Verne Dawson
“Rabbit”
Oil on canvas
FlashArt

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MUNTEAN & ROSENBLUM
“We are interested in superficiality. Lifestyle magazines are very much aimed for superficial gloss. The superficial quality is the signifier, but we are not looking for linear legibility. The white border plays a major part in our pictures; this means the work is not a complete excerpt, and there is a relative quantity and a lack of completeness. Painting gives these lifestyle and fashion figures an aura and charisma that are all their own and that only painting can achieve. We collect the images from books and magazines. They are banal. The texts are samples, like figures, and are created from fragments.”
(Interview by Johanna Hofeleiner, “Tirana Biennale 1,” 2001)
Out of sorts (detail), 2000. Acrylic and graphite on paper, 48 x 30 cm.

TAKASHI MURAKAMI
“Super Flat began because my L.A. dealer, Tim Blum, said: ‘Your painting has this amazing quality, it’s super flat.’ Super Flat is a very good marketing word. When I think about animation, I’m thinking about what Japanese society is now, and how contemporary art is linked with historical things, with Western art history and the traditional Japanese way. Super Flat and its definition have started to be controversial. I thought with Super Flat I was creating what Richard Hamilton did when he defined Pop Art.”
(Interview by Cheryl Kaplan, Flash Art #219)
Represented by: Koyama Tokyo; Blum & Poe, Santa Monica; Marianne Boesky, New York.

Mushroom Bomb, 2001. Acrylic on canvas, 180 x 180 cm.

LAURA OWENS
Euclid (Ohio), 1970.
Lives and works in Los Angeles.
“I want to make paintings that are simply about looking at a painting,” she has said. And though she leaps through the history of painting, dabbles in collage and photography, folk art, and design, meanwhile generously embracing any subject she might come across, the resulting paintings, astonishingly enough, are also simply “paintings about looking at a painting.”
(Kirsty Bell, “The Mystery of Painting,” Munich, 2002)
Represented by: Gavin Brown, New York; Sadie Coles HQ, London; ACME, Los Angeles; Studio Guenzani, Milan.

ENOC PEREZ
San Juan (Portoric), 1967.
Lives and works in New York.
His painting is based on snapshots of daily life. His works are both excited tributes and attempts to take the distance from the desire for love. Perez doesn’t try to reveal this mystery, he rather uses it as a primal element in his work. (. . .) The portrayed figures seem distant, they emerge from darkness only to dissolve in it again. They’re often cut-up or fragmented. The power of the cut puts the emphasis on the ephemeralism of the moment — the scene took place under Perez’s eye and then it fades away.
(From galeriemichaeljanssen.de, 2002)
Represented by: Michael Janssen, Cologne.

MIchael RAEDECKER
Amsterdam, 1963. Lives and works in Amsterdam.
“It seems maybe obsolete to do landscape. But I hope that with the ‘landscapes’ I do there is this sense of timelessness. The great outdoors has always been there, long before us, and nothing has changed ever since. And we have always been puzzled by how to relate to this ‘thing’ that’s as mysterious as life itself. (. . .) It might not be compatible with the times we live in; it can’t keep up with TV or the media. But since the media is omnipresent we need a barrier against ‘reality,’ and that’s probably why there is a new wave of interest painting.”
(Interview by Patricia Ellis, Flash Art #213)
Represented by: Andrea Rosen, New York; Raucci/Santamaria, Naples.


Catherine, 1999. 125 x 155 cm.

FOCUS PAINTING PART ONE

CONTemporary Painting Today

Dividing art according to media may seem like an outdated exercise. Yet if we look at larger survey exhibitions from the past two years, we realize that painting may be an exception. Exhibitions like “Painting at the Edge of the World” at the Walker Art Center in Minneapolis (2001), or more recently, “Dear Painter” at the Centre Pompidou in Paris, and “Painting on the Move” at the Basel Kunsthalle, reveal an episodic urge to regroup, to consider and even pronounce a prognosis for the health of the medium. As Walker Art Center curator Douglas Fogle has suggested, this has an historic precedent: “For centuries painting was THE artistic medium bar none. All the legendary exhibitions in the modern period were painting exhibitions. Perhaps we feel the need to take a litmus test of the art world by having painting exhibitions.”

