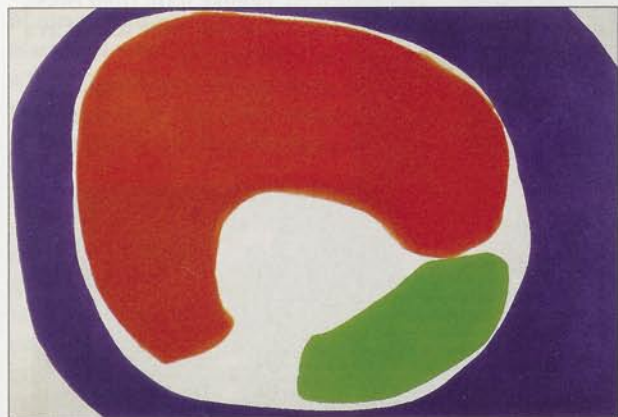


context for Olitski's work. All of the artists, like Olitski, were heralded by the critic Clement Greenberg as the heirs of the Abstract Expressionists.

The display of Olitski's big canvases began with the groundbreaking *Whore of Babylon* (1958), for which the artist used the nontraditional material Spackle to emphasize a crusty figurelike form rising out of a smooth field of mottled charcoal-colored stains.

Works from the late 1960s revealed how the artist began spray-painting col-



Jules Olitski, *Purple Golubchik*, 1962, magna acrylic on canvas, 90" x 121". Goldman Warehouse.

ors onto canvases, such as the enormous acrylic *Comprehensive Dream* (1965), a radiant mist of blue and fruity reds and pinks. In the 1970s, Olitski retreated from color in order to focus on surface rhythms, in subdued, visual tone poems. His return to color in the 1980s was marred by insipid canvases like the *Beauty of Lauren* (1989), with its streaky pastels in ranks of lozengelike shapes.

Canvases from the late 1990s, such as *Mythic Sunrise Journey* (1998), combined the sublime quality of Olitski's 1960s spray-painted works with glossy, lavalike textures.

The show culminated with the masterful "Love and Disregard" series (2002)—featuring roiling combat zones of fissured reds, oranges, and oily black, punctuated with free-floating circular shapes.

Within the boundaries defined by his focus on color and texture, Olitski triumphed in this handsome tribute to a life's work.

—Jan Sjostrom

Mario Sanchez

Key West Museum of Art & History at the Custom House

Key West

From 1930 until 1996, folk artist Mario Sanchez (1908–2005) documented public life in Key West. The Cuban-American woodcarver left a monumental artistic and historic legacy of more than 650 works. This captivating and reverential retrospective (through January 2006), a collaboration between guest curator

Nance Frank and the museum's staff, illuminates Sanchez's primitive style and prominent theme: social harmony born of racial equality and religious freedom. And although the multimedia presentation features a bounty of tangential information, the artwork shines through.

The self-taught Sanchez established his style and techniques early. He trans-

ferred drawings from paper to wood, then chiseled them into relief, detailing with a razor or glass shard. Finally, he applied oil paints with a dime-store brush.

Bahamian blacks, Cubans, Anglos, Jews, Italians, and others populate the simple, often humorous intaglios, which feature recurring characters and landmarks. Based on memories, Sanchez's carvings typically depict a street, his preferred stage for human drama. Some are paved with thick paint and coffee grounds or clean kitty litter.

In *Colorful Rocky Road* (n.d.), nuns lead students past a church, cats follow the fish cart, and a spotted pony observes with a long-lashed eye. Images of Christ and doves appear in clouds. But it is the



Mario Sanchez, *Old Island Days: Funeral #19*, 1970, painted woodcarving, 19" x 49". Key West Museum of Art & History.

resplendent street—each brick painted rust, garnet, or lavender—that most seduces the viewer.

Other pieces study individual humans or fish. Personifying vice, the gambler in *Jack's Seven Eleven* (1950) appears to float in a universe of giant dice, while each snapper in *Basket of Yellowtails* (n.d.), evolved from Sanchez's carvings of single fish, radiates banana and pomegranate hues.

A celebration of the American Dream, Sanchez's work conveys his personal take on national values and their manifestation in daily life.

—Ann Boese

Bohdan Osyczka, Ilona Sochynsky, Marko Shuhan

Zorya Fine Art

Greenwich, Connecticut

It is often edifying to see how much intelligent artists continue to wrest from the various conventions of modernist painting. This enterprising show featuring three very different painters from three generations afforded that opportunity.

