

Alison Knowles: *Three Oars and a Traveling Shirt*, 2000, mixed mediums; at Emily Harvey.

dissensions produce an engaging awkwardness and ambivalence which, construed as vulnerability and a lack of certainty, make her tile paintings more than just a gift for the eyes.

—Lilly Wei

Alison Knowles at Emily Harvey

Alison Knowles's latest show, "Footnotes," compiled relics from the past 30 years of the Fluxus artist's life—ranging from dried pig ears, rubber gloves and shoe parts to a muslin bag, denim scraps and bits of journal pages. She arranged these and other items into still lifes, tableaux and wall pieces that together formed what she calls an "environment." On the whole, its ambience struck me as rather *Out of Africa*-esque (thanks to a banana, earth tones, straw and shipping labels). Items from real life were pointedly set up as art, providing an occasion to think about how an instant endures in memory as well as in objects left over from an occurrence.

The moments alluded to by Knowles's arrangements are, however, patently hers, and they are neither directly comprehensible nor, most of the time, esthetically compelling. Her work's ability to interest a viewer depends on his or her capacity to free-associate among seemingly unrelated objects. *Spring Fantasy Page*, for instance, features a little pair of scissors and piano parts with a shipping label; *The Ubiquity of Sparrows* contains shoe parts, two black walnuts and a shipping label. The viewer is meant to interact with the works and investigate them. Some were made to be touched. *Dick Brown's Bread Book* consists of cotton bricks

set up as an open book. Its halves look like slabs of dry red earth textured with straw. A die is embedded in some of the "pages," while another die lies in front of the "book."

Knowles makes sculptures that reference the expansive experience of reading. Because of paper's link to books, she often uses it as a medium, pressing two dimensions into the service of three. *Three Oars and a Traveling Shirt*, for example, is made mostly out of paper. The piece consists of a triptych of silkscreened oar blades in different shades of blue, each on a separate strip of paper, which hang from and obscure a simple frame, perhaps punning on the orthodoxy of painting as "proper" art. A paper sculpture of a shirt is suspended from a hanger off to the side and has scraps of paper bearing apparently random bits of text tacked on with straight pins. Though these elements do not allow one to piece together a presiding personality or occurrence, the work does evoke a mysterious psychic landscape.

—Sarah Valdez

Shirley Tse at Murray Guy

Shirley Tse's *Polymathicstyrene*, an installation of carved light blue polystyrene, wrapped around the room, extending from the gallery walls to form a kind of running countertop. Seen here in its second incarnation (the first, twice this size, was exhibited in Los Angeles last year), the work stands a few inches away from the wall, a hovering 48-inch-deep, 2½-inch-thick shelf resting on polystyrene supports. The modular installation consists of

interlocking sections, which, for the most part, range from 2 to 4 feet long, cut from large sheets of the mass-produced plastic.

The work seems, at first glance, deceptively simple; in fact, it offers many layers of references—both cultural and art-historical—that make for a rich and engaging work. Tse cannily uses industrial matter to make objects quite distinct from such precedents as Mario Merz's haphazardly clamped-together Arte Povera igloos or Donald Judd's insistently repeated Minimalist forms. In the title, Tse combines the name of the material with the word "polymath," linguistically endowing her polystyrene with implications of broad intelligence.

The associations conjured are myriad. The intricately carved sections recall geological formations, such as glaciers, and both ancient and modern structures, from Machu Picchu to the "Star Trek" Enterprise. One segment suggests an industrial landscape reminiscent of areas off the New Jersey Turnpike; another recalls electronic circuitry, and yet another reads as a pattern of ice and snow melted by rivulets of water. The polystyrene supports themselves suggest hybrid rococo buttresses. These fantastic, natural and man-made references are galvanizing, drawing one into an engrossing alternate world that oscillates between macro- and microscopic views of the universe.

Tse painstakingly carves the lightweight plastic with a router, creating a structure that can be read as both installation and hewn sculptural object. At the same time, she visually mimics, through formal references, the "terrain" of abstract painting. Some passages evoke the mechanical dynamism of

Futurism. Occasionally, two sections form a diptych—or three sections a triptych—that can stand alone, underscoring Tse's allusions to painting. Ultimately, it is Tse's meticulous craftsmanship that lifts the sickly baby-blue foam out of a kitsch context and transforms it into a sophisticated monochromatic work.

