

reviews: new york

'Salon 2009'

Flomenhaft

Whether paintings, photographs, sculptures, or mixed-media installations, most of the works in this strong show seemed to spring from stories. Linda Stein began building her powerfully provocative suits of armor, made of wood, metal, and acrylic, after running from Ground Zero on September 11. Siona Benjamin's experiences as a Jew in India prompted a series of lush paintings and installations depicting blue-skinned "outsider" women. Memories of a childhood spent in an internment camp for Japanese Americans during World War II propelled Roger Shimomura to create boldly graphic pieces that are part American Pop art, part Japanese ukiyo-e prints. In all these works, narrative enriched the visual experience.

Although many pieces in the show drew on storytelling elements, not all did. Works ranged from the satirical bite of Camille Billops's lithograph *The KKK Boutique* (1994)—in which women of color sell robes and accessories to Klansmen—to the abstract explorations of Dina Recanati's "Gathering Winds" (2007), a series of sculpted muslins on canvas. Emma Amos's bold acrylic-on-canvas diptych *Sporting Beasley* (1986–87) took off from Sterling Brown's poem of the same name. Paul Brach's oil-and-pencil-on-canvas *Sky Portal #1* (2005) was a geometric study of purple globes floating in more purple. Two arresting and flatly painted portraits of women by Joan Barber hinted at off-kilter lives beyond the canvas,

while Mira Lehr and Ellen Frank showed sensuous, abstracted riffs on the natural and ancient worlds. The photographs of Rimma Gerlovina and Valeriy Gerlovin summed up the spirit of the show with references at once literary and mysterious. Two C-prints showed the Rapunzel-like Rimma with curtains of hair; in one she reads a translucent book, and in the other she stares at ghostly alchemical beakers. Like the other works here, they promised revelations to those who know how to read them.

—Mona Molarsky