

in squares filled with thick painterly strokes, while the third panel secures the transition from abstraction to figuration with an ambiguously expressive (but self-portrait). The last appears to exist for didactic purposes rather than as straightforward self-representation, so that its awkwardness is useful only conceptually, disrupting the work at other levels. A severely educated museumgoer spoils Corbusier's *Les Trois Femmes* (1967), a triptych that makes an other-worldly composing investigation into the way that varying scales, and their varying degrees of satisfactions, bring about not just differences in the way corners may be painted but also in the way painting itself may be utilized.

That such ideological agendas is not essential to Blair's purpose is clear enough from *Clytemnestra* (1963), another triptych and another foray into scale, marking and convention. Here the first panel shows a view of white pyramidal forms on a richly brushed black ground, followed by a "mediator" of the tower head as it wide-tail of vigorous paint strokes on a diminished black ground. In the third panel, that ground disappears almost completely as the head of the tower becomes virtually an upper half of face, curving Abstract-Expressionist strokes. The process of deconstructing the image from illusion to abstraction is never illustrative or didactic, and the paint remains responsive throughout to the promptings of Blair's eye.

The three Icon Intoxics (*The Mother in Blue*, *The Boy*) are dense with meanings, rich in execution, yet in certain respects unworkable and unworked. The two Crown Point prints in the show, however—*Abstraction*, *Myself*, *Debris*, especially—evidence, in their mysterious and careless graphic markings, the forced verbal and visual truth out of which Blair makes art. In its present showing and being adopted that truth is supplying her work with possibilities and problems which should feed it for a long time to come.

—Elizabeth Fure

Keith Haring and Frank Young at Hal Bromm

It often seems that graffiti is the only public art form that can compete with the immediacy of billboard advertising. Increasingly, though, graffiti is not the subversive art of practitioners known only by their first names, but the work of hands so facile and sometimes as well trained as those of their Madison Avenue counterparts. The only important difference is that the street-wise freelancer can choose his moment and avoid his own clichés.

Haring, who already has buttons made up with a trademark image, is probably as well known in New York as any graffiti master, and for several years he has covered (or lead advertising space with his art), blocky chalk figures of dogs, UFOs, radioactive babies and the like. They are a welcome surprise for commuters who bundle through subway corridors, and much of the attraction comes in knowing



Le Corbusier: *Les Trois Femmes*, 1966, oil on 20 inches at Corbis Gallery (www.co2.com)



Martin Silverman: *Eden*, 1981, cast bronze, 23 by 26 inches, at Hamilton.



David Hockney: *Street Scene*, 1982, oil on canvas, 30 1/2 by 27 inches, at Martin Gumpel

that one is likely to happen upon new ones with delicious frequency.

Recently Haring has started to make his hieroglyphs on permanent, outdoor surfaces, and his sampling of Hal

Bromm gave evidence of a definite commercial canvases. The difficulty is to have such a lively and busy one. It has been designated to serve as gallery material. The most obvious

transitional step is to make drawings, and indeed the two large sheets in the show are clever and attractive. However, graffiti as training has practiced it is like a disconnected, non-narrative comic strip—one waits impatiently for each frame to be followed by the next—and this effect is lost in take-home cartoons sold by the piece.

When the work is more conceptual and obsessive—as in the cookie panel also exhibited here—it changes character and is successful on new terms. The baby-boom crib is no less successful—and good mean for its form—decorated in gold, pink, blue and yellow, and covered by ump-teen glowing toddlers linked by ump-teen-plus signs, all watched over by a parental android with two heads and a TV screen belly. Stu Haring is still most readable when he affords a real world, as he does here, the frame of a gallery window. Much as I get a kick out of the city, I would rather see him sit loose on the walls of the nursery, or of any other room in the house, but since few can afford that private pleasure, I hope he uses the subsidy of selling (prints and drawings) to free himself to keep on practicing in the tunnels of the MTA.

Frank Young has also made appearances in several recent group shows. In particular as one of the "emerging artists" chosen last year by the Guggenheim, he shares with Haring a slightly macabre sense of humor. Though Young's sensibility is darker and less doctored. Apart from the two massive heads which introduce the exhibition (are they cackling or screaming?), all the paintings allude to the victimization of women, or at least to physical and moral threats made against them. The most aggressive bawling is a large crucifixion of a woman, and the remaining three, also large and turbulent, show hailing men hailing, emitting with or hawking sperm. The emphatic busyness of the work is somewhere between '80s culture and new-wave feminism, and the hybrid blues and strident reds are at once edgy and authoritative.

What undercuts the resented "expressionism" at work here is the very looking in the details: the Golyard torso of the crucified figure, the bulky "vinyang" formed by the grasping couple in spookily Thurner-style pair, and the daisy bridesmaids of the Dave-giant touching the breast of a (reddish) pink girl. The history of the two open-mouthed heads and the articulate meliorism of the crucifixion are frontal assaults on the viewer, but the second group forms (skew) a narrative: Beauty and the Beast in modern evening dress. There's much to like here.

—Robert Star

Martin Silverman at Hamilton

For four years, Martin Silverman has shown figurative sculptures that comment on both contemporary city life and current art. To keep his cast bronze figures from being too quickly read or too easily placed he has be-

come increasingly adventuresome and confident in exploiting the divergence between his modish subject matter and dated sculptural style.

