

boo catsuit that reveals the pre-pubescent simplicity of her sex. Her face is a cipher, a blank, except for two empty, almond-shaped eyes and the traces of two larger ones that have since been painted over. Not only is the optical veracity of the contour put at risk, but the devouring gaze is directed not outward but toward a version of the self: it is narcissistic. And it offers nothing of visual or semantic plenitude, refuses to fulfill its promise of possession. As both the subject and object of desire, Tyson creates a knot in the visual chain that leads from artist to model.

—Aruna D'Souza



Nicola Tyson: *Spilled Guts*, 1999, acrylic on canvas, 82 by 72 inches; at Friedrich Petzel.

John Currin at Andrea Rosen

A painterly fugue of attenuated limbs, perky breasts, fecund bellies and other suggestive but impenetrable iconographic details plays across the disturbingly handsome, if unexamined, surfaces of John Currin's recent crypto-mannerist nudes. In this exhibition he escalates his evident enjoyment of handling paint in a way that is as playfully engaging as it is provocative. At the same time he bypasses the rigor, conviction and moral authority of more ambitious artists associated with figurative and art-historical concerns.

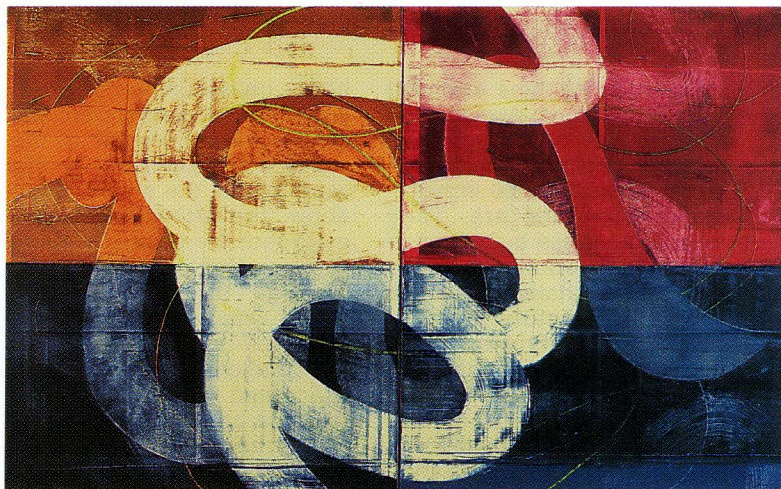
While remaining improbable

in anatomical proportion, his newest women are less the objects of inflated pneumatic desire than those previously rendered. Among them, *The Hobo* and *Sno-bo*, similar-sized portraits of cheerful wayfarers lacking only spring and fall to complete a season cycle, faced each other across the gallery. In between, adorned with a tumble of garden-variety lepidoptera, *Rachel and Butterflies* rehearsed the birth of Venus. In *The Pink Tree* and *The Old Fence*, coy figures recalled the winsome contestants in Cranach's *Judgment of Paris*. Perhaps personifying the things of nature,

these nymphs are ornamented with a tangle of spurious clues: backpack and walking stick, empty glass vessel and shepherd's crook, along with several arm-, wrist- and waistbands of what might be leather, ribbon and gold, embellished with a folded napkin and gemstones. There were capably rendered tendrils of hair, a garment as translucent as voile cut from the cloth of thinned oil, a tree resembling broken coral, lively eyes and loopy smiles.

The brushy, bourgeois domesticity of three intimate genre paintings amplified the studious wit of Currin's more than academic exercise. Populated with modish figures given exaggerated features, angular (the women) or doughy (the

men), they seemed to illustrate a moment in a narrative, like *New Yorker* cartoons, lacking only context and caption. The frosted cake of *Birthday* demonstrates a skill with knife as well as brush, the icing a controlled lather of sugary oil, luminous candle flames swaying in a draft. The more inclusive *Homemade Pasta* provides a kitchen setting for two ostensibly male figures as they preside over the birth of fettuccine. Currin manages a stack of plates with a few strokes of china white, gives solidity to a single bowl and frames the setting with the regularity of a stenciled border on the wall above. If these paintings demonstrate a remarkable agenda, they provoke the



David Row: *Phosphor*, 1999, oil and alkyd on canvas, 60 by 96 inches; at von Lintel & Nusser.

viewer to wonder where Currin is going and just how honorable his intentions are. Empty vessel or not, this showing advances the claims of disciplined painting on our attention.

—Edward Leffingwell

David Row at von Lintel & Nusser

David Row has developed a unique and intensive painting technique that, in itself, is seductive and gorgeous. Layers of oil and alkyd are scraped on and scraped off pairs of oversize wood or canvas panels to create rich, dense tapestries of color. The process of scraping, which hides some colors while others are revealed in a random manner, provides a balance to Row's precisely delineated figuration—in this case, controlled gesture in the form of undulating ribbons that resemble loosely tied knots.

In the past, Row's paintings depended heavily on the flashy effects his methods could produce, and often appeared more calculated than heartfelt. But now, rather than being driven by his process, Row emerges as its master; the paintings in this latest exhibition, all from 1999, are less complicated and more cohesive than before, and they express a new lyricism and vitality. Showy but not slick, the work has a new painterly depth and dimension that take it beyond the surface. Harsh primary hues and stark black and white have given way to a more refined and integrated use of color, both brilliant and subtle. No longer impeded by disjointed panels and awkwardly placed blocks of flatly applied pigment, Row's tangled imagery holds forth with serpentine sensuality.

Phosphor is clearly named for the pale, luminous green that animates a thick, pythonlike convulsion which winds up from the bottom of the horizontal canvas and takes several loops around itself before exiting at the top. The shape is reflected in mirror images, like ghosts or shadows, that swirl in the background—fiery reds and oranges above the horizon, dark watery blues below—and in the swooping scratched-and-painted threads that give motion to the whole. Underlying it all is an implied grid, and the interplay between the visceral and geometric gives the painting much of its tension. There is potency, too, in the way Row balances on the fine line between image and abstraction; his ribbons go beyond the organic to suggest complicated highway interchanges, twisting mountain roads, meandering rivers, as well as affiliations with Celtic interlace—efforts by man or nature to contain spontaneous activity. At once active and harmonious, they raise the possibility of order within chaos.

—Carol Diehl

Andrew Moore at Yancey Richardson

As the Soviet bloc disintegrated it became evident to the West that some former communist nations had left standing many architectural relics that in capitalist countries would have surely fallen into the insatiable maw of real-estate development. In this exhibition of recent photos of Havana by New York photographer Andrew Moore, it's clear that Cuba also harbors a treasure trove of architectural gems, albeit in a state of woeful decay.