

curvily pitted against each other—past pink, red, violets and blue-greens against yellows and blacks. Murray's ubiquitous lines have been freed and thickened, where before they pined down shapes, they now come up and back in space—cut through, outline of scallop, solid shapes, or edge the canvases with angled stunts. Murray balances the new, relatively wild generation of her forms and spaces with her thick surfaces, as slow and obdurate as steel. These surfaces make you see each element as deliberately placed and methodically built up: a tangible thing-in-itself, reading them up close can be as satisfying as following the usual ins and outs from far off.

These paintings bring to a new level Murray's innate ability to make abstraction emotionally compelling: the increase in her formal power and complexity is also an increase in meaning. The study is less that from adolescence to adulthood—the surely annihilation of the previous work has evolved into a peculiarly ardent visual narrative: a business of space and form, and of feeling. Murray's titles—*With Talking, Top, Two But One, Parting and Together*—refer to all kinds of interactions, not just those between shapes. —Robert Smith

## Robert Beauchamp at Monique Knowlton

The necessarily motile brain of the Action Painter is always on the verge of orienting figurative imagery. For nearly three decades, women have been toying up out of the Knowlton's beds of wet-on-wet paint. In the late '60s, droopy cliffs began to appear in Philip Pearlstein's abstractions. Figurative possibilities exerted so much pressure on Alfred Leslie's de Kooningisms that he finally abandoned them for his current matter style. Also late, our Action Painting to figurative pass from the mid-'50s on. However, as they began to attract widespread notice in the following decade, when he began to smooth out the surface of his paintings, Robert Beauchamp has never resisted Action Painting's colonialist for swirling, whirled-up liquidism. *Witches, Harpers, Baboons* and others have established his carefully paintings for 25 years. This will expand to take one of his style's most powerful facts that given his work strength, but it has also made him new '70s audience suspicious. Were so many of the other Action Painters were trying to suppress or condition their figurative tendencies, Beauchamp has cultivated his in their original state. Doesn't that put him on the edge of things? Doesn't that make him an exceedingly private and well-earned artist, one who pushes forward self-reliance to extremity?

Yes, and if the '70s are good for anything, they serve as an excellent backdrop for individuality of Beauchamp's kind. Over the years and now decades, he has become a witness at taking the smears, swirls,



Richard Long: *River Area-Dharaod Circle* (foreground), *Bluestone Circle* (left background) and *Red Stone Circle* (right background), all 1978, at Sprone Westwater Fazzari. Review p. 152



Anthony Caro: *Emma Landing* (left) and *Emma Dance* (right), 1978, at Emmerich.

and layerings of Holmanesque painterliness into furthest spaces where the elegantly horrible, hardly elegant creatures of his imagination drift and interpose. These percolates flaunt notes of the taboo: The males are bestial, the females angelic in a vampirish way. Everything between those two extremes is present, except for qualities of ordinary humanness. And now, in recent paintings of himself and his two brothers, those qualities have appeared.

Having been excluded for so long, earthly, the worldly feelings and attitudes don't simply arrive in his art. They invade it with an agonized verigence. Portraits of his brother Gene show him either seated in a wheelchair that was paralyzed by polio in his mid-20s) or stretched out on the floor, raising himself up on his hands. His brother Frank, killed by alcoholism long ago, appears seated and hunched into himself. Now after two of self-portraits, the face gone and full-front, show the artist in various stages of torment. Beauchamp's self-awareness seems always to be slipping over into dementia. Every hue and of spatting, gouging, sipping on and sipped-inward paint reads as an expression of being, as an extraordinarily subtle component of a painting's distinctive, scorching object of agony. I've been calling Beauchamp an Action Painter, but of course that makes him an Abstract

Expressionist, as well. His figurative manner establishes perhaps the clearest link between post-war American painting and the major Expressionist styles of pre-war Europe. This latest show puts Beauchamp in the elevated, tortured company of Munch and the strongest members of Die Brücke.