—Lisa Panzera

CHICAGO

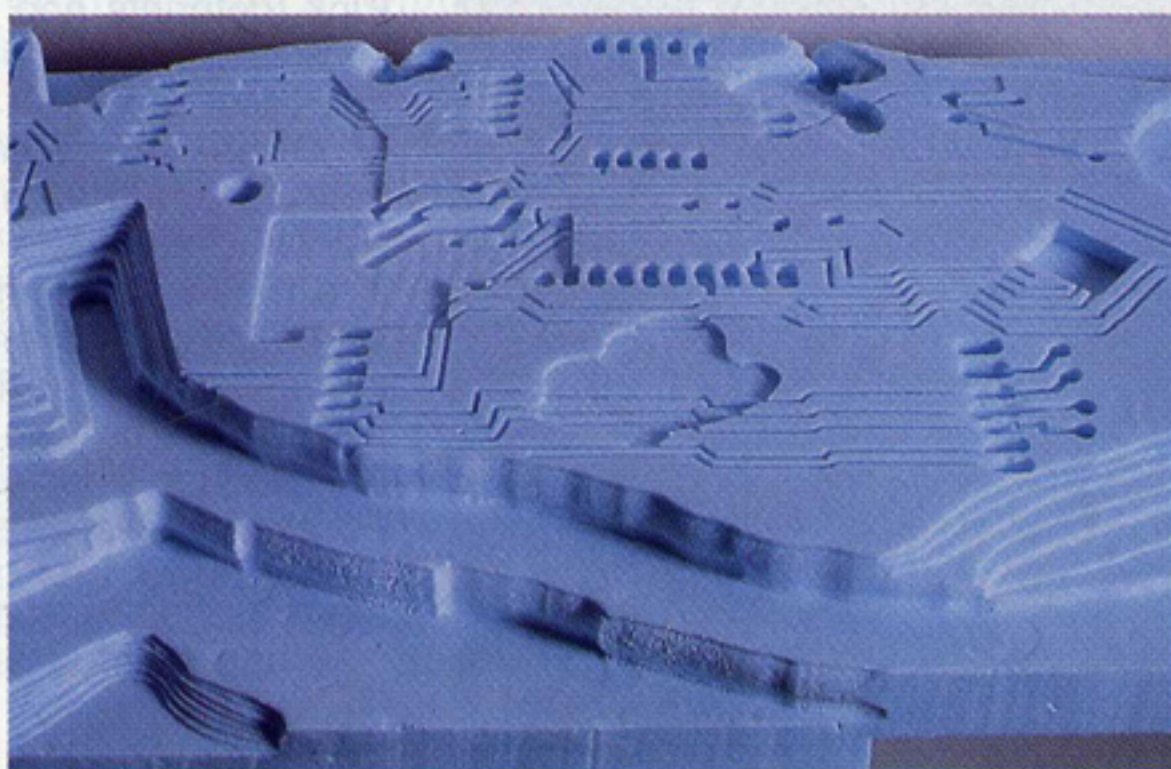
Laura Mosquera at Bodybuilder & Sportsman

Laura Mosquera is a young artist and an astute observer of human behavior who brings a fresh approach to figurative painting, whether working on a monumental or intimate scale. For her recent solo at Bodybuilder and Sportsman, a storefront space that was once a gym, the artist created a large, site-specific mural in the gallery's interior. Also on view were a single canvas and six small drawings that explore the same interpersonal and spatial relationships set forth in the more epic work, a commentary on the anxieties of social interaction.

Mosquera's figures appear youthful, self-conscious and fashionably hip. Extrapolating from photographs taken at parties and art openings, the artist clothes her subjects in the latest styles from Prada and Versace, then arranges them alone and in conversational groupings against sparse backdrops. Her paintings are executed in vibrant palettes and flat, broad shapes, their reductive surfaces reminiscent of advertising billboards, as well as the cool, illustrative portraits of Alex Katz.

Commanding the gallery's

Shirley Tse: Detail of *Polymathicstyrene*, 1999-2000, extruded polystyrene, 17½ by 48 by 2½ inches; at Murray Guy.



north and east walls was the 10-by-26-foot mural *Somehow You Just Know*, painted in latex, enamel, acrylic and glitter glue on drywall. Strategically placed against its expansive, violet background are six members of the "arterati," positioned alone at different vantage points within the picture plane. Two women, one at each of the composition's left and right margins, stand with their backs to the viewer, while another woman, caught in mid-conversation, sits facing forward in a comfy citrus-orange chair at the painting's center. Other figures (one of whom is critic Jerry Saltz) pose in profile, looking out across an empty abyss. These various shifts in perspective create an uneasy tension among the figures, and between figure and ground, while simultaneously enveloping the viewer in the psychological and architectural spaces of the painting. At the same time, Mosquera's use of various framing devices, such as cropping and the interjection of patterned and geometric fields within the formal narrative, allow her characters to function also as pictorial elements, reinforcing the sense of alienation they exude.

