

tonal contrasts seems to magnify the modest image into a windswept snow-covered mountain crest marked by deep crevasses. Such transformative mystery marks Neumuth Mito's most successful images, which enticingly hover between realism and abstraction. —*Michaël Amy*

Robert Longo at Metro Pictures

If memory serves, back in the bombastic 1980s, an article about the hot artists of the moment—Robert Longo, David Salle, Eric Fischl and Julian Schnabel—ran under the title “The Four Horsemen of the Apocalypse.” While that appellation dripped with the lurid overstatement of the moment, in Longo's case it seems prescient. His most recent works, very large charcoal drawings based on documentary photographs of atomic bomb tests from the '40s and '50s, are chillingly beautiful in a way not unlike the imagery in the *Book of Revelations*.

Each drawing presents a single mushroom cloud rising majestically above an unpeopled horizon. One is struck by variations in the forms these deadly blasts can assume. Some shoot straight upward before exploding into glowing blossoms, while others seem to simultaneously burst upward and downward, covering the lower half of drawings with billowing waves of smoke. Ironically, in light of their deadly effects, all evoke organic metaphors. They bring to mind trees, flowers and branching foliage breaking into bloom before our eyes. Longo's drawings lovingly reproduce the peculiar effects of nuclear light that tips the edges of some clouds with glowing halos, leaves others

as ominous dark masses and transforms some into incandescent torches.

Rising to a height of 6 or 7 feet, these drawings tower over the viewer. They remind us that Longo has always had a cinematic sense of scale, exploiting size in his drawings and sculptures to evoke a sense of awe. In the past that awe often seemed a bit artificial, as the horrors invoked—the falling revelers, the corporate behemoths or the cybermonsters—seemed the stuff of Hollywood fantasy. A few years ago, images of mushroom clouds might have operated in a similar way. Today, however, these works hit us on a different level.

In the front gallery are single works from other recent series. One is an enlarged drawing of Albert Einstein's disheveled office in Princeton. The hastily scrawled notations on the blackboard, we can't help thinking, could be the template for the blasts depicted in the next room. Another drawing is marginally less unsettling, depicting crashing breakers glistening in the moonlight. The third, however, leads nicely into the mushroom clouds. Titled *Launch (Rocket)*, it represents a streak of light that unites sky and ground in a lightning flash that is both thrilling and frightening.

The same can be said of the mushroom clouds. The irony of the late 20th century has given way to the paranoia of the 21st. In this context, the show's title, “The Sickness of Reason” is, sadly, all too appropriate.

—*Eleanor Heartney*

Friedel Dzubas at Jacobson Howard

Born in Berlin in 1915, Friedel Dzubas fled Nazi Germany in

1939 and settled in New York in the late 1940s, joining a coterie of leading young painters that included Jackson Pollock and Helen Frankenthaler (with whom he shared a studio). He never achieved the prominence of those contemporaries but continued to develop his radiant abstractions well into the 1980s (he died in 1994). This exhibition consisted of seven large abstract oils from the years 1958-59.

Mostly working on unprimed canvas, Dzubas applied wide, thick strokes of paint over areas glazed in thin washes, forging a figure/ground relationship in which pictorially emphatic elements seem to be suspended before or above a murky depth. While largely nonrepresentational, even when bearing titles with which their compositions might be identified, the paintings seem full of natural forces like wind and water, and to be governed by the pull of gravity. Although the eye winds its way through the open depths of an abstract, nearly 10-foot-wide untitled work of 1959 (Dzubas worked large—one of his paintings is 24 feet wide), a broad blue strip along the canvas's bottom edge suggests a ground supporting three dominant figures that coalesce out of yellow, red and green brushstrokes. Here, and in most of his other works of this

moment, Dzubas gives a saliency to the canvas's lower edge, as if to suggest earth or sea, an upright orientation and an environment for his otherwise abstract forms.

In *Cyclop* (1959), a vertical canvas nearly 8 feet high, a lower section washed and scumbled in earthy pigments is topped by a configuration of wide white strokes circling a blue-black core. Above is a horizontal vermilion patch, suggesting an Adolph Gottlieb or Mark Rothko painting with discrete shapes floating above one another on an open field. But because of the title, the red registers as blood and the imagery suggests an enormous eye standing on spindly legs, grim as its pictorial antecedent, *The Cyclops of Odilon Redon*. In *White Whale* (1958), a work that evokes a moody German Romantic sea painting, large green and blue masses intimating a whale seem to float within a nebulous space of drifting vegetal life. Thin brown washes below imply a seabed and yellows and roses above read as light from the ocean's surface.

Other works are much easier in tone and carry with them echoes of different traditions. *Bird of Paradise* (1958) flaunts a torrent of ruffled blue, green and orange brushstrokes, suggesting the showy flowers of the title or perhaps an extravagant avian



Robert Longo: *Nagasaki*, 2003, charcoal on mounted paper, 8 by 6 feet; at Metro Pictures.

