

ARTnews

JANUARY 2012

Clyfford
Still:
A Bigger
Picture

The Case of the
Stolen Turners

Who Shot
van Gogh?

Iván Navarro:
Man of Refraction





Max Jansons, *What's Not to Love?*, 2011, oil on linen, 22" x 30". Graham.

Max Jansons

Graham

New York native Max Jansons paints exceedingly charming stylized flowers in vases, as well as teapots and modernist-influenced abstractions. For his whimsical portraits of indoor plant life, he used curved forms to convey a sense of movement, as if each posed "posy" or vine were in the process of growing. Flowing forms such as buds and leaves filled each canvas to its edges and complemented the zigzag patterns of the vases.

In *What's Not to Love?* (2011) a hushed gray-blue field provides the background for the low-key pinks and pale yellows of the dancing blooms. In *Frank's Plant* (2011) the brown, olive, and gray foliage resembles comic-strip speech balloons.

Adding to the buoyant animation of each painting were the artist's smaller brushstrokes. From close up we could see curlicues looping in on one another inside the shape's outline, actively involved in the process of their being created. In a quaint touch, Jansons lined the edges of every canvas with old-fashioned carpenter's tacks, effectively reminding us that we were looking at a painting and not reality. Smaller canvases presented fanciful teapots in profile, their handles coiled as if fitted to a specific unseen hand.

In another group of smaller works inspired by modernism, the artist made abstraction as pleasing as could be imag-

ined and used intimate scale to great effect. These works could be viewed as miniature maps of imaginary places. All of Jansons's choreographed plants and colorful abstracts were composed with a deliberate hand and a visceral response to life's simpler visual treats.

—Doug McClemont

UP NOW

Amaranth Ehrenhalt

Anita Shapolsky

Through January 31

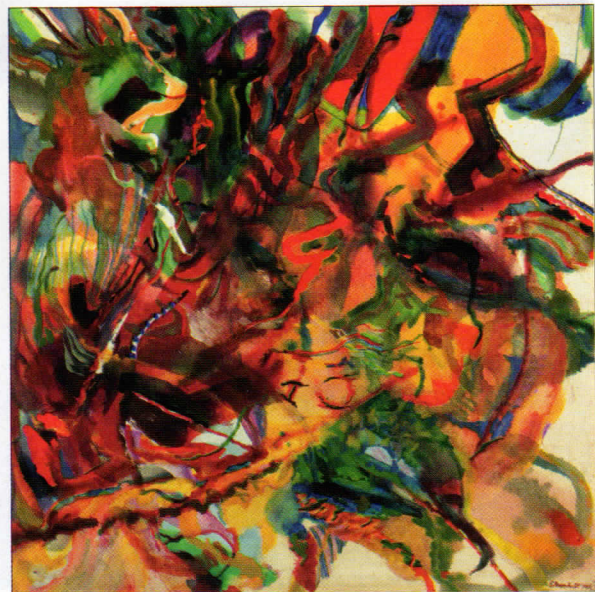
After a career spanning more than half a century, Amaranth Ehrenhalt is finally having her first solo gallery show in New York. This still-working second-generation Abstract Expressionist proves herself an inspired colorist in many mediums, including oil, watercolor, tapestry, mosaic, sculpture, and prints. Traces of the Fauves, as well as of de Kooning and Pollock, hover but don't dominate.

Ehrenhalt first hit her artistic stride near the

end of the 1950s with oil-on-canvas works like *Octameter* (1959), a stenographic jotting of tumultuous vermilion, blues, and greens, injected with white and purple-blacks. Her work is as kinetic as it is colorful. In the sensuous *Carmona* (1957), an explosion of warm colors, tempered with blue and sea-green fissures, seems to send the canvas spinning. Painted in almost transparent layers, the work evokes the mutability of the elements, of fire, air, and water.

Later works, like the striking watercolor/gouache *Vesti* (1974), with its abstract shapes, sharply delineated by black lines, take a less gestural approach but still conjure a visual carnival. Ehrenhalt's combinations of color and texture, light and dark, surprise at every turn. In the mosaic *I sette giorni della settimana* (2002), she places a circle of tumbling bird shapes on a prismatic background, putting Op-art effects to lyrical purpose. Black and white marble triangles support colorful painted ones in the sculpture *Black Bear 2* (2000), whose segments rotate on an axis when they are touched. *Aubrietta* (2008), a small but bold abstract tapestry of rippling blues, lavenders, and greens, enlivened by splotches of orange and yellow, may suddenly suggest the bottom of the ocean floor, covered with shells, coral, and rocks. Whether working with wool, marble, tiles, or paint, Ehrenhalt is fascinated with the physical stuff of this world.

—Mona Molarsky



Amaranth Ehrenhalt, *Carmona*, 1957, oil on canvas, 40" x 40".

Anita Shapolsky.