Julio Galán: *As I Wake Up*, 1985, oil on canvas, 79 by 100 inches; at Sotheby's.

tive. On the left side of the canvas a dog in red shorts holding a knife in one of its paws appears to swing through the room on a rope. Galán fractures, and sometimes rebuilds, the spaces of life, adding the invisible and the semi-visible to what we usually see. His policy of incongruence (expressed through unrelated scale, false perspective, unreal color), is always pleasurable and indicates an intuitive intelligence at work.

Smith's *Self Portrait As My Father,* a huge 96-by-192-inch canvas, shows the artist's face on the far right side with one arm extended straight toward the left, taking up most of the painting. The work dramatizes patriarchal authority as it must have filtered into the son's consciousness. The work is a bold statement that successfully uses a single image, with minor background work.

In other paintings Smith's mood is traceable to Magritte with touches of Hitchcock and the special effects of recent filmmaking. There are techno features—such as painted lightbulbs emerging from the heads of seagulls. Juxtaposition is used consistently to shock. For instance, in the large *La niña de los lirios* (The Girl of the Lillies), 1987, a human-size frog is superimposed on a naked woman, while smaller frogs of various sizes sit on parts of her body.

At Barquet, it appeared that in their more recent works both artists are searching for new painterly approaches with varying success. Galán, in a series of watercolors on paper presenting beautifully drawn heads of young men with protruding glass eyes, finds something that is both new and interesting. But he seems to have quickly abandoned this fruitful direction to fall into less fascinating territory (unless the selection was to blame here). As for Smith, the creation of an abstract foreground through which we see representational imagery could be a promising project. However, his beach scenes and big portraits of pets seen through a foreground of horizontal stripes seem tentative.

—Eduardo Costa

Francis Picabia at Michael Werner

Although Francis Picabia's paintings of anthropomorphic, often sexualized, mechanical forms from before and just after World War I are routinely exhibited alongside the art of his contemporaries, his subsequent work from the 1920s until his death in 1953 has received only infrequent public exposure, and rarely comprehensive at that. This remarkably representative exhibition of 42 oils and gouaches from that later period suggests why. Picabia was a chameleonlike artist, instantly adopting and as readily discarding one artistic vocabulary after another. His early work passed through the styles of Impressionism, Orphism, Dada, Surrealism, and verbal and visual collage; his later art extended from compositions that superimpose linear painted figures upon one another (and, sometimes, several of those on a painted ground), to paintings based on pinup nudes and commercial illustrations and, finally, to coarse, heavily textured canvases that depict totems, masks and shields.

Yet this restless, quicksilver proclivity for change came to suggest not so much a continual transformation in artistic premises—as it would with another protean artist such as Picasso—but the absence of any artistic commitments at all. For Picabia, it was as if only the appearance of the style mattered, but not the imperatives that initially gave the style its urgency. Too early for his practice to be regarded as an ironic stance toward all forms of visual representation, and burdened with a rich inheritance and playboy sensibility, Picabia struck high-minded modernists (such as his friend Duchamp) as insufficiently principled in both art and life.

Paintings rendered with the overlay technique—mainly from the 1920s and '30s—predominated in the show at Michael Werner, perhaps because that style became more genuinely Picabia's own than any of the others. It appears to prefigure a similar compositional strategy in postmodern art. Indeed, in its affinities with the work of Sigmar Polke and David Salle, Picabia's late work often looks strikingly contemporary. But whereas the work of those artists achieves a meaningful dissonance through a sundry aggregation of disjunctive motifs, Picabia's layered images serve to reinforce one another within each painting, coalescing in their signification into a unified expression or theme: in one case it is the seductive menace of his *Portrait of Kiki* (ca. 1938-40), a demimonde figure painted in lurid yellows and greens with a spider form imposed over her face; in another it is the cheesy eroticism of *Rève* (ca. 1935), an image of a sleeping woman about to be kissed imposed over a nude standing (like Botticelli's Venus, but with arms upraised) on the surface of the waves. Some of these overlay works reflect an interest less in an image's expressive power than in its status as a visual cliché (the dark-eyed women with flawless lips drawn in the unmodulated line of romance comic-book or movie-poster illustrations, for example). Other works, painted from magazine photographs and snapshots, such as the *Portrait d'un couple* (ca. 1942-43), blandly reproduce their borrowed artificial compositions wholesale, definitively neutralizing any of the meaning the image in its original form may once have yielded.

—Jonathan Gilmore

Kenny Scharf at Tony Shafrazi

Unlike his cohorts of the early 1980s, Keith Haring and Jean-Michel Basquiat, Kenny Scharf has yet to be given a major New York museum exhibition. A good case could be made for one. In this exhibition, as in his previous show at Shafrazi, Scharf paints like a master who challenges himself with fresh technical problems and solutions, lavish-

Francis Picabia: *Adam and Eve*, ca. 1931, oil on canvas, 78¾ by 43¼ inches; at Michael Werner.