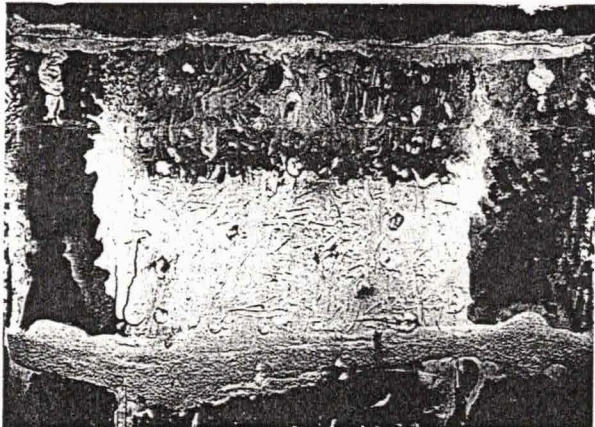


NEW YORK



Stanley Boxer, *Amarblemanshonor*, 1991, oil and mixed media on canvas, 40 x 55".



Alan Belcher, *Untitled*, 1991, color photographs, corrugated steel, and groceries. Installation view.

**STANLEY BOXER**  
ANDRÉ EMMERICH  
GALLERY

Stanley Boxer's paintings give me pleasure. Not only do I find them a relief from the sophomoric ideologically oriented work pervasive in the art world today, but they serve as a reminder that the pleasure principle, with its primitive *promesse du bonheur*, is inescapable in art. Boxer is a virtuoso of sensual surface, mixing gestures and encrustations with masterful bravura, abandon, and wit. Wild titles, such as *Paradisalsuccors*, 1990, and *Abraizefondle*, 1991, reflect this. Yet Boxer's attitude to the erotic—the erotic act of painting as well as the eros generated by paint—seems ironical and self-mocking. That is, Boxer's paintings are abstract drolleries—flattened color orgasms, as it were.

Boxer does try to levitate and spatialize the surface through his use of various materials—some of which are too conspicuous for my taste, that is, unintegrated into the general painterliness—but I take this to be part of the drollery. There is, however, a whole group of small works—more like studies—that carry this esthetic amusement too far. They seem to suggest that a visual joke that goes nowhere is enough. Nonetheless, the works in general convey a delicious excitement, just this side of the lurid.

I believe that some of the works are a kind of self-portraiture—self-caricature? *Aputzesharedfaith* and *Amarblemanshonor* (both 1991) seem to be ironical assertions of faith in the futile act of manic-depressive painting. At the same time,

Boxer seems to be saying that abstract painting is not simply a displacement of gratification into color and texture—not substitute gratification but a model for gratification at its best. He reaffirms the subliminal point of Color Field painting: that gratification in life is never as complete as in art, and that, in this respect, life ought to take its cue from art. Love ought to be like the self-abandonment and merging of colors, in complete indifference to boundaries. I see Boxer's work in Freudian terms; the primacy of libido is asserted over the object, which is exactly what the best—the most erotically totalized—Color Field abstraction achieves. It is about intensification of pleasure as an antidote to the toxic effects of reality. Boxer's color sites are erogenous zones, meshing in the body of the painting. While, in some of the works, paradise seems to turn to smoldering pain, the polymorphous perversity of Boxer's surfaces, whatever their affective charge, is a relief in a climate in which much art wants to tell us the truth of things facilely. —DK

**ALAN BELCHER**  
JOSH BAER GALLERY

Alan Belcher's exhibition of photographic portraits of Liberian blacks exists in the name of a noble cause. Part of the money from the sale of the works will be donated to the World Food Programme's international emergency relief operations. The portraits were made in Monrovia, where Belcher traveled, with United Nations status, to observe the program in action. In other words, the

images are premised on grim environmental and sociopolitical circumstances. However, many of the faces shown are smiling, and only a few seem to belong to starving people. The confrontational stares of some of these subjects suggest a nobility of spirit impossible to match; indeed, their glances are like a gauntlet thrown down to the spectator, who can only shrink away in guilt.