The Expressionist dilemma is to render the aggressive powers of visibility passive before the energies of feeling. By working with imaginary, sub- and supra-human images for so long, Beauchamp pushed his manual and imaginative skills to previously unseen extremes. When he turned to himself and his two brothers, he was able to bring history immediacies with the famous other-worldiness of his earlier work. As in all major Expressionism, the ordinary is offered as the source of everything extraordinary: from the most demanded nightmares to imaginations of the sublime. And, turning from the gallery of family portraits to the "family" of word creatures he lived with for most of his life as a painter, one sees below now the humanity beneath that wordiness. —Carter Ratcliff

## Anthony Caro at Emmerich

Caro's work, which appeared effortless in the '60s, has begun to look

facile in the '70s. Though he still improves, he more often ends in the same places. There is much new to describe in the successive series, but little real to say about them. His early, truculent sculptures embodied a greater lexicon of gambits, concerns and references than the criticism acknowledged at the time. He reverts to those pieces—as he did this year—to start fresh from jams or dead ends, and to work new, more explicit permutations on them. His touch is generally sure; vital passages are common. He remains important to sculptors of his persuasion.

Though peripatetic, Caro is English. William Rubin, Lawrence Alloway and Joseph Masheck have independently ascribed various national qualities to him: casualness, digressiveness, moderation, lightness of touch, an affinity for the picturesque, a sense of construction derived from architecture, the use of only partially altered forms. Caro's work has been strongest when he stayed closest to these terms. For instance, he lacks our American greed for space and scale. The larger he gets, the less sure he looks—witness his jumble in the East Wing of the National Gallery. He does have an unerring sense of scale in private, closely bounded spaces, be they galleries or walled gardens. I am amazed that Caro doesn't weld and is willing to work exclusively with scrap material; but the former may make sense in light of England's unfathomable class divisions, and the latter as an inlander's resourcefulness or steadfastness.

The recently shown "Emma Lake" works come out of Picasso's *Monument* and Giacometti's *Palace at 4 A.M.*, as well as from David Smith, and Caro's own *Month of May*. They suggest the work of Tim Scott, and, completely transposed, that of Al Held. The sculptures are varied, are not saccharine, are roughly, even sloppily made, with the joints, which were inserted to permit disassembly, being frightful. This denial of craft suggests that the pieces should be regarded from a distance. The haste and crudeness of construction links them with drawing—fast, heuristic, immediate—though Caro's lines are impersonal, like those in drafting.

In these pieces he plays with the partitioning of space, with different classes of closure. The larger works, which are visually open but physically boxed off like cages or corrals, are our height and around 9 feet on a side. The sculptures are so bounded and continuous that Caro has reversed his usual procedure and painted or left painted certain lines and shapes to emphasize his counterpoint, and so fashion a several-part order. The few opaque, geometric shapes in each piece act as referents. Caro's sureness in rising from the ground has been a constant. Strangely, the Emma works are best when they come up matter-of-factly like houses, and weakest, as in *Emma Landing*, when he uses his for-

mer ploys to liven their ascent.

*Emma Dance* is split level: underneath, a rectangle and a semi-circle expand sideways to form two opposing vertical planes. These are braced apart with one straight, two angled, and one looping line. Above, nine lines airily jazz around, doing variations and inversions of the understructure. Caro skillfully works the ambiguity of these upper skew lines. We are unsure whether we see a short line traveling across or a long line going deep in space. Our wish to see the lines as coplanar adds to the confusion. He uses the very known way the rectangle and the semi-circle (painted red to set it off) act with our perambulation to stabilize the piece. These shapes give us our bearings, and allow us to examine our recognition and retention of irregular geometric shapes as the work successively seizes a particular volume, compresses it down to a plane, then releases it back into open space. The way Caro puts what we know, and the way we've come to know it, against what our eyes see may again become important.

