



ROY WRIGHT

You don't miss the water till the well runs dry! Ellnore Hollinshead's *Death of Procris*, 1992 o/c and mixed media at Roger Smith Hotel

FIN DE SIECLE

Robert C. Morgan

Up at the Roger Smith Hotel on Lexington is a modestly constructed exhibition by curator Molly Barnes called "Flowers." The theme is modest and the idea is timely. It is timely in the sense that it represents a lull in the Postmodern culture gulf. It is indeed related to the Postmodern. This exhibition is about decorum and decoratif. It is about the fin de siecle. It is the eye of the hurricane. It is a respite from the nonsensical polyester mania that will bulge at the columns of the Aperto this June in Venice.

The most interesting painting in "Flowers" is a large tour de force by Ellnore Hollinshead called *Death of Procris* (1992). Somehow, for the moment, everything is there — allegory, decadence, eros, betrayal, indulgence. The romance goes deep into the mythology of primal experience. It defines the metaphors of nature as an anecdote to the cynical constructions of the natural. It defies the disbelief in nature as a mere simulation by allowing the resonance of the image a confined feeling of spiritual indulgence. It bespeaks of passion and obsession, grief, and infinite bonding with the cosmos beyond the limited visibility of nature. It is a symbolic painting. It sings and soars beyond the

weak-minded theories of surface and resolution. It is a painting for the 90s.

At the other end of the spectrum is Joseph Beuys. The drawing show at MoMA, "Thinking is Form: The Drawings of Joseph Beuys," is an ultra-refined and sophisticated curatorial venture into the soul of a major shaman-conceptualist. Beuys shared the romantic with the cerebral. Whether in his earlier Fluxus works, his blackboard installations, his Fonds, or his multitude of botanical and biological drawings, Beuys was in control of his intuition. The structure of his "social sculpture" permeated his vision. We see the evidence in his representations of stags and hares — totemic obsessions of his intensely arcane and ecumenical world view. These drawings are not so much a feast for the eye as for the mind's eye. They open up channels of experience left forgotten by the sensationalist aspects of an avowed simulationism in the 80s and purloined revivalism in the 90s.

Soho Shows

Joanne Tod's paintings at Stux are refreshing psychodramas of another order entirely. She does, in fact, rely to a certain extent on the simulation strategies of the 80s but she carries it off with elegance and ultimate ambiguity. These works — collectively called "Sheer Virtue" — are anything but theoretical one-liners. They have the signs

of Modernism and Colonialism — a shared interest for many — but they do not ignore the presence of construction in terms of how the surface of an image is made (through historical illusions) and how representation in painting may be seen. *Summer Palace* echoes the British problem in the Far East at this Fin De Siecle. Indeed, what is there to do? The regal presence is disappearing into the folds, the envelopment of another history — a history that is turning in on itself, substantially toward eros; that is, erotic dreams pervade the atmosphere of all politics. And painting is politics — if I am getting Joanne Tod's work correctly.

Also at Stux, in the basement gallery, one could view a smart show curated by Nicholas Tobier called "HyperCATHESIS: Layers of Experience." It is a highly reflective show focused on the problem of recurrent memory as a form of sublimation and includes works by Alfonse Borysewicz, Brice Marden, Cy Twombly, William Tucker, Vik Muniz, James Hyde and a mysterious wall installation by Joel Fisher.

Nancy Rubin's sculpture at Paul Kasmin Gallery should have been in the Whitney Biennial. It fits the criterion but it is better — much better than related works by other artists whom I shall not name. But Rubins does not need the competitive edge. The work is

terrific. Like Kiki Smith, she knows the parameters of sculpture well enough not to be dependent on the turns of popular consensus. I wonder how sweet the cake between the mattresses really is — or was. The feeling is rooco — with power!

Newer Than Neo

Rochelle Feinstein at David Beitzel Gallery offered a variety of new abstract paintings last month. What makes them new? They are not characteristic of Neo. Instead, they are new. They are not dependent on style. Each painting is different. They are not relevant in terms of descriptive language. They are open to the eye — to the play of the eye — without logic.

Robin Rose's show of monochrome paintings at M-13 impressed me as unusual in the sense that they were inwardly conceived, or at least I felt that to be the case. They were not so much about installation; that is, their architectural connections. They were about the fact of the surface and the mood generated by the surface under a certain diminishing aura within a world of image-glut. There is something sweet and private about the work which is other than appearing tough. Rose's paintings are not about toughness, yet they do not sacrifice tactility. They are serious paintings and, at times, extraordinary.