So here is the first myth of much recent sociopolitical art: the overtly suffering are more human than the rest of us mere neurotic sufferers. The second myth is that by presenting the work in a supposedly scruffy way (the photographs are bound to sheets of corrugated metal) one is using an esthetic appropriate to the all-too-human subject matter—an esthetic that will induce empathy for, and metaphorically convey, their suffering. Given the nature of Belcher's previous show (he used real pelts, sometimes of endangered species, in a gesture that was alternately taken as an act of the glibest cynicism and a more pointedly critical jab at the pieties informing much politically motivated work), it remains uncertain whether he inhabits these myths fully or calls them forth in order to deflate them ironically. Indeed, Belcher's use of rope to hold the images to corrugated metal is quite effective emotionally, but not perhaps in the literal way one might at first expect. It comes across as formally innovative rather than as a ramshackle construction altogether discrediting form. In other words, it is esthetically exciting, not simply as a reference to the West African environment—a synecdochic bricolage. At the same time, it does not break down the boundary between art and life but

peculiarly strengthens it by treating it as though it can easily be crossed—as though all the artist has to do is transpose some material from life into an art context in order to clarify both. In fact, Belcher's installation confirms that something happens in the transposition—that something is lost from life, and something gained for art.

Indeed, art dominates life in Belcher's installation, which acquires interest through repetition of the images and through their placement on the gallery floor (the works not only hang from the walls in a conventional manner but some lean against the walls and columns as well). Their shiny surfaces reaffirm the point that this is art, that is, cleaned-up life. Belcher has, in effect, slickly packaged his victims, facilely idealizing them (which no doubt adds to their self-idealization). He has in fact used a low-tech media method to glamorize them. Whether this kind of esthetic charity does the worthy cause any good or even casts much new light on the problematic interface of art and politics is a matter of debate. —DK

**PRUITT • EARLY**  
LEO CASTELLI GALLERY

Pruitt • Early's *Red Black Green Red White Blue Project* could be the "nigger drawings" of the '90s. Two white artists, whose previous works drew on the stereotyped iconography of teenage white trash, now turn their attention toward American black culture with dispiriting results. The artists have covered the floor and walls of the gallery with gold foil, a stylistic gesture that the



"Halston: Absolute Modernism"

**STUDIO MUSEUM IN HARLEM**, 144 W. 125th St.—Thirty paintings and sculptures by this year's artists-in-residence: Ada Pilar Cruz, Leonardo Drew, and Eve Sandler. Through March 1. . . "Africa and the Diaspora," a selection of nearly a hundred works from the museum's collection, dating from the first century to the present. (Open Wednesdays, except Christmas, through Fridays, 10 to 6; Saturdays and Sundays, 1 to 6.)

#### GALLERIES—UPTOWN

(Unless otherwise noted, galleries are open Tuesdays through Saturdays from around 11 to between 5 and 6. They will be closed on Christmas.)

**JÖRG IMMENDORFF**—Paintings from 1965 to 1966, when the artist was a student of Joseph Beuys' at the Düsseldorf Academy of Art, and works in various mediums made between 1967 and 1970, under the rubric: a Dadaist parallel universe involving urban design (for instance, streets laid according to the wanderings of turtles), but also power symbols, and props relating to authoritarian political actions of great humor and flamboyance. This show is extremely interesting and charming, and is a must for anyone interested in Beuys, early-eighties German painting, Western Europe's post-war cult, Godardian Maoism, agitprop. Through Dec. 21. (Werner, 21 E. 67th St.)

**PHILIP TAAFFE**—Mostly large, abstract paintings that are sumptuously ornamental while being both technically and intellectually rigorous. Though they register effortlessly upon the mind and the eye, they are in fact as complex as the ancient Byzantine-Levantine cultures that have provided the artist with many of his motifs. Taaffe's colors, opulent and sometimes weathered yet without the facile decorator's touch of so much recent antiquing in art, may make you yearn for travel and adventure, poetry and pleasure. Through Jan. 11. (Gagosian, 980 Madison Ave., at 76th St. Closed Dec. 24.)

**"SIX AMERICAN MODERNISTS"**—A generous selection of paintings, sculptures, and drawings, by Marsden Hartley, Gaston Lachaise, Elie Nadelman, Georgia O'Keeffe, Charles Sheeler, and John Storrs. Through Jan. 4. (Hirsch & Adler, 21 E. 70th St. Closed Dec. 24.)

**SHORT LIST**—**STUART DAVIS** and **GRAHAM NICKSON**, Salander-O'Reilly, 20 E. 79th St. (open Mondays, through Dec. 21); **HERBERT FERBER**, Knoedler, 19 E. 70th St. (closed Dec. 24, through Jan. 2).

