

Review/Art

Galleries Paint a Brighter Picture for Women

By ROBERTA SMITH

LAST week, the Guerrilla Girls, those intrepid and anonymous demographers of the art world status quo, released new information on the status of women — communicating, as usual, by posters peppering the building walls in SoHo and beyond. The most attention grabbing of the pronouncements compared the percentages of women represented by 33 prominent New York City art galleries with the percentages of women in other jobs nationwide.

Tallying 16 percent, the women represented by the galleries ranked well below women who are bus drivers (49.2 percent), sales people (48 percent) and managers (43 percent), and between such traditionally man jobs as driving trucks (17 percent) and welding (4 percent). Granting that artistic talent may not be as evenly distributed as driving or managerial skills, these statistics are nonetheless telling, and once more reflect the Guerrilla Girls' rather effective strategy of consciousness-raising through simple fact finding.

More intriguing is the idea that the 16 percent figure, taken from last

summer's Art in America Annual directory, may soon be obsolete. No doubt a result, at least in part, of the Guerrilla Girls' efforts, there are signs that prominent galleries are competing for the most-talked-about artists who are women. Whether this

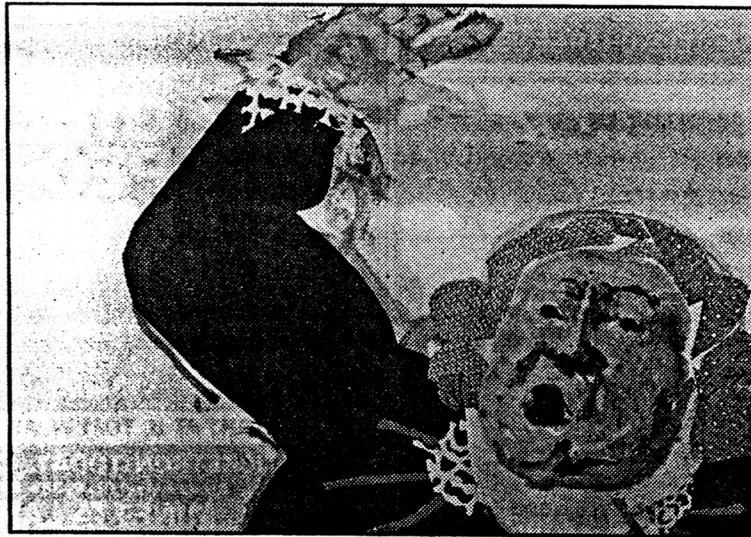
development represents fashion or progress, the number of exhibitions of the artists is increasing. Over the last two months, such shows have been especially abundant, and they can be found all over town — not just in the high-density gallery enclaves of

SoHo and 57th Street.

These exhibitions, which number a few dozen, are not of equal quality, but many are worthy of attention. Not surprisingly, the work runs the gamut from the overtly political to the purely esthetic: from, for example, Martha Rosler's sobering and informative examination of the facts, life and, to some extent, the art of the homeless, at the Dia Art Foundation, to Pat Steir's luminous waterfall-like abstraction, at the Massimo Audiello Gallery.

In between those extremes is work — often involving the manipulation of found photographs — that combines social critique and esthetic finesse. Those include the latest efforts of Cindy Sherman at Metro Pictures and Annette Lemieux at the Josh Baer Gallery, as well as Jenny Holzer's outstanding installation "Laments," on long-term display at the Dia Art Foundation's West 22d Street space.

The exhibitions suggest that women continue to do especially strong work in areas descended from Conceptual Art. The same is true of Sarah Charlesworth's photographs at Jay Gorney Modern Art and Elaine Reichek's installation pieces at the



Count de Mi-abeau as painted by Zuka, at the Baruch College Gallery.

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Carlo Lamagna Gallery — two shows that also reflect feminist concerns fused with issues of exoticism and exclusion.

Ms. Charlesworth's work takes an unexpectedly poetic and personal turn as the artist continues to photographically implant images of non-Western art and artifacts into color-saturated grounds. In the blazing yellow "Self-Portrait," fragments of Indian sculpture (eye, ear, breast, foot) circle an ancient three-footed vessel, which in this company seems literally and whimsically pregnant with meaning. And "Wisdom Through Initiation," showing an Indian sculpture of a dancer flanked by images of daffodils, conjures up two very different rites of passage.

