
Art in Review

■ Joseph Beuys, under glass ■ Mark Tansey's 'in' jokes ■ Wet babies by Adam Fuss ■ Ron Gorchov's bridge between styles ■ A museum's anniversary.

1950's, when he first started exhibiting in New York. Abstract Expressionism was on the wane, and the Color Field painting of Helen Frankenthaler and Morris Louis was being touted as the next hot thing. Mr. Gorchov's new abstract paintings have their ups and downs, but in the main they seem to be negotiating a fairly credible truce between these two historically opposed styles.

The artist continues to use the eccentrically shaped canvases that have been a constant in his art for nearly 20 years: with top and bottom edges that curve forward and sides that hug the walls, these canvases create the rather welcoming effect of cupping the image and holding it out for consideration. On these surfaces, Mr. Gorchov works with increasing abandon, making big looping calligraphic strokes, near-shapes and shapes that are full of emotional tumult (they sometimes suggest big hands or drifting ghosts) but that are usually brought off in luminous tones suggestive of watercolors.

The thinness of the oil paint means the different layers of the painting tend to show through at the center while disintegrating into rivulets of drips around the edges — a focus that seems entirely appropriate to the concave surfaces. Certain works are layered to the point of confusion: the large canvas titled "How the Uncles Escaped Disaster" is something of a disaster itself, indecisive and overloaded. But many of the smaller canvases, with simpler images, have a kind of loose-limbed perfection. And the middle-sized painting called "Erinna" allows us to relive the free but careful structuring of its gatelike image stroke by stroke.

Also on view are a number of watercolors on curved handmade paper that are too slight and too derivative of Oriental letters. Mr. Gorchov is better on canvas, when he makes oil paint imitate watercolor and flirts with but never quite embraces calligraphy.

ROBERTA SMITH

Ron Gorchov

Jack Tilton Gallery
24 West 57th Street
Manhattan
Through tomorrow

More than ever, Ron Gorchov seems to be returning to a moment in painting that existed in the late