#### GALLERIES—57TH STREET AREA

**JAKE BERTHOY**—Berthot was one of the more penetrating of a group of New York abstract painters prominent in the seventies. In these recent works, which are modest in scale and somewhat academic in format, the artist uses a visual language appropriate to analytical Cubism to examine post-Cubist space. The fields of muted ochre, blue, and brown are accented with splashes of bright yellow, red, and blue. Berthot's use of color per se is not at all interesting. He's more successful with a group of works on paper which forgo the

accents of brightness and simply explore space, which is what he seems to do best. Through Dec. 24. (McKee, 745 Fifth Ave., at 57th St.)

**JOAN NELSON**—New paintings; no news. Tiny landscapes. Antique looking. Very pretty. The nicest of all are almost empty: just sky, for instance, and a shrub or the top of a branch. Through Jan. 4. (Robert Miller, 41 E. 57th St. Closes at 1 on Dec. 24.)

**DANIEL SPOERRI**—Very funny figurative assemblages made up of kitschy German landscape paintings, animal heads, battered but gracefully posed mannequins, various scythelike farm implements, and occasional shells and animal horns set bawdily in all the wrong places. Through Dec. 31. (Zabriskie, 724 Fifth Ave., at 57th St.)

**SHORT LIST**—**LOTHAR BAUMGARTEN**, Marian Goodman, 24 W. 57th St. (open Mondays, through Jan. 18); **WILLIAM BECKMAN**, Stiebel, 32 E. 57th St. (through Jan. 11); **CLAUDIO BRAYO**, Marlborough, 40 W. 57th St. (open Mondays, through Jan. 4); **WILLIAM DUNLAP**, French, 24 W. 57th St. (open Mondays, through Jan. 4); **DUNCAN HANNAH**, Tatistcheff, 50 W. 57th St. (closes at noon on Dec. 24, through Dec. 28); **EDWARD KOREN**, Dintenfuss, 50 W. 57th St. (through Dec. 21); **ROBERT M. KULICKE**, Davis & Langdale, 231 E. 60th St. (through Dec. 21); **AGNES MARTIN**, Pace, 32 E. 57th St. (closes at 2 on Dec. 24, through Jan. 4); **ANA MENDIETA**, Galerie Lelong, 20 W. 57th St. (through Jan. 11); **BEVERLY PEPPER**, Emmerich, 41 E. 57th St. (through Jan. 4); **THEODOROS STAMOS**, ACA, 41 E. 57th St. (closed Dec. 24, through Jan. 11).

#### GALLERIES—SoHo

**ALAN BELCHER / LAURA BAIRD**—Belcher spent most of October working for the World Food Programme in Liberia, a country which has been torn by civil war for two years now. While innocently taking photographs he was imprisoned by Charles Taylor, the rebel leader, on suspicion of being a spy. The error was eventually discovered and Belcher was released. The result of this harrowing trip full of unexpected turns is a series of arresting portraits of unnamed Liberians, black-and-white photographs that the artist has strapped onto corrugated-metal mounts. Most of the works are simply propped against the gallery's columns and walls; they are Belcher's bluntest pieces yet. They contrast the permanence of portraits with the transience of the world from which they come. / An exhibition consisting of a needlepoint "Jonestown Carpet," designed like a traditional rug. The central panel, based on a

repetitive border filled with a hodgepodge of modern icons—everything from a television set to a barber pole, from a shopping cart to a Bible. The modest-sized rug is hypnotic and says more about death than have certain recent large-scale exhibitions that have attempted to explore the theme. Atop the rug, which lies on the floor, is a disturbing violation in the form of the rocking chair in which the artist sat while making it. The ultimate perverseness of the work is that it is a carpet, something that is walked upon. This maniacally obsessive work has occupied ten years of the artist's life, and is a fascinating and hopeless act of purification. Through Dec. 28. (Baer, 476 Broome St. Closed Dec. 24.)

**DAVID CABRERA / LAUREN SZOLD**—A modest, oddly affecting installation of different types of work, each of an impermanent character. On the walls, in groups, are photographs of fall foliage and watercolors in monochrome green, yellow, and opalescent white. On the floor are two blobs of cement, and hanging from the ceiling is a pink ribbon. These innocuously scaled works seem directed at breaking down the phallicentric, neo-expressionistic order. / In the back office, the like-minded Szold has poured pools of a pancake-like flour-and-water mixture on the floor and tinted them with a few splashes of food coloring and egg yolk. Intentionally or not, the work can be seen as a domesticated, finger-waving corrective to Lynda Benglis's AbEx poured process paintings of the late sixties. Through Dec. 21. (303 Gallery, 89 Greene St.)