Mosquera has a keen sensitivity to color and design, yet nothing is lost in the accompanying drawings, which employ an economical line to similar ends. Done in black pencil on stark white paper, these works likewise evoke feelings of detachment, emphasizing body language and taking careful note of the voids among the various groups and individuals. At once

existential and literal, Mosquera's vignettes are visually seductive, successfully engaging both our need to belong and our sense of self. —Susan Snodgrass

SAN ANTONIO

Irene Hardwicke Olivieri at Finesilver

For her first solo show in Texas in 15 years, Irene Hardwicke Olivieri showed an enchanting assortment of oil paintings, watercolors and a single drawing. It's not surprising to hear that this artist, a South Texas native, once studied art in Mexico and worked as a botanical illustrator: her work is richly folkloric, magically surreal and densely decorated with flora, animals, birds and text. Typically, each work depicts a brown-haired, often naked woman in a fantastical natural setting. Frequently, she's joined by animals and birds, and the scene is detailed with lines of Hardwicke Olivieri's own writing, which sometimes drapes her like a garment. In *Ringtail*, she has catlike ears and a coiled tail; her body is covered with paintings of small ring-tailed creatures, as well as text describing their habits. Pink footprints ring her neck, looking rather like love bites.

Often, the woman holds a paintbrush. In *Apricot Cream*, she lies in a meadow, painting herself with flowering vines, as an apricot ripens at her belly. In *Let Me Sleep in Your Arms Forever*, she seems to be lettering her own dress with a marvelous

passage that begins, "In ancient Egyptian literature, gardens are often described as the meeting place of lotus-eating lovers, whose flowery food caused sweet forgetfulness." Throughout Hardwicke Olivieri's work, creation is a central theme, whether it's achieved by art-making or sexual congress.

Most of the paintings are made on wood panels and have heavy, ornate frames. Sometimes, Hardwicke Olivieri paints on found wooden objects whose prosaic nature often works effectively against their fantastical subject matter. For *An Appeal to Heaven*, she illuminated a breadboard with a scene of a woman praying, her hands and shoulders twined with flowers and leaves. In *Now That You Know*, a woman garbed in a gown of intricate, brilliantly colored insects covers an old ironing board.

Many scenes segue from the childlike to the pagan. In one, a jaunty black-and-white cat, who recalls Puss in Boots, pins a nude woman to the grass with his paws. In another, a rabbit's body is decorated with scenes of a rabbit coupling with a woman; a human couple with spotted, furry bodies; and a woman cradling a bunny in her arms. The text across the creature's body reads, in part, "In many cultures the rabbit is known as a symbol of fecundity, lust and lasciviousness."

The watercolors touch on similar themes, but in a defter, more delicate fashion. *Knowing What Is Needed* pictures a girl in a meadow, hands clasped over her pudenda; her lower body is covered with blue wash, as though she's disappearing underwater. And in *Pet Me Quick*, a smiling woman reaches toward an erect penis

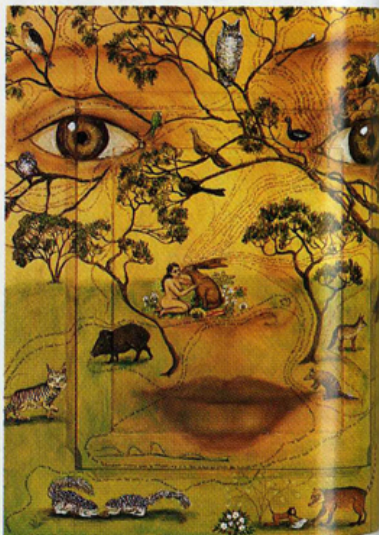
that sprouts from the ground. Similarly, Hardwicke Olivieri's sensual, magically complex work puts its finger on the quick of being and its many reasons.

—Carol Kino

SANTA FE

Judy Pfaff at Bellas Artes

In marked contrast to her unruly and exuberant site-specific installations, Judy Pfaff's recent mixed-medium works on paper present a delicate orderliness. This decorum is all the more striking given the eccentric range of materials and imagery Pfaff calls upon. Amid drools of resin and bright jewel-like blobs of pigments and metallic washes, these mostly



Irene Hardwicke Olivieri: *Tail for Blanket and Pillow*, 2000, oil on wood, 18 by 14 inches; at Finesilver.

elongated horizontal works incorporate leaves, butterflies, fragments of antique paper, combinations of dark elliptical shapes and biomorphic forms, 19th-century botanical drawings, calligraphic markings and geometric configurations that reference Eastern mysticism. Small rips, tears and burns in these applied materials reveal the varying hues of the paper underneath. Pfaff has been working in this vein for some time now, although the 15 pieces featured in this show date from 1999 and 2000.

The juxtaposition of gestural surfaces—reflective of the

Seth Kaufman: *Eggshells and Resin*, 1996, eggshells and resin, 23 by 23 by 1/4 inches; at California State University Art Museum.

