

“Challenge” Met

Fleisher's series concludes with a strong three-artist show.

by Roberta Fallon

The Fleisher Challenge Exhibition Series ends its season with a show by three artists whose works are beautifully crafted and imbued with passion.

Norman Paris' installation "Michael Jordan, Save the World" and Daniel Heyman's paintings and prints from his "War Series" find common ground in world events. Both artists' works convey embattlement: Bombs fall, bodies fall, and a sense of chaos sits heavily upon them. The works are about witnessing war and hating it.

Paris has installed 23 hand-cast figures of Michael Jordan in various Air Jordan poses trying to catch 24 falling bombs. Suspended from the ceiling with kite string, the 23 figures dive, twist and jump in freeze-frame suspension.

But it's not a game in Paris' piece. Jordan is doomed, and so are we. The title's exhortation to save the world is as sad as it is comic-book serious.

The figures are small and beautifully modeled. As you mingle with them, MJ seems doll-like and vulnerable. The bombs, on the other hand, have a sturdy if antiquated look that's right out of Superman.

The figures and bombs are all painted the same color-battleship gray-which is also the gray of moral morass. The piece developed out of Paris' ongoing exploration of his relationship with superheroes, but the artist told me war was the noise in the background coloring the work.

As with Paris' installation, Heyman's paintings and prints show a world of chaos that's both intriguing and repellent. The imagery is a mix of East (cranes, rice bowls, swirling stylized water) and West (soldiers, the iconic hooded Abu Ghraib torture victim). It's stenciled and painted in layers of ink, oil and gouache in such profusion that the results are often unreadable. They're both elegant and angry.

Heyman, who's capable of great lyricism and restraint-as evidenced in some of the small works in the show-hammers the lyrical in the bigger pieces with incessant overlays of effluvia. While Heyman's colors aren't gray like Paris', the overall affect is one of moral grayness where clarity is victim to the obfuscation of excess. Heyman's works cast the world as a beauty who's bruised and battered-and wears makeup to cover a black eye.

Lindsay Feuer's pristine porcelain objects, which have nothing to do with contemporary politics and everything to do with contemplation of beauty, may at first seem out of place in this show. But Feuer's biomorphic inventions, which resemble creatures of the sea-anemones, crabs or other swimming, crawling, floating things-are necessary respites from the threatening imagery of the other two artists.

Feuer's small sculptures are sensual and baroque. The artist refers to them as "little beasties" or "hybrids," and they're a jolt of pure visual pleasure. By mimicking nature and tweaking it into personal creations, the artist conveys her love of and fascination with the natural world and serves it up for the viewer's delight.

All three artists here communicate without holding back, and deliver objects with heart.