**HANS COPER** (1920-81) / **DAN FLAVIN**—Beautiful, sophisticated ceramic vessels that are strong

in form and delicate in execution. They suggest everything from Cycladic statuary to modern sculpture. / A group of dramatic new fluorescent- and ultraviolet-light sculptures that combine Albers-like austerity with baroque excess. Through Dec. 20. (Rubin-Spangle, 395 West Broadway.)

**GLORIA FRIEDMANN**—Well-crafted but not especially interesting minimalistic objects made primarily of natural materials. The works include, for example, a section of a weathered tree stump and a topiary cone of dried grass. A huge convex disk of grain is particularly attractive. Through Dec. 21. (Marcus, 568 Broadway.)

**MICHAEL JENKINS**—Large, adamantly yellow sculptures with boyhood references—camp showers and the like. A blackboard-size abacus with large yellow balls is quite resonant, although the artist's sentiments seem better expressed in his drawings, which are more metaphoric. Through Dec. 21. (Gorney, 100 Greene St.)

**RONALD JONES**—Jones' new sculptures combine what appear to be personality-altering drugs, wreckage from the Lockerbie bombing, images lifted from Bosch and Dali, and much more. The individual components seem to have been selected for their capacity to embody contradictions and falsehoods. The issues that animate Jones may be on the mark, but the obscurity of his references deprives the viewer of almost all access to them. Recognizing this, the artist has saddled each work with a lengthy text panel explaining in museum-label prose, what you are seeing at. But these texts are so loopy and pompous that once you've read one you never want to read another. What the viewer is left with, then, are large assemblages of seemingly unrelated elements joined in aesthetically satisfying formal balancing acts. Through Dec. 21. (Metro Pictures, 150 Greene St.)

**JEFF Koons**—This overanticipated instant scapegoat of a show is actually very useful, as it clearly illuminates Koons' strengths and limitations—what he can and can't pull off, what he does and doesn't grasp about material presence and the visual dynamics of art. He doesn't, for instance, seem to understand anything at all about what makes a painting work. The dozen or so large, photo-and-performance-based paintings in which we find this sometime ceramist and his picaresque wife, the porcelain-skinned Cicciolina, imitating, may be brave or perhaps foolishly gestures, and worthy of some respect for that, but they are total duds as two-dimensional constructs. Intended—quite sincerely, it seems—as a paean to conjugal love between two self-styled legends of the meta-culture, these works are strangely immature. The visible production values, Koons' quality, are here flatly mid-level—neither the Disney- or Fellini-esque extravaganzas one might have expected nor what could have been an interesting shift toward intensively low-rent porn-verité genres. Through Dec. 21. (Sonnabend, 420 West Broadway.)

**ANDREW MASULLO**—This reworker of dime-store paintings has expanded his repertoire a bit with a series of benignly bland paint-by-number panels of cats and dogs. Through Dec. 21. (Fiction-Nonfiction, 21 Mercer St.)

**GEORGE MOORE**—Accomplished paintings of farmed and inhabited landscapes. Some of these imaginary aerial views have names evoking past art—the Precisionist "River Rouge," the Abstract Expressionist "Number One Landscape," and the sculptural "Torso." "Flevoland," which depicts a part of the Netherlands built on landfill, is a landscape with particularly sinuous pathways. The relationship between settlement and farm in the painting seems metaphoric and suggests a laboratory experiment. In this sense, the work recalls the maps and floor plans of the Argentine painter Guillermo Kuitca. Through Dec. 21. (Plumb, 81 Greene St.)

**PETER SCHMERSAL**—Fine painter's paintings, done in a fractured style with a medium-width brush. Schmersal's rocky coasts recall Monet's, while his arrangements of dead fish bring Hartley to mind. Through Jan. 18. (Thorp, 103 Prince St. Closed Dec. 24.)

**BERNAR VENET**—The artist has scattered throughout the gallery bent lengths of rusted steel—the fashionably muscular minimalist material. Collectively titled "Random Combinations of Undetermined Lines," the pieces are neither random nor undetermined, but they are far more appealing than Venet's standard arcs and curves, even though the