

Ruth Weisberg

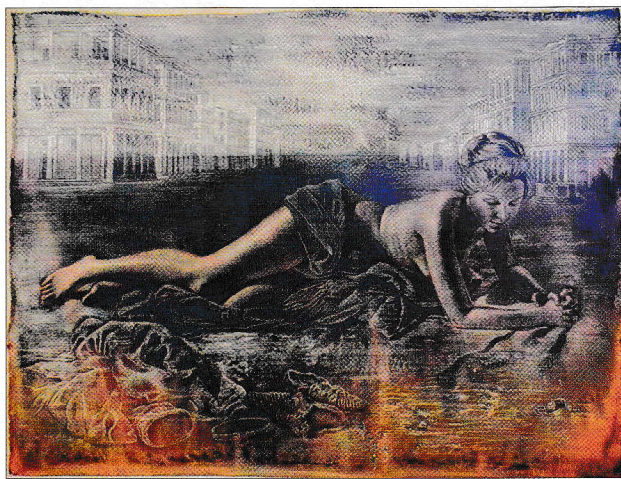
**Norton Simon Museum and Jack Rutberg Fine Arts
Los Angeles**

Ruth Weisberg's remarkable figurative works subtly convey her deep belief in the transformative power of spirituality and the importance of family. For the exhibition at the Norton Simon, she took inspiration from one of the museum's treasures, Guido Cagnacci's *Martha Rebuking Mary for Her Vanity* (after 1660). That theatrical Baroque painting led to 23 works by Weisberg, completed between 2006 and 2008, including oil-and-mixed-media paintings, mural-size drawings, and monotypes.

Weisberg took figures from Cagnacci's masterpiece and repeated them in various iterations, frequently isolating individual characters, such as Mary Magdalene or a triumphant angel, or replacing them with images of her friends and family. In *The Blessing* (2008), a full re-creation of Cagnacci's vision, the artist herself takes the place of Martha, Mary's sister. Unlike the admonishing elder sister pictured in the original, the substitute appears more as a wise, patient teacher. Modern women replace the nearly naked Mary and the two maidservants near the doorway, one older, one younger, representing past and future.

In *La Città Ideale* (2008), Mary is lying in the middle of a city street, with jewelry and clothes strewn in front of her. It's a soulful piece rich in narrative, as the figure meditates on a literal crossroads.

Jack Rutberg's more varied selection



Ruth Weisberg, *La Città Ideale*, 2008, oil and mixed media on canvas, 48" x 64".
Norton Simon Museum.

of 20 of the artist's oil-and-mixed-media paintings, as well as several drawings and prints, were similarly imbued with overlapping layers of historical references and self-reflection. *Alone Together* (1989) depicts an imaginary meeting between Weisberg's daughter and Alberto Giacometti. It's a pensive portrait, expressing Weisberg's regret at missing her chance to meet the famed sculptor when she was about the same age as the young woman in the picture.

—Richard Chang

UP NOW

'Indonesian Textiles'

**Los Angeles County Museum of Art
Los Angeles**

Through September 9

This exquisite exhibition of textiles collected by the museum's former curator Mary Hunt Kahlenberg presents a stunning variety of materials that are both complex and sumptuous. The pieces employ a broad range of patterns and techniques—including weaving, lost wax batik, warp- and weft-resist dyeing, stitch-resist dyeing, appliqué, and embroidery—used by the myriad indigenous groups that live on the thousands of islands that now make up Indonesia.

Just as fascinating is the evidence they

provide of the effect other cultures had on the region over the course of several centuries. A 19th-century woman's shoulder cloth from East Sumatra shows the influence of India in the design of the central panel, while the borders are embroidered with colorful Chinese motifs. An early 20th-century batik from Java exhibits traces of Art Nouveau picked

up from the Dutch by local craftsmen.

Many of the textiles are ceremonial and sacred. In weaving, tradition holds that the warp and weft symbolize the structure of the cosmos, with the warp representing the predetermined aspects of life and the weft representing its many variables. The masterful anonymous weavers represented here created such intricate works as an early-20th-century man's skirt cloth from East Sumba, which shows a bold repeated image of a cockatoo, a bird used in ritual sacrifice.

One of the stunners is a sacred textile from 15th-century Sumatra in a subtle palette of taupe, black, and gold, with a



Anonymous South Sumatra, Lampung, woman's ceremonial skirt (tapis), mid-19th century, silk and cotton plain weave with metallic thread, supplementary weft patterning, and silk and metallic thread embroidery with gold foil and mica, 3'11" x 3'8".
Los Angeles County Museum of Art.

silk warp and a cotton weft woven into an overall pattern of complex geometries representing temple gates, running horses, and flying birds. Another singular piece, an aristocratic woman's breast cloth from early-20th-century Java, makes dazzling use of a glimmering blaze of gold cloth appliquéd in the center of a sumptuous crimson. This is clearly a bold object of high status. —Susan Emerling

Mineo Mizuno

**Samuel Freeman
Los Angeles**

By his own account, ceramist Mineo Mizuno spent the first part of his career in Los Angeles trying to deny his Japan-

MARY HUNT KAHLENBERG COLLECTION

ese heritage and the next part trying to reclaim it. In the works in this show, "Coexistence," he reconciled both views in a sophisticated technique that blends practices from East and West.

