

Raven Schlossberg at James Graham & Sons

Raven Schlossberg is a young painter whose work was featured in Graham's pattern show the summer before last. In that exhibition, the new busyness of so much of today's abstraction seemed linked to obsessive nostalgia and melancholy remembrance. Schlossberg's abstract paintings include a lively smattering of collaged materials—including pictures from old Dick and Jane books and nudes from vintage girlie magazines—presented in the crowded manner of San Francisco beat artist Jess.

Of her dozen or so paintings here, *The Pink Elephants* perhaps best exemplified Schlossberg's technique and taste, if only because the title underscores the hallucinatory humor of her work. On a fairly big sheet of pink vinyl, the stuff that retro Middle Americans still use to spillproof the kitchen table, Schlossberg has furiously doodled, in swift loops made by dripping paint from a drinking straw (her attachment to plastic is fetishistic), a strange and barely legible clown. Though it is said to be a chorus figure, the image's obscure automatic-drawing quality betrays it as merely a device to entice you to follow the trail of loops through the painting, and thus to find meaning. While the drippy facture of the painting can sometimes suggest a deconstructed Pollock, Schlossberg seems more interested in creating a lively ground for collage than in expressing herself.

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Raven Schlossberg: *Path of Poets*, 2000, paper and ink collage with acrylic/glass tint on Naugahyde, 48 by 36 inches; at James Graham & Sons.



As for the collaged imagery, the polarity between sweet little pinafoored girls and pale pink "bunnies" baring all can be read as a commentary on what little girls are really made of or as an indication of what kids sometimes get an eyeful of, and maybe never recover from. In most of the other works, the mental activity of comparing and contrasting collage elements rules. In *Sunset*, Schlossberg cleverly contrasts boys in pj's with the robed disciples sleeping in Gethsemane, while

Path of Poets got my literary juices flowing by showing a boy surrounded with '60s Book of the Month Club selections such as Harper Lee's *To Kill a Mockingbird*, James Michener's *Hawaii* and John F. Kennedy's *Profiles in Courage*. Here again, Schlossberg seems to be worrying about what becomes of children and their dreams. Overall, the frisson created by shuttling from sweet nostalgia to simpering nudity and from childhood hopes to adult realities makes for a complex and compelling art. Schlossberg is a promising new follower of the tradition of collaged painting practiced by Sigmar Polke and David Salle.

—Robert Mahoney