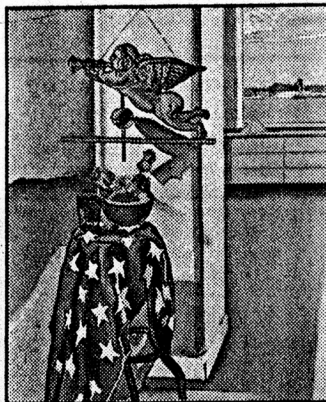
At Lamagna, Ms. Reichek melds the male rituals of primitive tribes with typically female Western ones — and unleashes a series of provocative contradictions. Her pieces combine life-size photographs of Tierra del Fuego Indians — their bodies painted in bold abstract designs — with hand-knit replicas of the figures, patterns and all, and the effect is startling.

The stylistic breadth of the exhibi-

tions by female artists is equaled by a great generational span. Work by Sonia Delaunay and Louise Nevelson on view at the Barbara Mathes Gallery and the Pace Gallery, respectively, let us assess the careers of artists who are no longer living. A similar effect may be achieved by a scheduled exhibition at the Robert Miller Gallery pairing Diane Arbus's portrayals of the human form and psyche with those of Alice Neel.

Several exhibitions are devoted to seasoned artists. Louise Bourgeois is showing new marble sculptures at the Robert Miller Gallery and, more impressive, a pair of new primarily wood-installation pieces at Galerie Lelong on West 57th Street. On East 57th Street, at the Cyrus Gallery, are the thoughtful, vibrantly colored canvases of Leatrice Rose, an artist who like Ms. Bourgeois has exhibited in New York City for more than 30 years. Ms. Rose specializes in the well-crafted still-life arrangement, but her landscape passages, which echo the flat, verdant density of Matisse in the 30's, are also impressive.

In galleries on the edge of SoHo, the latest monochromes of two longtime Minimalist painters — Merrill Wagner and Marcia Hafif — can be seen. Ms. Wagner's new works, visible at



Jacob Burckhardt

"Counterpoint" by Leatrice Rose, at the Cyrus Gallery.

Julian Pretto, feature classically geometric shapes painted on decidedly unclassical arrangements of slate and metal. Ms. Hafif's new paintings, which consist of bright monochromatic colors on square wood surfaces of varying size, lack variety; they fare much better when read together as a single work of art. They can be seen at the Julian Pretto, Berland, Hall Gallery.

Back Again

There is also a trio of happy returns of artists at mid-career whose efforts have not been very visible lately: Barbara Zucker's architectonic sculpture at the Sculpture Center; Dona Nelson's moody collage paintings at the Scott Hanson Gallery, and, at the Tomoko Liguori Gallery, the latest paintings by Frances Barth, an artist whose geometric works have lately opened into strangely angular landscapes, as abstract as they are imagistic and as gestural as they are structured. At Simon Watson, Louise Fishman's first full-scale exhibition in three years presents a group of elegiac abstractions, redolent of dimly lighted closed-off spaces and inspired by a recent journey to Auschwitz.

A number of exhibitions focus on artists who are relatively young and unknown. Victoria Civera, a Spanish painter, is making her debut at the Marta Cervera Gallery in SoHo with a series of small abstract canvases whose simple centered motifs conjure up an unusual range of association — variously physiological, astral or simply decorative. Around the corner at the Rosa Esman Gallery, Katherine Bowling, in her second solo show, exhibits landscapes that combine deep vertiginous perspectives with a lush physicality but balance a bit too adeptly between preciousness and abandon.

Wild Locomotives

And across town, at the Postmasters Gallery in the East Village, Diana Formisano is having her second solo show of cryptic photo-rel hybrids, aggregate arrangements framed images that seem computed generated. Trading visual for conceptual power; these works are more colorful than Ms. Formisano's previous efforts, but they are also less specific in terms of meaning.

Uptown, in addition to the Zuck show at the Sculpture Center, one can also see Sue Miller's haunting overly hefty images of abandoned rowboats and careering semiautonomous locomotives at the Allan Stone Gallery. And at Hirschl & Adler Mode are the latest sculptural constructions of Alison Wilding, a young British artist whose tensile combination of sheet metal and cut stone fuse low with solid and lightness with weightiness.