There may also be some sense of renewal, of periodically and ceremoniously purging painting of its historic baggage, making way for a new understanding of painting practice — to collectively reign the sort of “ignorant state” that John Currin describes in a conversation with Center Pompidou curator Alison M. Gingeras, also published in this issue. Following “Focus Germany” (Flash Art May/June 2002) and “Focus Mexico” (Flash Art July/September 2002), we continue our commitment to exploring specific art territories in “Focus Painting — Part One” including profiles on contemporary artists who have emerged over the last 10 years, and a series of companion feature articles and panel discussions. This first selection represents a wide range of both established and emerging artists. We have not included profiles on artists who are featured elsewhere in this issue (Verne Dawson, John Currin, Kamin Klimas, Peter Doig, Lucy McKenzie, Tomma Abts, Wilhelm Sasnal, Dara Schutz, Marianna Usatin, Jakka Korkela, Tal R, and Birgir S. Bjargason). “Focus Painting — Part Two” will feature on Flash Art November-December 2002.

(Edited by Charles Gau, Samuele Morini and Michele Robecchi)

SIMON ARLIDGE
Shifting between a skateboarding vernacular and modernist notions of formalism, Aldridge creates large-scale, unblushing wall-ramps painted in translucent dayglow colors. Free of romanticizing abstraction, Aldridge produces a delicate balance between accident and intention, structure and agency, theoretical intervention and subjective aimlessness.

(Ann Joy)

KAJ ALTHOFF
“I am using language in both music and art. I spend a lot of time to find the right words that would tell me exactly what I want to know, that in themselves carry the preconceived contents that ease all misunderstandings. Or I build sentences that demand slow reading. I try to use good, easy words. I don’t use technical terms, unless unavoidable, or foreign words. Often the more educated people are, the more tedious their talking becomes.”

(Interview by Angela Rosenberg, Flash Art #224)

Represented by: Artos, Karin; Daniel Buchholz, Cologne.

UNIFIED (Orange Chamber), 2000. Spraypaint on canvas, 36 x 48 cm.

CAROLE BENZAKEN
Benzaken approaches figurative painting through the fragmented and fast-moving lens of the camera. She translates her personal archive of images, selected daily from snapshots, found photographs, newspapers, magazines, into a roll of miniature painted images. She has recently explored the translation of these images onto ceramic wall tiles.

(From centerpompidou.fr: 2002)


MICHAEL BEVILACQUA
“I learned about color from ‘60s psychedelic rock posters. Staff like Hendrix, Cream, and the Jefferson Airplane. The colors never seemed to go together; they clashed. I think that kids really respond to color. Not that I’m trying to fennec some sense of childhood innocence or that naïveté, but look at these Disney animations. I find it funny, though, that my son could care less about stuff like Digimon, Sailor Moon, etc. We both kind of dig the old stuff like “The Little Prince,” or even stuff that appeals to adults as camp and kids as serious entertainment like “A Clockwork Orange.”

(Interivew by David Hant)

Represented by: Fredericks Fristor, New York.

UNIFIED (Scene in room with a bed), 2001. Lacquer, paper, watercolor, varnish oil on canvas, 40 x 60 x 4 cm.


NINA BOVASSO
Nina Bovasso stays close to earth, compiling her abstractions upon another one, or in speaking words with the ordered chaos of a freeway cloverleaf. Cartoonish lines and closed environments recall the late work of Bovasso’s inspiration, Philip Guston. With wit and playful spirits, Bovasso finds her subject in handmade systems that seem purposefully out of place and anamorphic.

(Grady T. Thomas: Flash Art #210)

Represented by: Clementine, New York.

UNIFIED #214

AISAN EAT, 1999. Acrylic on canvas, 92 x 110 cm.

PROJECT DEUX SOUL EN FAUCON (details), 2001-2002. Masquette, 700 x 600 cm.

CECILIA AARO
My paintings used to be more autobiographical. A personal identity is one reason that I use film as starting points. I do it in order to remove focus from myself and not to lapse into personal therapy, but to make my work more open and accessible for all people. Still, a lot of the paintings are focused on the feeling of missing something and being sad. This sadness does not need to be formulated as anything dramatic, but is connected to absence.”

(Interview by Mike Hamada: Story for a Moment: Painting as a Place to Be, NIFCA, Helsinki, 2002)

Represented by: Ahlbrand, Umeå (Sweden).


FRANZ ACKERMANN
Neumarkt-St. Viti (Germany), 1962. Lives and works in Berlin.
Franz Ackermann is one of the artists working today who consciously place themselves in the tradition of urbanistic criticism established by the International Situationist movement. Ackermann’s psychic geography in this context is expressed in all kinds of media. His small-format “mental maps” are drawings that can be packed in a suitcase and are created on the spot on extensive journeys. They are spontaneous jottings, a visual diary giving as much information about economic and political structures as about vegetation or architecture that are typical of the country concerned.