Mizuno fires domes of light-colored clay, drills small holes into them, and plants them with the tiny mosses he collects on walks in the Hollywood Hills.



Mineo Mizuno, *Untitled*, 2008, ceramic and moss, 17" x 46" x 40".
Samuel Freeman.

As the mosses grow they cover the domes in blankets of emerald, chocolate, and gold. Other life forms contribute as well. On one dome here, a spider wove a little web amid the mosses. On another, leaves and stems of various flora make a tentative appearance. A couple of pieces have shiny black glazes. Most are the color of sand.

Reminiscent of tortoiseshells in shape and two to five feet in length, the domes were arranged in the gallery with the precision of a Zen garden. The mossiest dome was positioned in an alcove like a Buddha in a temple. Devices in Mizuno's design occasionally let loose veils of soft mist that added atmosphere. Standing like a waterfall at the gallery's entrance was a six-foot-tall ceramic column, its surface dripping with vertical streams of matte blues and greens. These are the glazes for which Mizuno first gained renown, and the new piece integrates his past and present work.

As the moss grows, the domes will continue to change. The entire exhibition stood as a moving statement about the enduring power of the Japanese aesthetic in contemporary art.

—Hunter Drohojowska-Philp

William Swanson

Marx & Zavattero
San Francisco

Oakland painter William Swanson's works look equally assured and knowing whether you confront them en bloc or one at a time. This confidence comes from their being meticulously planned

yet not over-designed. Starting with photographic sources, the artist develops imaginary landscapes that look at once like rubbles of abstraction and illustrations for some dystopian saga.

Swanson steers clear of the topical, but viewers might infer a reference to Eero Saarinen's Terminal 5 at JFK Airport in *Site*

Establishment (2008), or the ruins of the World Trade Center in *Collapse Cycle* (2008), or a bank of TV screens from the set of a cable news program in *Component Collective* (2008).

Swanson tempers the overtly allusive aspects of his work with a palette that evokes both the candy colors of home decor circa 1960 and, more remotely, the tinted atmosphere of an unknown planet. The acrylic surfaces have chalky looks with just enough facture to show

the care the artist takes in patterning their fine details.

The ruins the pictures evoke, then, may be the wreckage of the association between abstraction and utopian ideals. The suave impression they make always comes tinged with sorrow, possibly even nostalgia.

—Kenneth Baker

'A Fresh Look'

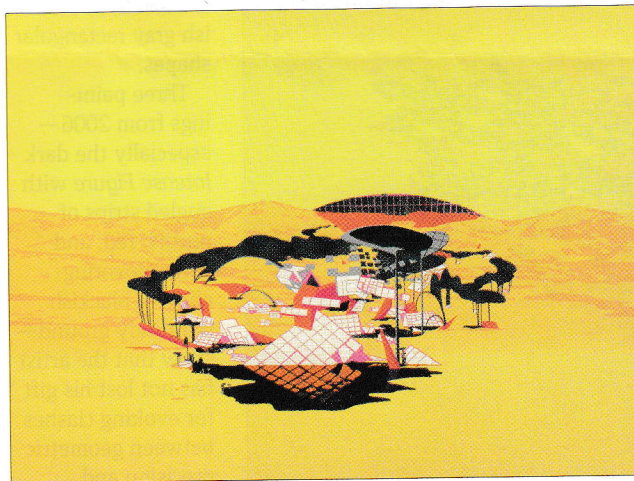
Gallery NAGA
Boston

Amid arctic temperatures, this winter group exhibition organized by independent curator Meredith Hyatt Moses held out the promise of all that was missing outside: light, vibrant color, things bursting with life. The nearly two dozen pieces ranged from Michelle Samour's *White Light* (2008), a galaxy of pigmented handmade-paper disks on a wall, to Jay Stanger's *Pierced and Perched* (2009), an elegant cabinet featuring a geometric abstraction crafted of dyed wood veneer.

Resonances linked many works. Whole new worlds appeared to emerge from three neighboring pieces: the chromatic constellation of Samour's wall installation; the shimmering puddles of Terry Rose's oil-and-micron-pigment-on-aluminum painting *Emit* (2008); and the fantastical web of Judy Moonelis's installation *Neural Corner* (2008), with its miniature masks and strands of plastic ties arranged like frilly fish bones.

Danäe Anderson's painting *The Memory* (2007), marked by rudimentary vessel shapes, found a correspondence in the colors and handmade esthetic of Randy Shull's paired bench and painting *Verdant Reflection* (2008).

On the facing wall, Reese Inman's dotted *Decay I* (2007) translated similar greens and reds into a more structured array. The artist/computer programmer used software to design her pattern, but introduced a personal touch in the way she built and sanded down bumps of color in this composition, which suggests a nighttime



William Swanson, *Site Establishment*, 2008, acrylic on panel, 35" x 47".
Marx & Zavattero.