Making Cutouts

Midway between 57th Street and SoHo, at the Baruch College Gallery on East 22d Street, the artist Zuka, having her first New York City exhibition in nine years, a lively collection of cartoonish yet robustly painful canvases and cut-out reliefs that depict many of the prime movers in main events of the French Revolution. In TriBeCa, one can see the luminatory, gravity-free landscape: Marina Cappelletto at Wessel O'Connor as well as the foreboding, clichéd, figurative cutouts of Grace Graupe-Pillard at Hal Bromm.

And, finally, near Manhattan's there is an exhibition of paintings Katherine Parker, who is making debut in the lobby of Merrill Hall part of the Stern School of Business (90 Trinity Place) at New York University. The scratched and rough surfaces of Ms. Parker's canvases teem with signs, symbols and occasional words, as if painting itself a dumping ground. They are certainly not without precedent; but them, Jasper Johns, Cy Twombly, early Elizabeth Murray and Robert Rauschenberg come to mind, as does Piet Mondrian and Piet Klee. Nonetheless, the blue, "Spout" and the earth-tone "Tortoise" show promise, holding their own against these impressive influences as they do against their decidedly makeshift exhibition circumstances.

Where to See the Art

Here are the addresses of the galleries mentioned, and how long each exhibition will remain on view.

Uptown

SUE MILLER, Allan Stone Gallery, 48 East 86th Street, through May 2.

ALISON WILDING, Hirschl & Adler Modern, 851 Madison Avenue, at 70th Street, through April 22.

SONIA DELAUNAY, Barbara Mathes Gallery, 851 Madison Avenue, at 70th Street, through Sunday.

BARBARA ZUCKER, Sculpture Center, 167 East 69th Street, through April 29.

57th Street

LOUISE BOURGEOIS, Robert Miller Gallery, 41 East 57th Street, and Galerie Lelong, 20 West 57th Street, both shows through April 22.

LOUISE NEVELSON, Pace Gallery, 32 East 57th Street, through April 29.

LEATRICE ROSE, Cyrus Gallery, 11 East 57th Street, through April 22.

ELAINE REICHEK, Carlo Lamagna Gallery, 50 West 57th Street, through April 22.

Chelsea

JENNY HOLZER, Dia Art Foundation, 548 West 22d Street, through January 1990.

Gramercy

ZUKA, Baruch College Gallery, 135 East 22d Street, through April 28.

East Village

DIANA FORMISANO, Postmasters Gal-

lery, 66 Avenue A, at Sixth Street, through Sunday.

SoHo

CINDY SHERMAN, Metro Pictures, 150 Greene Street, through April 22.

PAT STEIR, Massimo Audiello Gallery, 142 Greene Street, through tomorrow.

MERRILL WAGNER, Julian Pretto Gallery, 251 Avenue of the Americas, at Houston Street, through April 22.

MARCIA HAFIF, Julian Pretto, Berland, Hall Gallery, 50 Macdougall Street, through tomorrow.

ANNETTE LEMIEUX, Josh Baer Gallery, 270 Lafayette Street, through tomorrow.

LOUISE FISHMAN, Simon Watson, 241 Lafayette Street, through April 22.

DONA NELSON, Scott Hanson Gallery, 415 West Broadway, near Spring Street, through April 29.

MARTHA ROSLER, Dia Art Foundation, 70 Wooster Street, through April 29.

SARAH CHARLESWORTH, Jay Gorney Modern Art, 100 Greene Street, through April 29.

KATHERINE BOWLING, Rosa Esman Gallery, 70 Greene Street, through April 29.

VICTORIA CIVERA, Marta Cervera Gallery, 470 Broome Street, through tomorrow.

FRANCES BARTH, Tomoko Liguori Gallery, 93 Grand Street, through April 22.

TriBeCa

MARINA CAPPELLETTO, Wessel O'Connor, 60 Thomas Street, through April 22.

GRACE GRAUPE-PILLARD, Hal Bromm Gallery, 90 West Broadway, at Chambers Street, through April 29.

KATHERINE PARKER, Merrill Hall Exhibition Space, 90 Trinity Place, at Thames Street, through April 23.