(Kumar Stangar, Flash Art #199)

Represented by: Neugartemeffner, Berlin, Gavin Brown, New York, Gis Monacelli, Milan.

MENTAL MAP: No one will ever understand your view, 1998. Mixed media on paper, 13 x 19 cm.
SOPHIE VON HELLERMANN

Sophie von Hellermann's paintings are inspired by images from her personal life, films, books, art history and the mass media. Describing her work as "child's play — dream, drama, game," she uses the filter of genetic imagery to describe, and exercise, her own personal experiences.
(From centropyramidum.fr, 2002)
Represented by: Saatchi Gallery, London.

KURT KAUPER

Kauper's paintings refer to the tradition of history painting and the heroic portrait. With reference to the idealized modes of antiquity and the Renaissance, Kauper's depiction of Hollywood's leading man Cary Grant in the role explores the representation of public desire.
(From centropyramidum.fr, 2002)
Represented by: Deitch Projects, New York; ACME, Los Angeles.

ROGER KELLY

The physical composition of Roger Kelly's works is a manual elaboration of images in color fields that resemble the digital. Each piece of color information is carefully painted between the lines drawn in pencil on the canvas. The result looks almost like the early years of digital imaging, in which the borders between what is made by the hand and what is computer driven begin to produce an ambiguous reality, suspended out of time and space. Kelly's paintings are a violent and definitive slap on the face of our ever more omnipresent beliefs that provide over the separation between reality and fiction.
(Alessandro Riva, from "Between Ambiguity and Seduction," De March, Legnano, Italy, 2001)
Represented by: Nykon, London; Alessandro De March, Legnano (Italy).

Chantal Joffe

St. Alban (England), 1969.
Lives and works in London.
Chantal Joffe is known for her fluidly painted portrait studies, in which she delineates the poignant fallibility of human existence. Joffe's subjects have principally been female: female children, women deliriously copulating with their partners, or women being demonstrative of their clothes, bodies or sexuality in ambiguous fashion? All painted with good humor and in a lively, alert style. Joffe depicts her subjects somewhere between the instantaneousness of photography, and the intensification and emphasis of caricature; the artist defeating the prejudice against being seen enjoying skilful handling of paint (Nick Brown, Interview 42, 2000)

New Dawn Fades, 2001, Acrylic, ink, pencil on canvas.

SUNNY KIM

Sunny Kim's images appropriate a quasi-pop sensibility negotiating the boundaries between racial and cultural subjectivity, fetishization and essentialism. Starting out from the monochrome canvases, her schoolgirls appear as paper cutouts imposed against the traditional architecture.
(David Pere)
Represented by: Saugy Gallery, Seoul.


TOBA KHEDDOORI

Over the years, figuration in Toba Khedoori's art has become simpler. Narrative motifs like boats, explosions, a doll's house, a train, follow minimal indications of architectural elements: a door, a railing, a window; a staircase. The inscriptions evoke spatial associations that are simultaneously precluded by the two-dimensionality of the drawing. An extremely odd feeling tension is generated among the actual space of viewing, the drawn fragments of space and their extensions: the door, the window, the stairs suggest a transition [as if the] real world were meaningless extended into the white surface of the paper.
(Hans Rudolf Rent, from "The Mystery of Painting." Munich, 2002)
Represented by: David Zwirner, New York; Regen Projects, Los Angeles.

KIKI LAMERS

Nijmegen (Holland), 1964.
Lives and works in Rotterdam.
A rebuttal by inclination, Kiki Lamers typically paints her subjects in the nude, giving them naturalistic poses that are revealed or obscured by the extent to which they are cropped within the picture frame. Moving our gaze halfway without hesitation or shame, we are not dazzled as adults, nor are they transformed into exaggerated stereotypes of moral vanity for the sake of childhood's fierce inclina
tion toward self-institution.
(Dam Cameron, Presumed Innocent in "Tender Age, Artnet" Amsterdam, 2002)
Represented by: Annet Gelink, Amsterdam; OMR, Mexico City.

UDOMASK KRIANSAWAT

Udomask Krisanawat's works are composed of collages of materials. Collages of varying combinations of tea, newspaper, photographs and other items are affixed to plywood, canvas, silk screen, or a polychromed thread. Thick black acrylic paint builds to form images. When left unmasked the noodles are transparent. They have been laid out in tight, loose
t layers ofenny mysterious ways, which create a hypnotic effect - light painting - on the canvas. The delicate and delicate art form that involves hermetic allusions to carnivorous all kinds of fish, the death of domestic to animal causes.
(Cristobal: Medina, Flash Art #210)
Represented by: Massimo Audiello, New York; OMR, Mexico City.

