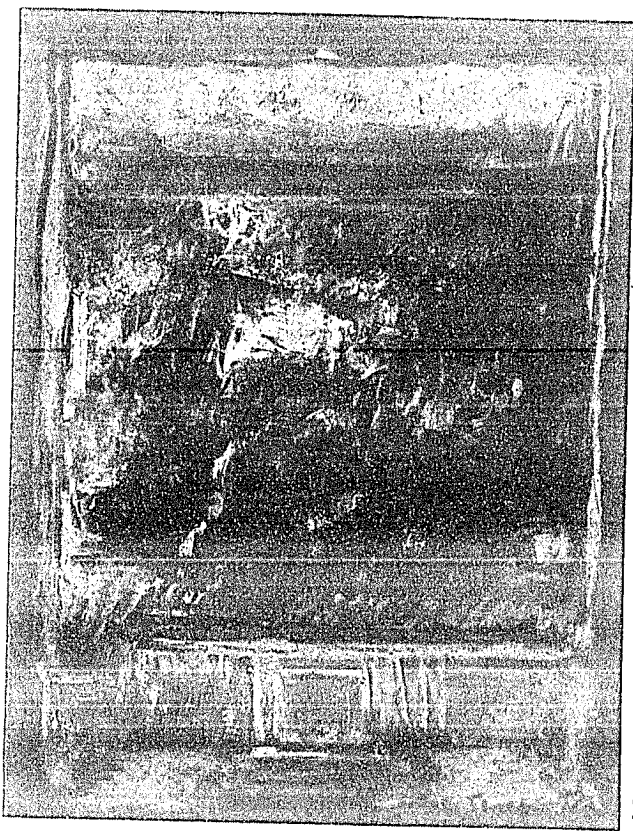


By Gil Goldfine

If one were to smash a couple of stained-glass windows, shake up the bits and slivers in a paper bag, then toss them randomly on a hard surface, the results could resemble a Steffa Reis abstraction. The difference being, Reis leaves little to chance or accident. What might appear to be a mannered lyrical style peppered with rococo charm actually represents the results of her ability to control, and in many instances subdue, extravagant color themes, shape and spirited line.

Reis's intimately sized panda and pastel paintings on paper, titled "Small Joys 1991," cover a tremendous range of expressions. Several flutter with an airy, yet determined, calligraphic ease while others project a more stable effect, as flicks and swatches of pigment hang together like an embroidered Beduin galabiya. In a third group, Reis amalgamates several ragged and disproportionate rectangular shapes into a harmonious composition by charging impasto layers of subdued underpainting with actively brushed polychrome surfaces of turquoise, olive green, chrome yellow, cadmium red, cerulean and pink.

Reis has mastered the art of lyrical abstraction to the point where it has become an academic ideal. Although intuitiveness, coupled with an occasional flamboyant passage, lies at the core of her paintings, they are nevertheless sturdy and resolved and they clearly express both historical influences (the New York School and local New Horizon painters) and years of investigating the art of creating non-objective icons. Going one step beyond the sprightly opaque textures, surface design and intricate combinations of ethereal color tones, Reis's pictures often project a veiled luminosity that is quite beautiful. (Ephrat Gallery, 21 Gordon, Tel Aviv.) Till October 28.



Steffa Reis: panda colors on paper (Ephrat Gallery, Tel Aviv).

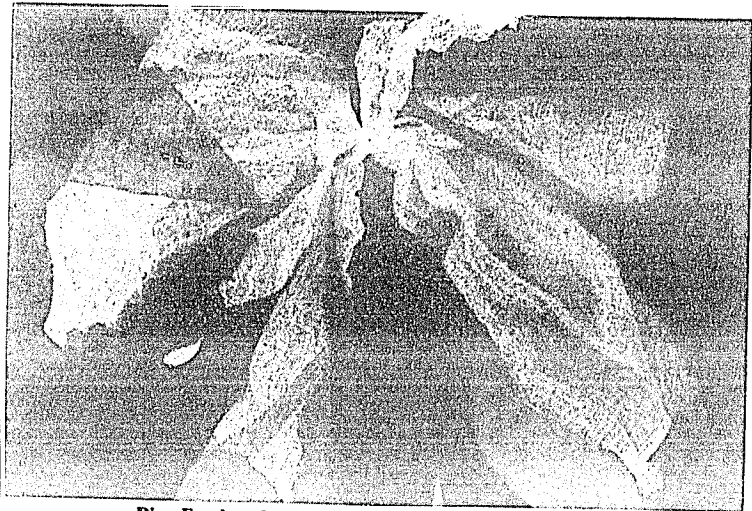
"DOMESTIC ENVIRONMENT" is a fine example of how a curator invents an exhibition subject and then goes about searching for works to fill the gallery. Sorin Heller has chosen paintings, sculptures and reliefs by 13 artists that, directly or circuitously, fit his subjective bill. Unfortunately, most of the works are familiar and bland; and as a group they are particularly uninspiring. (Artists Pavilion, 9 Alharizi, Tel Aviv.) Till October 27.

ON THE other hand, Horace Richter has assembled a dozen carefully chosen paintings and reliefs by six artists that, despite their totally different approaches, complement each other within the limited gallery space. Menahem Kadishman's loosely hung, expressionistically painted sheep's head from 1979 looks down on Amnon Ben-David's cerebrally conceived plywood constructions and a pair of horizontal compositions painted by Tamar Jeter in 1985. Both of the latter's canvases are packed with a host of enigmatic images and obvious symbols from birds and cylinders to representational figure painting.

The confluence of emotion and intellect, clarity and mystery, provide the foundation of Richter's potpourri to operate on. Not because he has avoided choosing a theme, but simply because he has taken the time and effort to reach back in time, from one to 12 years, and extract something meaningful from each of his participants. He also feels he is meeting his obligation to reconsider the past, even on a small scale.

In his desire to create something representative of the times, Richter has balanced this show with mixed-media (plastic extrusions and photography) panels by Sigal Primor, a couple of unexciting paintings by Rachel Heller and an outstanding, oversized print by Todd Sifer. A panel of repetitious black-and-white photographic reproductions of pioneering life by Haim Lutzy fills out the exhibit. (Horace Richter Gallery, 24 Simtat Mazal Aric, Old Jaffa.)

Academic Abstractions



Dina Frank: colored monprint (Engel Gallery, Tel Aviv).

DINA FRANK is an American printmaker who displays a penchant for bold, vibrant colors and intaglio textures. Her current exhibit of large monprints, printed from plexiglass plates and assorted textures (cloth, cord, feathers, paper etc.) embossed into the rag paper by running it directly through the etching press, contains stylized images of floral and geometric patterns.

Frank's technical ability to soften edges, either by feathering her printed image or hand coloring forms after a proof has been pulled, reduces the harshness of the intaglio process and the crisp drama attached to the medium. Forms quietly fold into each other as if a breeze, not the artist's hand, were controlling their destiny. Several prints in which large black shapes

constructed in the foreground to protect illuminated backgrounds do not work as well as the poetic, translucent abstractions interpolated from natural subjects. (Engel Gallery, 26 Gordon, Tel Aviv.) Till November 7.

HIGHLY STYLIZED animal and figurative forms by Dushka Resnik, carved and polished from a variety of marble (color and texture), are banal examples of a tired and overexposed sculptural style. The mellifluous mother-and-child compositions, symbolic geometric volumes and the ubiquitous birds in flight, in which one bodily contour plaintively melds into the next, are the repetitive mainstays of Resnik's unappetizing iconographic menu. (Safrai Gallery, 23 Gordon, Tel Aviv.) Till November 11. ◇