

grounds. Dedicated to either the nameless or the unknown, they are purposely abstracted of all emotion.

Just before taking in Roosen's creations, I visited the Field Museum of Natural History, where I saw "Gods, Spirits, and Peoples," an exhibition of mostly African and Pacific Island masks, statuary, and clothing used in religious ceremonies. These objects, imbued with both reverence for and fear of forces beyond those of man, resonated with meaning; they were the stuff of ritual and abiding community. By comparison, Roosen's works are but shadows—often captivating, but shadows nonetheless.

Price range: \$1,500 to \$35,000.

Richard Gage

Three Berlin Artists— Three Berlin Contrasts

Walter Bischoff Gallery
340 W. Huron St., 312/266-0244

"Three Berlin Artists—Three Berlin Contrasts" was a highly visceral exhibition, in which the rhythms, longings, and configurations of the human body were explored.

Barbara Quandt's works reflect her training in the new German expressionism. Her colors are rich, full, screaming; the brush strokes visible and wide. Her human bodies hump and curl and dance around each other, whether struggling with nightmares or serving as silhouette-like reflections of African culture and tribal rites.

Quandt's paintings are at their dizzying best, however, when they portray her immediate impressions of her surroundings. Since arriving in the U.S. in August (on an exchange program that ends next January), Quandt lost no time in depicting contemporary Chicago. *333 Wacker Drive* (1987), for instance, treats us to a carnival-like panorama which includes the curls of Marina Towers, a splash of Lake Michigan, Sullivanesque architectural details, a burning Black Power fist, and, throughout, the twisting, sprite-like figure of Quandt herself. No more than a wraithlike head and arms, she turns and gestures gleefully at the passing scene.

Movement and music are also central themes in the paintings of Barbara Heinisch. In fact, in Heinisch's arrestingly colored works, the force of the notes and the undulations of the model's body become the controlling elements. These pictures could not exist without their movement; there are even overtones of Italian Futurism in the total integration of subject and locomotion.

Yet Heinisch's works are not mechanical or detached; they are highly emotional and sensuous. Heinisch often works with a model dancing behind a canvas. Liberated from the traditional role of silent, immobile muse, the models are free to move as the music guides them, their cast shadows becoming Heinisch's painted forms.

Occasionally a model will rip through the canvas, thereby achieving a total escape from the conventions of model and artist. Heinisch glorifies these acts: some of her paintings contain a golden-edged, jagged central shape, marking a tribute to the spot where art and life momentarily switched places.

For Maina Munsky, reality, particularly the reality of the operating room—in which man's very existence as a vulnerable, physical creature is pressed overwhelmingly to the surface—is conveyed through the strictest realism. Munsky's subjects—a Caesarian birth, an open-heart surgery, and a hip operation, among other medical procedures—are ones that might traditionally seem off-putting or too personal and traumatic. There is, however, no morbidly sterile fascination in these paintings. Instead, there is a reverence for the all-encompassing absorption of

the doctors, the gleaming practicality and efficiency of the instruments and, above all, a sense of appreciation for these attempts to prolong and improve human existence in ways which merge the technological with the organic.

Price range: \$5,500 to \$17,000.

Amy Rosenbaum

Vivian Nunley

Sybil Larney Gallery
118 N. Peoria, 312/829-3915

The duplicity of Vivian Nunley's newest works is revelatory. Her monumental paintings continue to reveal a careful control of color that subtly modulates, revealing ethereal icons—especially birds. Birds soar in liberated upward thrust in *Bird on House*, or metamorphose phoenix-like to near-abstract in *Green Bird*. In these paintings, as in *Bird on Gold*, Nunley's painterly talent dominates the image; the icon is insignificant by comparison. The decorative edges, in fact, are curious elaborations which primarily reinforce her images as paintings rather than messages with narrative content.

Yet in a bold new step Nunley introduces the Christian cross into her canvases. It appears as a simple innocuous form in *Cross on Red*, and it disrupts the formalism and Rothko-like spirituality of her earlier work. It is clearly designed to discomfort. In *Brazos de Dios IV*, the cross appears about to be consumed by an orange fiery fog rising up from behind the hill on which the cross is implanted. The cross, which stands at the brink of an inferno, seems less to me like the "arms of God" promising redemption than the cross itself about to suffer damnation. The duplicity of modern Christian faith (as embodied in the ludicrous hypocrisies of Jim and Tammy Faye *et al.*) is revealed most forcefully in this painting.

The most hopeful of her cross pictures is also darkest. In *Cross of Black*, the canvas is almost entirely black; but framed in the lower right is a cross with light emerging from behind. The image seems inspired by the German Romantic painter Caspar David Friedrich, though Nunley does not employ Friedrich's severe perspective. Yet the juxtaposition of light and dark suggests the hope of modern Christian faith. What can be disappointing about this work is that the strength of her talent to create ephemeral dream-like images is replaced by heavy-handed symbolism.

The most intriguing and powerful work of the exhibition is *Maggie's Window*, in which Nunley's earlier painterly handling of the monumental figure combines with overt Christian iconography—this time the leaded grid of a stained glass gothic window. The combination is haunting. The figure at the window has the ominous quality of Goya's giants; indeed, this figure seems like Satan himself melting away the vivid colors of the window into fires from which the figure emerges. Nunley's ghost is faceless and seems like one we might encounter in a nightmare. Here Nunley uses her gift for modulating color to offer the most significant revelation in her work thus far: the duplicity of hope and despair in Christian faith.

Thomas F. Rugh

Joan Lyon

ARC Gallery
356 W. Huron St., 312/266-7607

These are unusual paintings. Nude figures, often bald and of indistinguishable sex, act out Jungian archetypal dream situations referring to spiritual evolution. Lyon considers them "a mythological journey into my psychological past."

The figures are vaguely described, as if their form doesn't particularly matter, and thereby



suggest "every person" rather than a specific individual. They bring to mind Kenneth Clark's concept of the "alternative convention," those awkward bodies in medieval paintings that, in their eagerness to renounce the flesh, are ill at ease with their own physicality.

Birds are a frequent prop, and are carefully defined as specific species. The oil painting *Serious Conversation with Birds* is based on a dream about various birds flocking to a tree and changing into fish. Lyon would then carry them to a pond to save them, although that part of the dream is not prominent in the painting. There is something elemental and primeval about birds changing into fish, a kind of reverse evolution. It feels right as a psychological or formal notion, although its precise meaning is elusive—a common trait in many of the paintings.

In another painting three figures hold up a fourth, helping to elevate it toward a white sun that contains three small guru-like gods. The landscape is divided in two color areas; warm red earth for the lower realm, cool green trees and blue sky for the upper. Like most of the paintings in this exhibition it represents a quest to give form to a mystical idea, to illustrate the invisible. This approach to art carries risk: while the intent is admirable and moving, the result is often short on aesthetic resolution. It reminds me of Julian Schnabel's attempt to paint the Portrait of God.

More resolved is a smaller group of paintings that seems to delineate Lyons's future direction. It incorporates the use of stencils and cutouts to build a layered surface, mostly in earth tones, comprising images of figures and animals. Here the handling of the surface is more confident, derived from established printmaking techniques with the added flexibility of monoprint-painting. This evolution culminates in a 15-foot-long piece