PABLO VARGAS LUGO

Mexico City, 1968. Lives and works in Mexico City.
Pablo Vargas Lugo deals with the tension of perusing, shaping, mixing, knowing, and tricking that derive from painting. His interest in perceptual artifice and in exploring the field between recognizability and confusion, shaping and disappearance, has lead him also to work in the borderline of banality and representation. Through collage partly made with the blurred edges of photographic images, he has created a visual style that involves hermetic allusions to carnivorous all kinds of fish, the death of domestic to animal causes.
(Cristobale: Medina, Flash Art #210)
Represented by: Massimo Audiello, New York; OMR, Mexico City.

EMMANUELLE MAFFITE

Ingres, ever remembered for his extraordinarily beautiful portraits, would not have been able to comprehend the immediate and almost throw-away quality of these drawings. Slices of paper are simply slotted onto the wall, as Maffeite's line is integrated into a limited edition arrangement of stickers. The more conventional drawings on paper are huge almost floor to ceiling and rendered in neon pink and green. Subjects include a host of urban youths: baggy-troused, computer-fanatic, funky. Maffeite's smooth, done works are, quite simply, new.
(Robin Dart, What's On, 2000)


Pablo Vargas Lugo

10 Downing Street (detail), 1998. Acrylic and collage on newspaper, 56 x 34 cm.

SARAH MORRIS

At first glance, Sarah Morris's large-format pictures, with their glowing, precisely composed color fields, are reminiscent of shimmering tower block facades. Most of her titles identity existing buildings in Washington, but Sarah Morris's surfaces — aesthetically broken down into small, precise, straight-edged fields, with lines running into a void and abstract space — are actually presenting the complex visual semantics of modern city architecture.
(Richard Sturken, "New Models: nothing but a new model," Flash Art 220)
Represented by: Fridrich Petzel, New York; White Cube, London; Max Hetzler, Berlin; Antel Schiebler, Cologne.

Michael LIN

In Platform Two uses a traditional Taiwanese print, in the recent past a fabric for matrimonial dress covers. Materially, drawn down, the enlarged phoenix pattern is painted onto panels, which form the platform, latticework of decorations, the two nature-inspired motifs are designed for protection — one for the domestic interior, and the other for external warfare.
(Brownlow Mahoney, from "Eggpegal, 2nd Eastern Biennale, 2001"
Represented by: Park Gallery, Taipei.


Laura Owens

"I want to make paintings that are simply about looking at a painting," she has said. And though she leaps through the history of painting, dabbling in collage and photography, folk art, and design, she has been, and is perhaps most recognizable for subject she might come across, the resulting paintings, luminous and lively enough, are also simply "paintings about looking at a painting." (Kerry Boll, "The Mystery of Painting," Münch, 2002)

Represented by: Gavin Brown, New York; Sadie Coles HQ, London; ACME, Los Angeles; Studio Guggiari, Milan.

Enoc Perez

San Juan (Portorico), 1967.
His painting is based on snapshots of daily life. His works are both inspired by graffiti and attempts to take the distance from the desire for Perez. He doesn't try to reveal this mystery, but rather uses it as a primal element in his vision. (....) The portrayed figures seem distant, but near enough to make you think of the way they live from then on. They're often cut-up or fragmented. The power of the cut pays the emphasis on the otherness of the depicted moment—the scene took place under Perez's eye and then fades into distance.

Represented by: Michael Janssen, Cologne.

Michael Raderer

Amsterdam, 1963. Lives and works in Amsterdam.
"It seems maybe obsolete to do landscape. But I hope that with the 'landscape' I do there is this sense of transience. The great outdoors has always been there, long before us, and nothing has changed ever since. And we have always been puzzled by how in relation to this 'thing' that's as mysterious as life itself. (....) It might not be so great to do the way we live, it can't keep up with TV or the media. But since the monument is omnipresent we need a barrier against 'reality,' and that's probably why there is a new wave of interest painting." (Interview by Patricia Ellis, Flash Art #212)

Represented by: Andrea Roesen, New York; Russo/Santamaria, Naples.


Takashi Murakami

"Super Flat began because my L.A. dealer, Tim Blum, said, 'Your painting has this amazing quality, it's super flat.' Super Flat is a very good marketing word. When I think about art, I'm thinking about what Japanese society is now, and how contemporary art is linked with historical things, with Western art history and the traditional Japanese way. Super Flat and its definition have started to be controversial. I thought with Super Flat I was creating what Richard Hamilton did when he defined Pop art." (Interview by Johan Rosenthal, "Titanes Brumales I," 2001)


Acrylic on canvas, 180 x 180 cm.

