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ART PREVIEWS

ART PREVIEWS; As Fall Beckons, Women Rule

By Benjamin Genocchio

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O.K., you art trivia dragons out there, and I know you're there, when was the last time a majority of New York art museums had exhibitions of female artists?

The answer is hardly ever, at least to my knowledge, which makes this fall's near sweep of the region's museum exhibitions by female artists all the more remarkable. Is it some happy coincidence, or do they rule the art hinterland?

Female artists, generally, do not enjoy the same renown as some of their male counterparts. It is an old problem, but the whole idea of artistic genius is so bound up with myths of loutish, brush-wielding men battling the crusty forces of reaction that the public has a hard time imagining women in the role.

It follows that gate-needy New York City museums, under pressure to show the biggest draw, rather than expand the canon, often pass on exhibitions of artwork by women.

Women often wind up showing in smaller museums outside New York City. These places have more latitude, and can afford to show great artists who mightn't otherwise get the gate. They can also afford to be adventurous, promoting the work of artists who might not be so well known by the public but who are highly respected among their peers. Many female artists fit this category.

Those who would use this as a soapbox to lecture the art world are right. It is unfair. But then again, this is glad news for regional art lovers who like good art but don't care who made it. And who knows, maybe one day these regional, more experimental art places might supersede art-stately New York City.

Perhaps it has already begun. In the last 18 months, the Westchester region has seen the opening of two gargantuan centers devoted to advanced art: the Hudson Valley Center for Contemporary Art in Peekskill and Dia: Beacon. The impact of these centers is sweeping and complex, with artists now settling up here in droves.

In the meantime, let's take a look at what is doing in and around Westchester this fall. In addition to continuing, scheduled solo shows by Agnes Martin, Shahzia Sikander, April Gornik, Chakaia Booker, Elba Damast and Sandra Tomboloni, there are fine-themed group shows, an edgy exhibition about the nexus between popular music and video, and a print retrospective by hardy blue-chipper Richard Diebenkorn.

If one exhibition stands out, it is "April Gornik: Paintings and Drawings" at the Neuberger Museum of Art. This much-anticipated exhibition presents a midcareer survey of Ms. Gornik's brooding, angst-filled landscapes from 1980 to the present. The exhibition will travel nationally through 2005.

Among touring shows from other sites, the pick is "Birdspace: A Post Audubon Artists Aviary" at the Hudson River Museum. You say what? This nutty mix investigates the prevalence of bird and bird culture subjects in contemporary art since the early 1990's, with contributions by artists like Jacqueline Bishop, Ross Bleckner, Petah Coyne, Walton Ford, Adam Fuss, Roni Horn, Ernesto Pujol, Kiki Smith, Fred Tomaselli and Thomas Woodruff. Those birders are everywhere.

What follows is a sampling of what is in store for art audiences this season.

Neuberger Museum

Organized by Dede Young, the museum's curator of modern and contemporary Art, "April Gornik: Paintings and Drawings" features more than 40 of the artist's monumental and small-scale paintings and drawings. Most of the works are on loan from major museum and private collections throughout the United States. The show, which opened late last month, continues through Feb. 13.

Ms. Gornik, 51, and one of America's foremost landscape artists, has never had an exhibition of this scope and scale. The exhibition follows the evolution of her work, focusing on the way she has pushed the traditional landscape genre in new directions by manipulating scale, color and content. Many of her landscapes are composites of real places, but others are purely imaginary. The most charismatic pictures are a selection of boldly monumental, romantic landscapes, which have the moody eloquence (without the sentimentality) of Turner.

Aldrich Museum

Fresh from an \$8 million renovation and expansion, this chic museum on the border of Westchester and Fairfield Counties is presenting "Shahzia Sikander: Nemesis," an exhibition of recent animations, drawings, and a site-specific installation by the Pakistan-

born, New York-based artist. Ms. Sikander's tranced-out, trippy artworks tinker with the conventions of traditional miniature painting, combining formal slickness with imaginative flair. The show opens Sept. 19.

