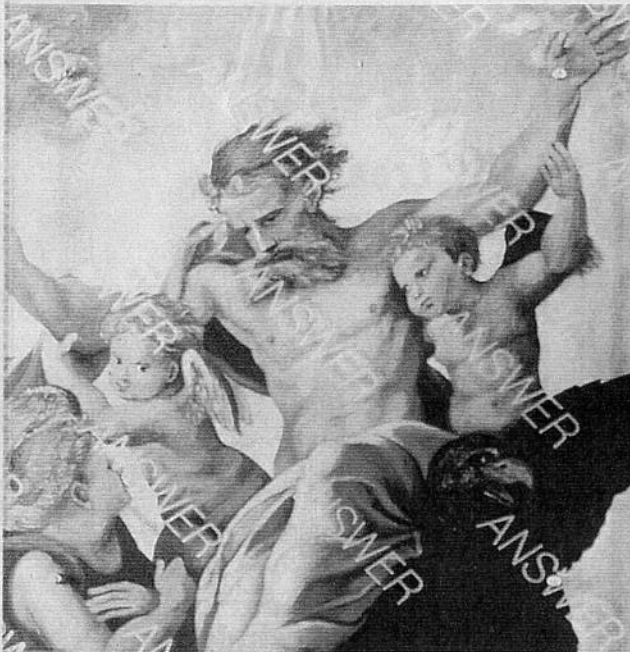


A Force in the Golden Age of Photojournalism



Margaret Bourke-White

Sag Harbor Picture Gallery, 66 Main Street, Sag Harbor. Through Dec. 31. (631) 725-3100.

Margaret Bourke-White is often mentioned in conjunction with the golden age of photojournalism, when the great pictorial magazines that started in the 1930's helped to develop a wide appreciation for the enrichments the camera could offer.

Concentrating on the photographer's early years, this strong exhibition includes a number of the powerful themes and a number of the ambitious approaches that have contributed to her reputation.

Her ability to analyze how difficult situations affect individuals comes across well in a series documenting rural America in the mid-30's. She personalized adversity, but also constantly found the spark that would produce a memorable image. "Taxi Dancers, Fort Peck, Montana" demonstrates the increased emphasis she could place on figures by using multiple synchronized flashbulbs to distribute light over the subject and minimize the background.

The exhibition does a particularly good job of highlighting Bourke-

White's interest in capturing dynamic patterns. These are based on meticulously organized compositions of industrial or architectural subjects and their impact blends aesthetic and social messages. Compelling shapes, reportage and a celebration of the nation's progress combine dramatically in the soaring shafts of "Fort Deck Dam," which was used as Life magazine's first cover.

Bourke-White's interweaving of design and message is especially effective in "State Farm, Russia," a composition of monumental symmetry that gives the farm building's spirelike verticals the psychological presence of a religious structure.

'Punk and Bloat'

Molloy College Art Gallery, 1000 Hempstead Avenue, Rockville Centre. Through Dec. 17. (516) 678-5000.

The title of a software design program is used with a measure of irony here, for this sometimes seductive exhibition intends to remind viewers that hard-edge abstractionists have been inventing potent visual experiences since the pioneer efforts of Malevich and Mondrian.

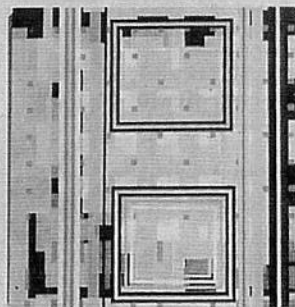


With 24 examples by eight contemporary American artists, the show is relatively modest, yet passion comes across in its argument to remember great traditions. The emphasis is on intellectually driven schemes and a respect for theory and philosophy. Examples are well chosen to include oils, acrylics, mixed media, studies and even two pieces of sculpture by Steven Parrino that make points about the transience, fluidity and morphing of shapes.

The emphasis is not so much on rigor as on imagination and refined sensitivities. With every nuance of color crucial to the desired impact, things seem more vibrant than aus-

tere. Everyone builds visual tensions. The ambiguities of optical weight are important in Li-Trincere's two-toned diagonal structures and in Donald Alberti's geometric compositions.

Shifting, unpredictable spatial and color relationships introduce movement to many tightly constructed paintings. Cary Smith's shimmering



"Vintage Game," left, by Lori Ortiz; and "#31," above, by Christian Haub; both are part of an exhibition at the Molloy College Art Gallery in Rockville Centre.



"Answers/Questions," left, by Ken Aptekar, is part of a show at the State University at Stony Brook's Art Gallery. "Taxi Dancers, Fort Peck, Montana, 1936," above, by Margaret Bourke-White, is on view at the Sag Harbor Picture Gallery.

vertical stripes produce some of the exhibition's most dynamic canvases. Christian Haub's layers of organized geometrics interact with the irregularities of wood to create complex examples. In different and satisfying ways, both Merrill Wagner and Don Voisine allow central dark shapes to have alternating roles as flat and as receding elements.

A strong feature in the Malevich-based heritage of cerebral compositions is the structuring of movement that retains its tension and defies resolution. Lori Ortiz's quietly sophisticated paintings interpret this tradition, frequently in pieces that hold configurations of floating circles within a larger geometric shape.

'Intersecting Identities'

Art Gallery, State University at Stony Brook. Through Dec. 16. (631) 632-7240.

By including projections, video, audio, an interactive CD-ROM, photography, painting and sculpture, this frequently engaging exhibition takes a multifaceted look at a difficult subject. Subtitled "Jewishness at the Crossroads," the show's starting point was a consideration of crossroads and identities as something relatively urgent to people of various backgrounds. The guest curators were Nicholas Mirzoeff, a pro-

fessor at Stony Brook, and Karen Levitov, assistant curator of the Jewish Museum in New York City.

Works by just five artists carry the message, yet each has such a different and ambitious direction that the show feels like it has substantial breadth. Symbol, metaphor and sequence are part of most pieces and in many instances meanings tend to emerge slowly. It is art that often asks something of the viewer, but usually brings rewards.

Contrasting Jewish anxiety with Christian certainty, Ken Aptekar's effective two-section painting, "Answers/Questions," borrows a Raphael image of Ezekiel and Rembrandt's image of the angel stopping Abraham from sacrificing Isaac. Anxiety is present too, along with a haunting discomfort, in Albert J. Winn's autobiographical photographs of deserted summer camp cabins. Their desolation evokes a parallel with the rough buildings in concentration camps.

Rachel Schreiber and Susan Silas also create situations that re-examine emotions. In one Schreiber project, uneasy, voyeuristic photographs document New York City pedestrians passing the likenesses of Anne Frank that the artist has stenciled over public streets and buildings. Ms. Silas mines history and shapes memories with a three-screen installation that uses the landscape of a forced march of German prisoners in 1945.

Stephanie Snyder's sculptured wax blocks are visually successful but have a quiet subjectivity that makes them less immediately gripping. Each bears a relief derived from the pixels of electronically transmitted topographical maps representing sites that have significant meaning to the artist's heritage.