Mary Neumuth Mito: *Avenging Angel*, 2003, oil on canvas, 78 by 117 inches; at Gerald Peters.



display. It is a dazzling work that owes much to both the Nabis and Matisse. —Jonathan Gilmore

Lothar Baumgarten at Marian Goodman

One possible subject of this exhibition by Lothar Baumgarten may have been the politics of color or, perhaps, the color of politics. The installation titled *Imago Mundi* (1988) is based on two ostensibly unrelated systems: one is a color separation chart distributed by Kodak for commercial use, the other a list of continents and former colonial powers. Baumgarten reproduced the layout of the former on the walls of the rear gallery, inserting geographic names from the latter into places originally occupied by color blocks. Hence, we have black boxes containing the words "America," "Spain," "Portugal," etc., distributed across the wall, along with a list of four colors: cyan, yellow, magenta, black. For those baffled by the significance, the press release reports that these are "ethnic colors, representing the peoples of a diverse contemporary world society." Further underscoring the political message purportedly embedded in the merger of these two systems was a text, the work's subtitle, printed across the ceiling: "L'autre et L'ailleurs" ("others and otherness," according to the handout).

A second work based on color

analysis occupied the front gallery. Titled *Double Pendulum/Unity without Whole* (2002/03), it presents five "charts," each comprising five disks of painted aluminum or, occasionally, mirrors, of varying diameters. The configurations of the charts are identical—an axial arrangement oddly reminiscent of a paw print—but the colors change from one to the next. The subtitles of the five charts cite various Renaissance masters:

"Masaccio," for example, has two mirrors with circles of red and magenta, while "Fra Angelico" employs gentle shades of yellow, gray and blue. The colors seem to relate to each artist's palette, while the mirrors may be a reference to the Renaissance ideal of mimesis. Again, the conflation of systems or concepts, here the deconstruction of color and the "genius" of Renaissance painters, may be intended to convey a larger political message about connections between art and mammon. But who knows? The press release suggests that this work "signifies the standstill of motion and time."

One turned with relief to the nature images in *Feldweg* (2002/03), the three-part slide-projection installation in the middle gallery. In the section subtitled "Track across the fields," paired black-and-white stills of rocks, paving stones and bits of rural ground flash onto the adjacent walls of a corner. In another, called "farm road," a similar pairing is projected side by side on a



View of Friedel Dzubas's exhibition "Paintings of the 1950s," 2004; at Jacobson Howard.

single wall. The third, a round slide projection subtitled "Tondo," provides a succession of dramatic views of cloudy skies and is actually quite beautiful, apart from whatever conceptual weight it is intended to bear.

These works, along with an installation of diamond- and key-hole-shaped mirrors running down the long hallway that connects the principal galleries, were elegantly presented but remained conceptually oblique. As in Baumgarten's explorations of such charged political and cultural issues as the fate of the Yanomami Indians in Brazil and the eradication of Native Americans by the early colonists, the opacity of his language threatens to render the critique all but impenetrable to those who don't consult the none-too-helpful press release. —Eleanor Heartney

Ernst Caramelle at Lawrence Markey

In this season of war and rumors of war, it's a relief to find art that reminds us how the world can still contain simplicity, order and a kind of amiable beauty. That's the feeling one had, at any rate, at the Lawrence Markey Gallery this spring. A recent show presented the abstractions of Ernst Caramelle, an Austrian Conceptual artist whose work has long reflected a fascination with rooms, walls and architecture in general.

The show's main attraction was eight framed and untitled paper collages, five measuring roughly 10 by 16 inches and three 10 by 7 inches. Created from tinted construction paper meticulously cut

into rectangles, squares and other shapes composed of parallel lines or perpendicular angles, the works are the original models for an art insert that ran in a 1991 issue of *Parkeet* magazine. Caramelle calls this sort of work *Reproduktionen*—commercially reproduced images, like postcards, that become art "in their own right." Several of the collages appear slightly aged, exhibiting separations between the planes of paper where the glue has worn away, areas where the color has faded (the artist is known for *Sonnenbilder*, or "sun pictures," in which he allows sunlight to alter the tone of the paper) and at least one small tear. True to his interest in encouraging the passage of time to leave its mark on his art, however, Caramelle seemed content with letting these small imperfections stand.

Despite their formalistic qualities, the collages conjure up pleasing associations. One work, consisting of yellow, red and blue rectangles mounted on a white background, resembles a zoom-in look at a Mondrian painting. Another piece suggests the experience of peering through several proscenium entrances in a museum at part of a rectangular red painting in a distant gallery. A third collage plays with the notion of architectural alignment, evoking a view past irregularly spaced blue, gray and cream-colored walls to a red chamber beyond.

Drawing upon elements of topography and natural phenomena, the collages represent a kind of distillation of Caramelle's concerns over the last 20 years of his career. Reinforcing the collages was another hallmark of the

Lothar Baumgarten: *Double Pendulum/Unity without Whole*, 2002-03, painted aluminum, mirror, dimensions variable. Courtesy Marian Goodman Gallery.



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