

Art in America



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REVIEW OF EXHIBITIONS



Fabian Marcaccio: *Time-Paintants*, 1999, mixed mediums, approx. 8 1/2 by 112 1/2 feet; at Gorney Bravin + Lee.

NEW YORK

Fabian Marcaccio at Gorney Bravin + Lee

Fabian Marcaccio remains one of the most innovative and challenging painters around. His big, bold-colored abstractions are infiltrated with all sorts of other elements, such as computer-manipulated photographic imagery printed directly on the canvas. He's also known for the unorthodox formats of his works, which often twist and jut from the walls, conflating painting and sculpture. This exhibition, billed as a "painting installation," consisted not of discrete canvases but of a single elongated painting that wrapped around the gallery walls and protruded into the space via a system of metal supports. At once dizzying and unwieldy, Marcaccio's painting-contraption awakened thoughts of wall murals, advertising billboards, political banners and theatrical scenery—precisely the kind of ambiguous combination that this artist favors.

Titled *Time-Paintant* ("paintant," a term coined by Marcaccio, is a cross between "painting" and "mutant"), the work is divided into nine different areas, each duly labeled on the canvas. The sections nevertheless merge into one another, like the pictorial equivalent of a DJ's musical mix. In the first section, "Dub-

Paintant," there is a thick, almost junglelike tangle of green leaves digitally printed onto the canvas. Several of the leaves morph into real green brushstrokes, one of numerous instances where photographic reproduction blends with a hands-on painterly touch. Below the leaves there's a jumble of printed sections of magnified canvas weave, splattered colors and twisting biomorphic shapes. In "Image-Addiction Paintant," swirling green brushstrokes and an outsized, splattering red droplet recall and mock Abstract Expressionist techniques. It takes a while to register just how much else is going on here: images of cigarettes, stones, a crowd scene, a black star filled with bubbles and another star replete with a skull-and-crossbones motif.

Present throughout are Marcaccio's vigorous variations on the basic elements of painting, such as large brushstrokes in prominent colors that trail into brittle ridges and gobs of transparent silicone gel. Surprises abound, as flecks of color in one part of the work turn out, on closer inspection, to be explicit pornographic vignettes culled (the artist says) from an X-rated Web site. Visual overload notwithstanding, everything about this turbulent room-painting seemed amazingly coherent.

—Gregory Volk

L.C. Armstrong at Postmasters

L.C. Armstrong is known for abstract paintings that incorporate single marks, which she forms by laying lengths of bomb fuse on the canvas, igniting them and holding them in place while they burn. Such marks appear in her striking new acrylic landscape paintings, but now with a twist: they've become stems holding up brilliantly colored flowers, some faithfully reproduced from nature, others invented by Armstrong.

In *View from 30,000* (1999), an aerial display of these flowers fills a portion of the cloudy sky; on the left, part of an airplane wing zips through the floral extravaganza. Armstrong's flowers-in-the-air are gorgeous and also touchingly whimsical; it's as if they're leaving the bounds of earth to grow right into the heavens on their precarious yet strangely menacing stems. Yet they also recall a fireworks display or anti-aircraft fire. Throughout these paintings, beauty and anxiety share close quarters.

The works in this show engage a utopian, nature-based strain in American art, but Armstrong introduces startling shifts that are all her own. Her nature vistas

also coolly refer to the kitschy scenes found on the sides of customized vans and in 1970s black-light posters. The metallic colors that she favors are closer to shiny auto veneers than to anything organic. And the way she seals everything behind a layer of resin reinforces the journeying quality of her work, as if each piece were a window into an alternative reality.

Romantic Landscape (1999), a panoramic triptych that shows a lake surrounded by mountains, is reminiscent of expansive Hudson River School scenes. The flowers in the foreground are fecund and erotic, but they also seem creepily mutant, as if growing from the ruins of some postapocalyptic landscape. The surrounding mountains are all smoking, as if poised to erupt. Meanwhile, a mermaid perched on a rock in the lake listens to a Walkman; two snowmen on an adjacent rock greet the rising sun with their stick hands, although this event will presumably melt them; and a shark advances on a swimmer in trouble. This is a dysfunctional paradise, an Eden subject to all sorts of bewildering pressures and logic-defying surprises. Like the rest of the works in Armstrong's show, it is both enthralling and jarring.

—Gregory Volk

L.C. Armstrong: *Eighty-Sixed*, 1999, acrylic, bomb fuse and resin on panel, 42 by 36 inches; at Postmasters.