—Wade Saunders

## Richard Long at Sperone Westwater Fischer

Richard Long has a light, pure touch and his work a romantic, refined solitariness which makes him something like the Agnes Martin of sculpture. Just as Marin's penciled lines and thin washes barely, but irrevocably turn a piece of canvas into a painting, Long delicately empowers the concept of "art," of artistic decision and order, on natural found materials which he uses "as is," and, in the larger sense, on the landscape, or nature, itself. Long's pieces often consist simply of a walk through the countryside from one place or point to another, documented with a historically captioned map or photo of the country passed through (usually somewhere in England or Scotland, Long is British); the more tangible work consists of circles, lines and spaces of sticks or stones arranged either where he finds them (in which case the photo-document becomes the final work of art here, too), or in galleries and museums.

Long showed both kinds of work in the recent exhibition here: four circles, 10, 12, 13 and 16 feet in diameter, made respectively of pieces of painted wood, red slate from Vermont, driftwood from the River Avon and bluestone, plus five photo works documenting various walks and pieces done elsewhere (*A Line in Austria*, *A Crow in Africa*). Each part separate and distinct, the whole well-contained, the flat circles occupy space much like hand-made, primitive Carl Andre's—but somewhat less accommodating (you can't walk on them), somewhat more evocative of pieces and processes outside the gallery. The obvious care with which

their components are selected and placed (each circle is spaced differently), conveys a sense of a deliberate aesthetic ritual which is also a communion of sorts with nature. It was instructive to compare the differing color, scale and character of each circle: the wood made them lean and unbold by law of water; the large flat flagstones of red slate and local soapstone, the rough-cut rectangular chunks of bluestone. On the detail site, these Long's pieces function best slowly, dominating an entire space or series of spaces. Presented together, these works tended to diminish each other, becoming isolated like traditional art objects.

A fuller sense both of what inspires Long and of what he opposes to comes across in his photo works. The large, grainy-beam prints have the look of 19th-century landscape photography, and the images themselves—usually rolling hills leading away to distant horizons—give us a nature which is all-encompassing, relatively unspoiled and benignly ignored by Long's first incursions. It's a landscape whose vastness and indifference has more to do with Hardy's Wessex than with Long's contemporaries, American earthworkers.

One of the best of these photo works is titled *Dark Tarned Exe: A 3 Day Triangle Walk Between the Sources of the Dart, Tamar and Exe Rivers*. The photograph shows us only one of the triangle's "points," an inauspiciously tricking spring which is one of the three rivers' sources, and the country beyond, while the caption tells us that the triangle was 34, 41 and 44 miles on a side and that it took Long into the counties of Devon, Cornwall and Somerset. Lovely and serene as the image is (and as Long's walk presumably was), the piece or the "art" resides as much in the caption as in the photograph and perhaps in our minds more than anywhere else that Long imposes his artistic concepts and his poetic experience and some encapsulation of nature. In this case, Long implies a series of successive, resonating triangles, geometric, geographic and metaphorical: three points and lines, three counties and counties, and, finally, three small beginnings leading to the sea.

—Rudetta Smith

## Robert Cottingham at O.K. Harris

Along with numerous now well-established Photo-Realist painters, Robert Cottingham continues to rely on the camera to help him transfer some of the visually hyperactive American scene to canvas. He remains the most interested of the lot in bold graphic display. Avoiding the spatial complexity inherent in long perspective views down city streets, wide-angle panoramas, or store windows with highly reflective surfaces, Cottingham's thematically cropped

close-up continue to focus on lettered and constructed store signs.

While simplicity and regularity distinguish Cottingham's approach, he nevertheless chooses signs whose materials and physical construction yield visually tempting two-dimensional designs. For, for instance, is a diagonally composed painting in which giant red neon letters, each floating in its own luminous metal shadow box, project from a pale green enameled facade, creating a coolly seductive interplay of texture, color and shape. Above and below the sign (which has been cropped at the right) one suspects the full text is "Ratner's"; plastic swags and fringe surrounding the store's change of management are decorative excursions that add visual interest without disturbing the structural hierarchy. The viewer's eye may be teased from visual incident to incident, but cropping and color, exciting organization, ensure a dramatic return to the sign.