Bohdan Osyczka, now in his 80s, makes large-scale watercolors in the pouring and staining tradition of Morris Louis and Helen Frankenthaler, although the intense pigments on his canvases are entirely his own. He has invented and perfected a tilting painting table that enables him to control the flow of paint in these pictures. This may explain the complex, almost baroque nature of his designs. Typical of his color sense is *03:13* (2003). Four irregular bands of stingingly intense cardinal red run across the paper (occasionally bleeding into it) and into the black stains that cloud around them. The result is thrilling.

A group of interrelated paintings from the late 1980s by Ilona Sochynsky were installed nearby. Sochynsky, who is now in her mid-50s, was a photorealist earlier in her career and has moved increasingly into abstraction. These exciting pieces provide us with a glimpse of that stage in her development when the painterly techniques of her earlier work ran headlong into the more freewheeling design concerns that



Bohdan Osyczka, *03:13*, 2003, watercolor on paper, 45" x 44". Zorya Fine Art.

drove her work forward in the 1990s.

The youngest artist here, Marko Shuhan, was the only disappointment. His starting point appeared to be generic Abstract Expressionism, but his spiky gestural canvases lacked a really distinctive personality.

Curated by Jeffrey Wechsler of Rutgers University, this show reflected the young gallery's admirable objective of presenting work by artists of Ukrainian heritage. It will be fascinating to see future shows as they demonstrate a more particular national character.

—Robert Ayers

Peter Charles

Irvine Contemporary Art
Washington, D.C.

This witty show of new sculpture consisted of eight small houselike structures, the largest 15 inches high. Each occupied its own shelf, dangled an antenna wire and cord, and contained its own tiny flat-panel screen TV, tuned to a local channel. Remote controls allowed buyers to choose their own programs.

Charles, who rarely watches television, is fascinated by the flicker of TV sets he glimpses while passing through different neighborhoods. That peripheral experience may explain why he installed his houses at eye level and why he blocked the viewer's line of vision with walls of scored plaster, steel mesh, mirrors, and painted and gold-leafed plastic. By provid-

ing few apertures, the artist forced viewers to seek, without any success, direct sightlines to the screens inside.

Charles's titles ranged from straightforward—*Torn House* (2005) and *Glass House* (2005)—to the art-historical. *Piet's House* (2005), its exterior a grid of red, blue, yellow, and white, resembles a Mondrian painting morphed into a pavilion. *De Stijl House* (2005) presents a simple cube (think Monopoly game houses), and the design pays homage to that movement's spiritual geometry.

These pieces effectively turned viewers into voyeurs, even as they suggested the banality and

ubiquity of broadcast TV. One had the impression of being able to control the images on the screen—but only up to a certain point: after all, the choices of shows are ultimately determined by the randomness of television programming.

Although these works projected a hint of despair, they also suggested that pixels have their own charm and acknowledged the viewer's instinctive delight in things small-scale. —Jean Lawlor Cohen



Peter Charles, *American Icon*, 2004, welded steel and flat-panel screen TV picking up local broadcast channels. 9" x 8" x 8". Irvine Contemporary Art.

Richard Johnson

Cole Pratt

New Orleans

Richard Johnson, often labeled an "abstract illusionist" painter, has turned to exploring classical landscapes and the figure to give a successful new direction to his expressionistic compositions.

Long a master of spatial illusions—whimsical abstract imagery seems to float across his paintings—Johnson has recently broadened his visual repertoire to include photographs of landscapes, female figures, folded fabric, and reproductions of other artists' works.

These pop motifs are added to the signature swaths of paint, geometric lines, and other elements that make Johnson's work distinctive. Their placement appears spontaneous and chaotic, primarily



Richard Johnson, *Reflection*, ca. 2004, acrylic/collage/panel, 28" x 50". Cole Pratt.

because the artist does not plan his compositions. He moves elements around until he is satisfied.

Despite references to art history and pop culture in works such as *Double Ring Ceremony* (ca. 2004), *Sunset at Pleasure Point* (2005), and *Reflection* (ca. 2004), Johnson's multimedia paintings and collages are still about creating the illusion of space. He breaks the picture plane to create a depth and tension that draw the eye in, to explore rather than simply to scan the surface.

Rendered primarily in acrylics and collage on panels, his intense colors, especially hot reds in *Red Moon* (ca. 2004) and *Scraper* (2004), radiate the heat of a New Orleans summer day. The city's fabled Dionysian environment is also reflected in his nude imagery and echoed in the sensual, rounded folds of cloth.

Johnson's new direction is still evolving. The results so far—introspective, pop-inflected pieces that are less busy than his earlier canvases—are promising.

—John Kemp