

Bas Fisher Invitational

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FASTER SLEEPER

January 14, 2006 - February 11, 2006
Opening reception: Saturday, January 14 (6pm - 10pm)

JAVIER HERNANDEZ

IN LIGHT OF DEAD STARS

By Jamieson Webster

"It may be that tragedy emerges when a civilization is caught between fate and freedom." -Terry Eagleton

The current renaissance of painting is a welcome turn of events for many. At the same time, given the current climate we live in, one might find themselves suspicious. Paintings are of course one of the more profitable art forms. Damian Hirst himself gave up the large installations in lieu of a collection of paintings which may have profited him greatly along with his art dealers, gallerists, what have you. He is not the only one. Just look at the graffiti artists who are dropping their polaroids like flies. At the same time, painting seems to me a more apt medium to capture the current contradictions- the possibility of carrying within the sedimented history of art, attempts at representation, and even the process of commodification- all without lapsing into mere commentary or banal shock. If contemporary paintings are going to have any value, beyond their fetching prices, they will have to both carry this aporia and rise above it.

Javier Hernandez's current show, *Faster Sleeper*, illustrates the latter. His paintings stand on that edge that separates out a moment, from history and from an unknown future. If anything, we live in a time that collapses all three, immediacy, the past, and our desires that stretch forward. This is the work of fetishism. Hernandez's paintings speak against that structure. As such they are idealistic. As idealistic they are tragic. This is not only so in form but in content as well. At times they are a frozen instant- a plot of land for sale which manages to remove the eternity of nature usually found in a landscape. At others this momentary glance reaches forward- the burning houses and cars before being entirely enveloped and destroyed which is where your mind goes while your gaze remains fixed. While these moments are empty and universal, others are particular, historicity- the Challenger explosion, the fall of Mary Decker, the embrace behind the bank of microphones. It seems these images encompass a variety of ways in which our time has been manipulated- fast forward, pause, rewind-as Eagleton says, 'a tragic time that is the moment between fate and freedom.' Hernandez, in finding a way to give representation to this days' juncture, creates the most timely of works that reaches us from the light of dead stars.



Clockwise: *Houses Burn* - oil on canvas 20" x 30", *The Challenger* - oil on canvas 30" x 40", *Cars Burn* - oil on canvas 20" x 30"

REBECCA SCHIFFMAN

In "Faster Sleeper" Rebecca Schiffman presents a group of new acrylic paintings of moments from her life, specifically within the scope of her eyesight- her father playing on-line checkers in the dark, a pigeon in front of the Guggenheim across the street from her apartment, a view of two pairs of feet in front of a TV. Although the paintings are based upon digital photographs they depict moments that will and do continue beyond the duration of a snapshot, making painting a more appropriate medium to capture these meditative scenes.

Schiffman's recent work is inspired by André Breton's novel, "Nadja" where the author advocates several opinions on writing. Breton uses the metaphor of a writer living in a glass house, saying he should not be ashamed of who comes or goes. He also implies that the most interesting or worthwhile material to write or read about someone is the experiences that differentiate him from everyone else- those that could only have happened to that person because of a long chain of events that caused him to be in a particular spot/moment/mental state. Schiffman feels this method can be used for all forms of expression and is the material from which each person has the most authority to draw- sometimes the value of an event can be derived from the mere fact that it actually happened.

Schiffman sees her recent paintings as just the beginning glimpses into her specific journey through time and space and the way in which they are painted reflects a sum of the prejudices and affinities she has felt toward every conscious and unconscious impression so far.

"Over and above the various prejudices I acknowledge, the affinities I feel, the attractions I succumb to, the events which occur to me and to me alone- over and above a sum of movements I am conscious of making, of emotions I alone experience, I strive- in relation to other men, to discover the nature, if not the necessity, of my difference from them. Is it not precisely to the degree I become conscious of this difference that I shall recognize what I alone have been put on this earth to do, what unique message I alone may bear, so that I alone can answer for its fate?" -André Breton



Left to right: *Sunset on The U.E.S.* - acrylic on canvas 48 x 36 Inches, *Dad Playing Checkers* - acrylic on canvas 39 x 52 Inches