

GALLERY&STUDIO

Talent: An Annual Tradition at Allan Stone Gallery

The barechested man in Scott Goodwillie's oil on panel "Outsourced" has the head of an elephant. No big deal. The head fits perfectly on his body and the flesh tones match and the eyes look humanly worried anyway. The waistband of his underwear is showing above his trousers, but not in the way currently fashionable among the young and insouciant; more in the careless manner of an older guy going to seed. And his beer-gut is hanging over it, as he stands there looking befuddled and obsolete with his arms hanging uselessly at his sides, a cigarette smoking like a gun in one hand.

Goodwillie's poignant portrait was among several other standout works in "Talent 2006," this year's Emerging Artists Salon, seen recently at Allan Stone Gallery, 113 East 90th Street. Long overdue for more widespread recognition, Robert Valdes showed a landscape in a long, narrow horizontal format reminiscent of a Chinese hand-scroll; however, rather than unfolding in narrative time, Valdes' stretch of rusty, sun-lit American river appeared as still and impassive as a Warhol soup can.

Past New Talent shows included Andy Warhol, Wayne Thiebaud, Richard Estes, Robert Ryman, Eva Hesse and other now famous names early in their careers. And there's always a good chance that some of the present exhibitors may someday be stellar names as well. Two strong contenders are the painter Anne Connell who makes a

meticulous synthesis of early Renaissance and medieval details and design motifs within an overall abstract context, and the trompe l'oeil sculptor Richard Haden, whose "Anonymous Box" makes mahogany and enamel identical to stained brown cardboard and packing tape, evoking the kind of "suspicious packages" that Homeland Security is always warning us to report. Emily Epstein Vines also stakes out peculiar sculptural territory with her small heads of various canine breeds, duplicated exactly in ceramic clay and acrylic paint.

Paintings of food seem to constitute a mini-movement unto themselves at Allan Stone, or at least a specific species of still life. While Peter Anton's big 3-D wall pieces of open candy samplers have predecessors in Pop, particularly Oldenburg, Duane Keiser's "Watermelon" and Gina Minichino's "Little Powdered Donuts" hark back to the 17th century Dutch masters, depicting their succulent or sugary subjects with a delicious explicitness verging on gastropornography.

Long an even more substantial specialty of this venue, which made its initial reputation in the early 1960s showing Kline, de Kooning, and other Abstract Expressionists, are various overtly painterly tendencies, here represented by the glistening-like-licorice surface of Sandi Cervek's sensual black on black abstraction; the vigorously brushed landscapes of Haden Glatte and Marjorie Glatte, as well as by Pat Mahony's still lifes in

oil on unstretched canvas, notable for their exquisitely austere spatial sense and subtly tactile paint handling. Molly Kugler Dickinson also displays painterly finesse in her gouache, "Biggest Bigtop," where the wavering red and white stripes of a circus tent are the *pièce de resistance* of the composition. And, characteristically, Nguyen Ducmanh strikes a resounding blow for the spontaneous gesture with "Chimba," an acrylic and mixed media on paper, in which bold red strokes laid down on a bare ground take on a heraldic elegance.

Drawing as a discrete and complete art form unto itself, rather than a medium for preliminary studies, also comes to the forefront in Dan Gilhooley's meticulously detailed large-as-life pencil drawing, "Self Portrait at Forty"; Kate Sullivan's photorealistic graphite drawings of industrial sites and shopfronts, and Paul Lorenz's "One Object," an abstract composition of densely crosshatched graphite strokes with a small circle of bare paper at its very center.

Allan Stone Gallery has won enviable art world status and respect without adhering to any trendy agenda. As this exhibition demonstrated, once again, its policy of valuing the individual talent over the fashions of the moment continues to pay high aesthetic dividends.

—Ed McCormack