

# NEW ART examiner

THE INDEPENDENT VOICE  
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GOLDMAN TRACES **CHICANO ART** INTO THE '90s  
FOLK ART—A **PROTECTIONIST DISTINCTION?**  
"ELECTIVE" ART IN "SPEAKEASY"  
INTERNATIONAL **SCULPTURE CONFERENCE** REVIEWED

*greetings  
from Kassel*

*Reports on  
Documenta's  
dog days*

*by Martha McWilliams  
and Kathryn Hixson*



peculiar odor, making its presence known before it is actually seen.

Whitehead seems all too aware of a point at which her perception of her work diverges dramatically from that of its audience; a point which maintains a continual (and differing) mediation of the art between artist and viewer. What, to us, seems to be essential autonomy may to her, as an accomplished technician, appear as manipulative trickery. In this show Whitehead questions the virtue of ambiguous three-dimensional abstraction and, further, the mortal ability to conjure an eminent object. With considerable talent and intuition to guide her investigations, however, she evidences that there is little reason for such doubt.

Prince range: \$1,500 to \$10,000.

Deborah Wilk

## Risa Sekiguchi

Chicago Cultural Center  
78 E. Washington St., 312/269-2820

Risa Sekiguchi's paintings are small in scale, yet their mysterious intimacy reflects a vital optimism in human potential. With the exception of a few representational still lifes and a couple of paintings where milagro-like body parts float in surreal environments, the artist's strongest work in this exhibition of 16 untitled oil-on-panel paintings portrays the human figure. All of Sekiguchi's paintings are complimented by plaster-coated wood frames that are smooth, cool, and clammy. The flesh and boniness of the frames subtly echo the external and internal qualities of the bodies she portrays.

With his or her back to the viewer (gender is not always evident), these generalized nudes are solidly built and stand at the center of their compositions. The paintings, made of rich colors skillfully applied layer upon layer, combine the effects of Renaissance clarity with an earthy scumbling. The dark areas of the works are so lush and deep that the viewer feels the urge to search inside and look a little closer, but we are unable to see anything there. It is the contrast of the lighter elements in the painting with this darkness that leads the viewer to contemplate what we can and cannot see in our own human condition.

As in her previous work, many of Sekiguchi's paintings here depict figures in interiors. In acts of repose or moments of vanity, the figures seem traditional; however, Sekiguchi creates an ambiguity by placing the figure in an undefined space which suggests isolation and vulnerability. Thus, the artist transforms simple, banal acts into something ritualistic.

In her strongest group of paintings, Sekiguchi departs from interiors and moves the figure out into the landscape. These paintings take on a spiritual power that is sensitive and alluring. In most of these paintings, a physical and psychological occurrence is suggested by the figures' multiple limbs which appear to be moving within their afterimages. They resemble Eadweard Muybridge's photographic studies superimposed upon each other in an effort to depict the passage of time. They are also reminiscent of the multi-limbed enlightened deities found in Buddhism and Hinduism. Transition, growth, and change resonate through these mysterious images. Here lies the eerie edge between chaos and peacefulness when one is becoming something else.



RISA SEKIGUCHI, "Untitled," oil on board, 11 3/4" x 9 3/4". Photo by Tom Van Eynde, courtesy of Betsy Rosenfield Gallery.

In one work, a turning figure and its shadow-self, both visible from the waist up, are suspended in dark green water. The only light source emanates from this hunched-over being who clutches a beam of brightness. Tumultuous skies remind the viewer of the powerful forces of nature. Sekiguchi is able to depict an experience that seems somehow familiar but imbues it with mystery so that the image suggests mystical power and possibility.

In a culture that seems to promote the propensity to shout large and loud in order to be heard, Sekiguchi is heard, seen, and felt while speaking quietly. Her paintings express the motion of life—our movings and shiftings—and this feels very human.

Prices unavailable.

Nancy H. Zwick

## Patrick Tosani

The Art Institute of Chicago  
Michigan Ave. at Adams St., 312/443-3600

Patrick Tosani's first solo show in the United States revealed an artist of modest vision and occasional flashes of brilliance. The 37-year-old Parisian photographer, known mainly in Europe and Japan, isolates and photographically enlarges single objects—such as a spoon or the bubble from a carpenter's level. The smallest of his color prints is three-by-five feet, and he hangs at least three different versions of a motif together. Scale, repetition, and immaculate lighting transform these banal subjects into meditations on space, form, texture, and the photographic medium.

In some instances he converts life into an abstraction. The viscous bubble in the carpenter's level becomes a smooth metallic lozenge, its functional aspects transcended. Similarly, an egg-shaped spoon's gleaming parabolic shape resembles the head of a reductive Cycladic idol. However, associative values fail to surface in the drum head series because machined bolts used to tighten the instrument's skin also serve to rivet the spectator to the subject's mundane physical identity. And Tosani's latest works, showing fingernails bitten to the point of deformity, are simply of greater medical

than aesthetic interest.

Before adopting the abstracting close-up approach, Tosani worked in a conceptual vein. His early studio set-ups reflect on the medium and its limitations, fixing especially upon "photographic time." One group portrays stop-action figurines of sprinting athletes encased in, or emerging from, a block of ice. The concept is less well articulated in the "Fire and Ice" pictures, which show newspaper buildings consumed by fire as they emerge from frozen blocks. Photo-puns on the same theme depict water droplets falling around a Plexiglas comma, or in a pair of Plexiglas parentheses. Suspended in mid-air, the props interrupt the downpour, metaphorically enacting the photograph's incision into the continuum of time.

In his "Portrait" series, Tosani adds conceptual weight to figuration. He took bust-length photographs of various individuals, and projected them out-of-focus onto sheets of braille punched paper. (The braille "texts" have no meaning.) The final re-photographs of the projections look like phantasmal targets from a shooting range. It is hardly a revelation that certain categories of experience—touch, for example—are extrinsic to photography. What distinguishes Tosani's indeterminant "Portraits" is that their critique of photographic representation is couched with mystery and beauty.

Prices unavailable.

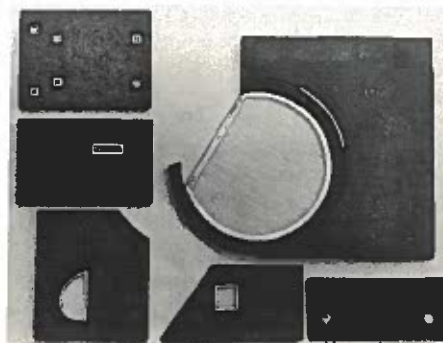
Jason Edward Kaufman

## Liviu Mocan

Art Department Gallery  
Columbia College  
623 S. Wabash Ave., 312/663-1600

This show featured recent sculpture—four ceramic wall reliefs and a large, rectangular floor sculpture composed of six steel slabs—by Liviu Mocan, a Romanian artist working in the United States under a year-long international study grant. One encountered the wall pieces (each 12" x 4" x 1") first upon entering the small, intimate tenth floor gallery. While Mocan's artistic skill was amply demonstrated in these elegant reliefs containing robust, gestural movements that revealed a mastery of figurative modeling in clay, it showed itself even more so in the floor piece, titled *Little Transparent Islands*, which measured roughly 30 by 40 inches.

This piece announced itself almost as a separate part of the show, and I found that I made spatial references in its direction in order to orient myself to the room. Specifically, the piece formed a rectangle within the rectangle of the room, and each step I



LIVIU MOCAN, "Little Transparent Islands," iron, glass, and lead, 2" x 30" x 37", 1992.