Jussi Niva

Pello (Finland), 1966. Lives and works in Helsinki. We know that the eye sees. But can the eye see itself looking? When we look at a painting, what do we see and how? These are interesting questions and well-known to many people working within the fields of art and philosophy. There are also other questions to Jussi Niva, whose art consistently deliber- ates upon the problems of looking at and percep- tion of a piece of art. The Exposure series has been paint- ed on a sort of rectangular box protruding from the wall. The front of the box is concave and covered with a thin layer of paint. Niva has left the sides of the box unpainted showing the material, plywood, and thus reminding us of the fact that a painting is also an object, which consists of two different parts, the surface and the supporting structure.

(Toma Valjakka, from "European Different Perspectives in Painting," 2000)

Represented by: Kari Kersela, Helsinki.

Exposure 890, 1999. Oil on wood.

Neo Rauch

Leipzig (Germany), 1960.
Lives and works in Freiburg and Leipzig.
"My pictures are allegories. I try to take the pic- tures that are washed upon us and use the art of painting to employ them as allegoric situations on the canvas. What happens on the canvas is not necessarily congruent with my idea of the picture or with the one that was given to me. This is very comparable with an attempt to relate a dream. The account of the dream is once becomes an abstrac- tion. I cannot convey a dream to anyone." (Interview by Bernhard Schwend, "The Mystery of Painting," Münch, 2002)

Represented by: David Zwirner, New York; Eigene Art, Berlin.

Niedersieg, 2001-2002. Oil on linen, 250 x 210 cm.

Navin Rawanchaikul

Chiang Mai (Thailand), 1971.
Lives and works in Chiang Mai and Yokohama (Japan).
"I have used painting as part of my projects because it is a very simple medium; it is quite easy for the public to enter into its stories and per- ceive what the artist wants to express — experi- ences and memories — through colors and brush- es. Painting is one of the very basic media; from far in the past and up until the present, humans have used painting to record their cultures." (Interview by Hans-Ulrich Obrist, Flash Art #210)

Represented by: Air de Paris, Paris; Sunari Gallery, Tokyo; Laura Picci, Milan.

Samme, Same but Another Millionaire, 2000.
Acrylic on canvas, 158 x 158 cm.

Darren Wardle

Painting subverts through the conventional matrix of fractal composition, Darren Wardle creates reflexive psychological portraits of Californian or Australian suburban sprawl in hallucinogenic color. The Rorschach composi- tion diagrams its sounds and execution, estab- lishing an unsettling dialectic between the illu- sion and the reality, private and public space.

Represented by: Nettie Castan, Melbourne.

Oil on canvas.

PIETER SCHOLLERWORTH

"Most of the paintings are painted from life, with multiple sittings. On the practical side, you have to deal with who's readily available, and rather than deal with models, you use your friends. At the same time, I like to stage these situations that are becoming more and more like a party or event. It's an incredible energy between bodies. (. ....) My interest in composition is to use the abstract to re-energize the social, or human condition, the difficulty of which we sense in moments of mundane awkwardness. (. ....)" (Interview by Patricia Ellis, Flash Art #211)

Represented by: Anthony Torres Fine Arts, New York; MC Magma, Milan.

Find the Lady (Detail), 2000.
Oil on canvas, 224 x 234 cm.

KEHINDE WILEY

Kehinde Wiley normalizes classical portrai- ture, incorporating a projected ideal of black masculinity onto the graphically dissecting and ornamental painted surface. "The whole purpose of this project is to manufacture a sense of eminent visibility, to brazen out the language of eminent invisibility, and to draw upon its strength as a historical marker. I want to aesthe- tically normalize masculinity and be comptent within that language of oppressive power while at once critiquing it." (Laure Fournier)

Represented by: Nettie Castan, Melbourne.

Vanned, 2002.

Thomas Scheibitz

Radeberg (Germany), 1965.
Lives and works in Berlin.
Scheibitz's painterly abstraction is synonymous with instantaneous brand recognition. Merging commercial imagery with the style of early 20th- century modernist abstraction, filtered through the retro soft focus lens of '70s advertising, and rendered with the swish colors and airy feel of contemporary design, Scheibitz doesn't present the usual celebration deja vu fanfare. His is a love affair with the completely oulde, in defini- tively market-friendly as Microsoft, electronic pop, and mobile phones that about as fan as Eroy, Bill Gates, and brain tumors. (Paris Ellis, Flash Art #210)

Represented by: Gebe Lehmbruck, Dresden; Tanya Bonakdar, New York.

Find Gold, 2002. Oil and marker on canvas.