Cottingham appears to take more interest in the physical construction of the sign than in its message; even so, he exploits the semantic weight of the word to draw one's attention to some salient characteristics of the painting as a whole. "But," the nickname for a popular beer, as well as for any familiarly addressed but unknown male, seems an appropriate "label" for a painting whose heavy-duty frontal design, consisting of the advertisement centrally placed and surrounded by rows of corrugated glass tiles, suggests a macho industrial aesthetic. Displaying a competing product and sign, *Miller High Life* shows a single bearing those words amid a stark arrangement of wood siding, chain and whatever materials—none of them notably high-life—the camera captured in the vicinity of the sign. Cottingham's *Photo-Realism* is thus distinguished by its subtly humorous referential; the paintings do not merely exhibit concerning visual personalities, but show how, through judicious cropping, counterpoints of once radical styles such as Minimalism and Synthetic Cubism may be "found" in the environment.

In appropriating ready-made subjects and styles, Cottingham in particular among the Photo-Realists reveals his indebtedness to Pop Art. Yet his method of transcending his sources remains rooted in commercial formulas. Whereas Pop artists attempted a radical aesthetic based on widely known commercial techniques (such as Warhol's silk-screened images or Rosenquist's collaged billboard reality), Cottingham incorporates his predecessors' advances into a view of painting based on traditional principles of design. *Red* and *Miller High Life* seemed the most successful paintings in the show because, by directly exploiting the actualities of good design, they are most consonant with the artist's intentions. These two paintings had the power to fascinate in much the way advertisements do, through their technical virtuosity, and they did

not seem to require a more challenging conceit. —Marjorie Wiley

## Janet Fish at Miller

Janet Fish's recent show was remarkable for its range of visual effects and its ambitious treatment of new kinds of imagery and information. In her earlier work, outboard glasses, ice and bottles crowded the canvas, effect turning the traditional still-life inside out; rather than depicting of objects in space, she focused on the configurations of light within the objects. The format both guaranteed contemporaneity and allowed for a astonishing display of perceptual panning that could record the intricate effects of light passing through liquids, being fractured by fat glass and scattering off wet surfaces.

Now she is also looking amor and beyond her glass subjects. The previous handling of complex space is still there, but the paintings no give cityscapes and landscapes a portent role, where in earlier work they were essentially framing devices. The new work is risky in two respects: She takes on the difficulty of integrating new subject matter with the distinctive, vivid formal language of the glass; and, as the space detours, she lessens the impact of a signature-format. Indeed, in two pieces she renounces that format entirely to make closely viewed but more conventionally structured still lifes, looking down on the forms.

The results vary. In *Spring Even* the glasses and table form an invaded proscenium through which, warm, hazy cityscape appears, coexisting with the cool brightness of the foreground. To my mind, the relationship between the top never-occludes; the juxtaposition seems willful, arbitrary. On the other hand, *Context and Factories* contrasts brightly the concentrated light and energy of the joy, glamorous decorum with the familiar and affectionate seen view of the city. The play between the two is succinct and evocative; the decorum's dazzling light, her high style distills experience. Precisely why one painting works and the other doesn't is a question of bears analysis, though I suspect Fish works intuitively and operationally rather than analytically.

In *Goldfish Fantasy*, July the pattern seems to be simply that her richness of the distant trees and the cut wild flowers does not come up the high style of her glass, with lively surfaces and impetuous calligraphy. *Goldfish Fantasy*, St. Andrew, on the other hand, is an exhibition of variegated surfaces, its effects and spatial complexity which the eye can scarcely come rest. With no hint of fortyness still-life, by its more conventional, no less interesting structure, it announces a new departure for Fish: clear that her first allegiance is to pressures of painting per se, that appetite for new material is strong