

REGIONAL REVIEWS

Massachusetts

Miller Block Gallery/Boston, MA www.millerblockgallery.com

ANNE CONNELL: RECENT PAINTINGS

Anne Connell mines art history for inspiration in her delicate, detailed paintings. A recent trip to Italy yields her work a rich vocabulary of motifs, influences, and swipes from architecture, murals, and paintings that reflect the richness of Western European history.



Anne Connell, *Vignette with Oriflamme*, oil and gold leaf on panel, 12 x 12", 2004.

Connell arranges cultural fragments within a modern cubist grid format, flattening space. The first level of her paintings is full frontal, like walls of regular patterning. She punctures through these walls with literal windows, scalloped openings in stone frames that allow scenic vistas and deep illusionistic space to coexist with her meticulous surface detail.

Connell paints in oil and gouache with precise assurance, mimicking the ancient techniques. She renders objects realistically but arranges them in collagelike fragments. Spheres, cones, and cubes recur as pure geometry amid more architectonic passages. Seldom symmetrical, her compositions still exude a feeling of balance and grace. Her suggestive titles reveal the thematic world of each panel; they are evocative and suggestive while being pertinent and focused.

Bathymetry, we're told, is the science of measuring the depths of bodies of water. Here a fluted column pokes above a rough sea, the swirling waves a stylized memory of water, more drawn than illusionistic. In this small square of space Connell has united above and below, near and far, the sensual and conceptual in a coherent personal unity.

Semmé de Bijoux strewns jewels across a piece of drapery from a Renaissance altarpiece, but these jewels are "strewn" with the regularity of a chessboard. This impossible, whimsical arrangement (the stones glisten in deep red and purple against the satiny fabric) alludes to scientific principles that underlie natural forces, knowledge our culture has been expanding upon since the Renaissance period that Connell prefers. Connell's portals and oculi seem to be admitting the light of reason even as they fracture religious motifs. *Shawn Hill*