His early sculptures were single figures, somewhat columnar, set in suggestive contexts. In the recent pieces, context is implied by pose and clothing rather than by props, and the color has been keyed up from the traditional, somewhat effacing browns and greens of bronze to a livelier, more urban range of blues and turquoises. Figures now interlock like early Lipchitzes, or unfold across space like reliefs freed of supporting walls. The works have grown to approximately 3 feet in size, and when placed on high pedestals they appear taller still. Their rhythmic massiveness, their emphasis on discrete and chunky volumes, and their apparently sentimental subject matter connect them with the slightly abstract figurative sculpture of the '20s and '30s. Silverman's new characters seem, by and large, to be married. They are less leisured and solitary than before, more hurried and interactive. For example, the hand mirror in his bronze still life reflects a clock face.

Silverman uses the resources implicit in pose and subject matter, modeling and color, scale and placement to give each sculpture several mutually exclusive period cues, and so makes the seemingly familiar mysterious. In *Eden* a pigtailed girl sits spread-legged holding her doll. This *Saturday Evening Post* vision gives way when we realize that the girl is breastfeeding her doll while she herself sits in the stiff-legged pose of dolls in toy store windows. If you look up her dress you see colored panties. The angular, almost faceted massing of her body owes more to Tony Smith's or Robert Morris's constructions of the '60s than to figurative sculpture. By imitating both the doll and her mother, the girl ends up negating herself. The embracing couple in *Passion* comes from a time when people could be swept off their feet, when movies only showed you the beginnings of things and kissing was a big deal. Also suggestive of the past is the deep blue color of their clothing, which mimics the ominous gray shadows of "B" movies. Then we notice that her hand is tugging at his groin, and we are back in the present.

Silverman's figures appear worked up from scratch without reference to real people. His adults are like kids who grew older and broader, but did not grow taller. Their combination of scale and proportion is so consistently queer that they appear to inhabit a planet with heavy gravity. The modeling is schematic: bodies are composed of almost doughy cylinders and limbs fold abruptly rather than bending or twisting gradually, giving the figures an angular, Legerian quality. Silverman's tool marks, which are transferred intact from clay to bronze, refer as much to carving as to modeling, giving each figure's surface an ambiguous history.

In the new pieces Silverman has added a complexity of volume and overlap to his always sure grasp of profile. We can, in certain sculptures,



Anselm Friedlman, *29th St (Power)*, ca. 1940. Oil on canvas, 30 by 26 inches, at Ziffelberg (www.ziffelberg.com)



Tamasz La Fuzar, *Beysayamok*, 1981. Mixed media on canvas, 85 by 84 inches, at Nancy Hoffman (www.001.147)

sense the form of things that are hidden from view. In *The Businessman*, a man clothed in suit, tie and hat stands

behind a nude woman whose body is detailed but whose face is rendered cursorily. His face is obscured by—in

fact, disappears into—the back of her head. There is a strong suggestion that he's listening or smelling, but we can't see through the bronze to where his features should be. If we look, we notice that her right arm, reaching back over her right shoulder and clutching him, bears a left hand. Like much in this work, it is both dislocating and plausible. —Wade Saunders

Vaclav Vytlačil at Martin Diamond

A few months ago, Vaclav Vytlačil, while making an inventory of his studio, came across a body of work which he had quite forgotten—paintings, all dating from 1931 through 1933, of urban scenes in New York.

Examining a New York painting by John Marin, one may conclude that, whatever its merit artistically, it could be about any urban scene. This is true of many other pictures, even by Stuart Davis or Stepper. But it is definitely not true of Vytlačil's New York paintings. Although more or less abstract in style, they refer concretely to places without identifying any particular landmarks (with the exception of Yankee Stadium and the Polo Grounds). Somehow Vytlačil succeeded in communicating the locale as well as the soul of New York (his palette is superficially gay, but underneath is the brown of brownstone and masonry). These paintings evoke a period when in order to Eazy it didn't you had to go to a speakeasy. In front of them you almost hear the sounds of old New York (like Duke Ellington's music), almost sense the smells of the city (like those of Neddy's and other quick-food luncheries).

Vytlačil studied with Hans Hofmann for seven years in Munich, but by 1931 he had reached a stage when he began to respond to other influences; important among these was Fausto Duffy, a painter Vytlačil has always held in esteem. One sees the presence of Duffy in these New York paintings, but a Duffy well absorbed and understood. Vytlačil's patches of color—signs for windows, words, automobiles, and faces—angle across the surface and are ornamented by skill calligraphic touches all his own. At the time he also experimented with spous textures, using sand, a drybrush, etc. and he even composed the impasto of his paintings while still wet.

Though by 1939 a charter member of the American Abstract Artists, Vytlačil later evolved independently of others' work. His painting soon deepened into a unique Expressionism—a blending of Cubism and Fauvism mostly. His extremely powerful work of the last 22 years seems to be little known in New York, although it is shown in retrospectives elsewhere. Here at least his reputation as a painter has unfortunately been overshadowed by his reputation as a teacher. (Though they are done in an older style, Vytlačil's New York paintings of 1931-33 still seem fresh. Their period subject matter, it is true, has now largely disappeared, but good paintings like these never look dated. —Lawrence Campbell