Running alongside is "Bottle: Contemporary Art and Vernacular Tradition," also opening Sept. 19, exploring the use of the bottle in contemporary art. Curated by the in-house director of exhibitions, Richard Klein, the show includes high-spirited works by Joseph Beuys, Dove Bradshaw, Bethany Bristow, Tony Feher, Phil Frost, David Hammons, Mona Hatoum, Damien Hirst, Whitfield Lovell, Josiah McElheny, Barry McGee, Charles Ray, Alison Saar and Kiki Smith. Should be a smash. Both shows close Jan. 5.

Hudson River Museum

This museum often presents family-oriented group exhibitions containing interesting individual works. This fall it is the host to "Birdspace: A Post Audubon Artists Aviary," an appetizing exhibition of more than 70 works by 50 artists looking at the prevalence of bird imagery in contemporary art. Curated by David S. Rubin, and touring from the New Orleans Contemporary Arts Center, the exhibition is the first major thematic museum exhibition to survey the subject. It opens Oct. 9 and continues through Jan. 2.

Frances Lehman Loeb Art Center

Things are more cerebral up here, where "Evidence Revisited" reprises a pivotal moment in the history of appropriation photography. That moment centers on the artists Larry Sultan and Mike Mandel's 1977 traveling exhibition and book, which showcases 89 photographs selected from the files of government archives, research laboratories, corporate offices, and law enforcement agencies. Sound sinister? Not really. The project helped inspire varied uses of appropriated imagery in art. "Evidence Revisited" pairs the project's original prints with documentary material. It opens Oct. 2 and continues through Dec. 19.

Hudson Valley Center for Contemporary Art

This museum is the most dynamic contemporary art site in Westchester. This month sees the unveiling of a jaunty on-site installation by the center's first artist-in-residence, Sandra Tomboloni, 55, of Italy, who has spent the last couple of months building a phantasmagoric, childlike sanctuary filled with plasticine sculptures, recycled toys and furniture scavenged from dump bins. Titled "Lost and Found," it is all about familial loss, confusion and conflict. It is Dr. Freud meets Henry Darger. It opens Sept. 19 and continues through June 2005.

To coincide with the opening of Ms. Tomboloni's installation, the center is sponsoring "The Peekskill Project," Sept. 18 and 19, consisting of site-specific artworks, panel discussions, guest lectures and open studio tours. For the site-specific artworks, prominent curators

have selected artists from New York City and Westchester to create pieces in response to the City of Peekskill. Works will be set up in shops, alleyways, homes, delis, bars, restaurants and parking lots.

Bronx Museum

This museum, an honorary Westchesterite, is presenting "Music/Video," featuring short single-channel videos by artists influenced by music videos. Videos range from clips of artist bands performing covers of pop songs to critiques of pop music videos and the commercial music industry. Artists include Assume Vivid Astro Focus, Slater Bradley, Candice Breitz, Jonathan Hernández, Nam June Paik, Pipilotti Rist, Marina Rosenfeld and Susan Smith-Pinelo. It opens Oct. 20 and continues through Dec. 31.

Katonah Museum

This museum is offering a retrospective of Richard Diebenkorn's printmaking. Primarily a painter, many of the prints show him working through formal ideas and thematic motifs that appear in his paintings. They also show off the range of print techniques he used during his lifetime, including etching, lithography and woodcut. The prints are good, at any rate, placing this among the fall's meatier exhibitions. The exhibition runs through Oct. 3.

Lehman College Art Gallery

This teaching gallery is the perfect setting for Elba Damast's "Memories of Things to Come," a multimedia installation based on childhood experiences of school. It includes found school desks and chairs (from 1940's Bronx classrooms), mirrors, bronze heart sculptures and videos of children and passing strangers. The show opens Sept. 7, continuing through Dec. 15, alongside the Lehman College Art Department faculty exhibition.

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