

ART : ARCHITECTURE : DESIGN : FASHION

ARCHIVE

12 X 12:
NEW ARTISTS/
NEW WORKS
LAURA MOSQUERA

Museum of Contemporary Art
220 E. Chicago Chicago, IL 60611
312.280.2660
Through October 28, 2001
by Annette Ferrara [posted: 10.24.01]

For obvious reasons, it's hard to resist reviewing the first show in an exhibition series entitled 12 x 12: New Artists/New Works at the Museum of Contemporary Art, Chicago. So I didn't. Aside from the suspiciously similar moniker, this new series, designed to "provide a forum for the many talented younger artists in Chicago...[and] stimulate awareness of and discussion surrounding these works within the larger art community," is the shot-in-the-arm art types have been waiting for--or more to the point, begging for--from the MCA since they moved into their new building in 1996. As the title suggests, the museum is planning a fast-paced exhibition schedule for this series (12 solo shows in 12 months) which could be interpreted as hedging a bet, but more optimistically, can be imagined as an enervating, brisk tour through the contemporary Chicago scene.

Laura Mosquera's paintings of gallery-goers mingling in abstract fields of color jumpstart the series in an appropriately festive and self-reflexive way. Her work has been compared, at least conversationally, to that of Alex Katz, and while she, like Katz, is invested heavily in the figure and in documenting social interaction, Mosquera does not appear to share the older artist's concerns with light or natural landscape. She is interested in the psychological implications of landscape, however. She writes: "In places where being with someone can have overwhelming consequences, the context becomes of increased importance. It is with this idea in mind that my color and composition function as signifiers for the underlying psychology within each painting." In a large wall painting, *Interesting Things Will Begin to Develop*, 2001, and in a smaller painting, *Can You Feel It*, 2001, for example, Mosquera's use of wrong-in-just-the-right-way color palette (fluorescents combined with pastels and neutrals à la Peter Halley) and signature floating figures that interrupt and overlap architectural shapes, capture both the excitement and anxiety of an art opening. A closer look at her drawings, though (*Knowing It All*, 2000, *Let Them Choose Another*, 2001, and *Some Things are Always With You*, 2001), which show groups of figures and studies of various postures floating on blank sheets of paper, does more than hint at Mosquera's working process of painting from photographs of gallery openings and parties. It also reveals how dependent the viewer is on the patterned backgrounds to "read" the situations depicted. What a nice surprise to (re)discover not only that figurative art is alive and well, but also that landscape matters!

All in all, the exhibition is an auspicious beginning to a curatorial project that I hope will extend beyond both the walls of the underutilized gallery and the clever time constraints of the title. 24 x 24 anyone?