

## Stein and Brody-Lederman

BY MARION WOLBERG WEISS



While it appears that East Enders Linda Stein and Stephanie Brody-Lederman deal with different subjects and media, their sensibilities are similar. That's a good thing for viewers who want to compare and contrast their works, which are now at New York galleries. The intriguing part of Stein's and Brody-Lederman's art is how each communicates their world views and personal journeys.

Chelsea's Flomenhaft Gallery plays host to Stein's sculpture in "The Fluidity of Gender," an eye-catching exhibit that tickles first our senses

and then our intellect. We don't have to know about Stein's considerable commitment to gender politics or even her comprehensive traveling exhibition, complete with lectures and performances, to realize that the current show evokes years of research and discovery. Stein is indeed a true arts advocate and innovator.

The first things a viewer notices are the figures' diverse materials: leather, wood, paper, seashells, beans and metal – all materials with substance, texture and subjective connotations. Then, the theme slowly emerges organically from the material and from the works' constructions. The torsos and full-body shapes are all put together

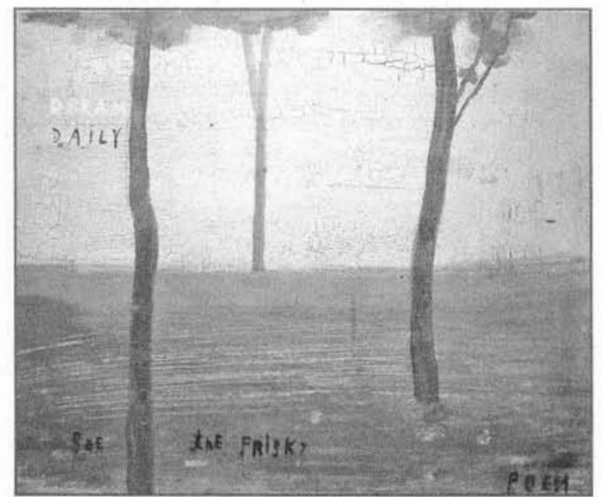


Shell Homes

with separate pieces: multiple shells are joined; visual images of Wonder Woman are placed side-by-side like a montage; tiny beans are positioned in an abstract design; leather pieces are stitched together.

Even so, there's more than good craftsmanship at work here. What we may really have is a metaphorical representation of the female psyche: the combination of various qualities (separate pieces of material), which forms a complete personae. This observation is not new; fragmentation of the human being is an accepted concept (for example, consider the mind, body and soul).

But Stein may be saying something different in the case of the female. Perhaps there's too much fragmentation, leading to a configuration, which never completely comes together, that never becomes whole. And, consider the material itself. Seashells, sticks, metal and beans (seeds) feel hard to the touch and may even cause abrasions. Let's not also forget the fact that none of the sculptures has a head or face. Is that a comment on the perception that females lack a mind? Of course, Stein's belief in the power of women belies her materials and constructions, which makes her work all the more potent.



Arcadia

Brody-Lederman's paintings in the group show, "Arcadia," at OK Harris Works of Art in SoHo isn't anything like Stein's sculptures. But there are connections, nonetheless. Brody-Lederman's pieces express her own worldview as well, yet one that is not related to politics like Stein's. Brody-Lederman's creations remind this critic of a stream-of-consciousness, the images plucked from memories, some deriving from childhood, some more recent.

The images are exterior ones that signify an interior life. For example, Brody-Lederman's country sides (with a few trees and a chair) seem incongruent, but when connoting a dream-state, they are consistent. It's as if the chair is a cherished personal possession, which shows up in many different places. Another work indicates it's inspired by Pompeii, although the setting is more like a landscape. Yet, the red and black colors might suggest the literal horror of Pompeii. Or, more importantly, the colors may convey the artist's perceptions about Pompeii. Either way, Brody-Lederman's work is provocative beyond the literal world.

*Linda Stein's exhibit The Fluidity of Gender will be on view until June 30 at Flomenhaft Gallery (547 West 27th Street.) Call 212-268-4952.*

*Stephanie Brody-Lederman's work can be seen at OK Harris (383 West Broadway) until July 20. Call 212-431-3600.*