcoal on paper study of angles, Working Spaces, to the witty, Rolf Helland's Cuban Swimming Team of black-suited men standing in a diagonal line in the lanes of an impressionistic pool (571-4831). . . .

Through Feb. 5, Pirate, 3659 Navajo St., turns itself over to a one-man show of works by Bill Stockman; pieces from a series called (or not called) Untitled (in memorium) show ghostly humans with halos of stars and a home under a star shower, with the addition of the occasional cartoon character for effect. What is Krazy Kat doing in there? Or the floating underwear? Stockman's paintings are like the dreams you cannot quite puzzle out (458-6058). . . .

Spark Gallery's members invited other artists to show during "Spark Selects," and the result is another wide-open-whatever type of experience. Of note: John **Fudge**'s impeccable ability to paint reflected images, in Good Luck and Game Over, and Dean Habegger's tiny oil and gesso works chronicling family lore. Spark is at 1535 Platte St. (455-4435).



John, Fudge, *Good Luck, Game Over* (diptych), 1993, acrylic on canvas, 17 x 42 in