

arts MEDIA

PAT KECK'S
DANGEROUS
DUMMIES

BY DEBBIE HAGAN

PAINTED
STORIES AT
BACZEK FINE
ARTS

BY LEON NIGROSH

MARK DAVIS'S
ART ON THE
MOVE

BY REBECCA TUCH

THE HEALING
ARTS

BY ELLEN HOWARDS

PLUS REVIEWS OF
CURRENT
EXHIBITS
THROUGHOUT
NEW ENGLAND





One of Ambreen Butt's works at the Bernard Toale Gallery in Boston's South End.

balloons of non sequiturs. Jennifer Zackin's "Wonder Woman Cosmos" uses plastic figurines to redirect male aggression. The shining Amazon becomes the central organizing force for troops of tiny soldiers and cowboys. They form the intricate patterns of a Buddhist mandala around her towering form, as regimentation gives way to organic rhythm.

Laylah Ali, Renee Cox and Kerry James Marshall approach racism with biting irony. Cox's alter-ego "Rajé" is a glorious heroine clad in African hues and thigh boots. Whether hanging out with Lady Liberty, battling corporate bigwigs, or tearing up Times Square, she's always poised. Marshall's witty cartoons literalize marginalization. His poignant story (of certain blacks being denied public housing in Chicago) takes place on the edges of wide expanses of white paper.

Bostonian Ali's familiar "Greenheads" figures continue their careful and troubling ministrations to each other. Covered in bandages, losing limbs and fleeing in fear, these simplistic figures present an ambiguous identity that quickly leads to creeping dread.

Warhol, Lichtenstein, Murray, Ramos and Scharf provide historical context, but it's the lesser-known work that haunts. Like Ida Appelbroog's deceptively simple painting that shows five identical panels in monochrome. Only the captions

change, narrating the two figures, an adult kneeling before a child. "Face it," says the child with deadpan calm, "Chaos is useful, Mommy." *Shawn Hill*

**Ambreen Butt: New Work
Greg Menco: Sculpture
Bernard Toale Gallery
450 Harrison Avenue, Boston
Through November 8, 2003**

This delightfully mismatched show joins two artists who have little in common except that their art is labor-intensive, and both refer to the book as art object. Greg Menco's wood, acrylic enamel and ricepaper wall-mounted sculptures hang in the smaller room of Toale's newly configured gallery.

The pieces are abstract, although a few might be taken for open books — sensuously smooth, glossy and precisely detailed. Their minty colors are cool, like ceramics. They have been brought to a high finish — sanded, shaped, and painted, until surface and shape are one. To my eye the most beautiful piece in the room is done in soft lavender. It's squarish, made of two slightly uneven panels joined to form an object that refers to nothing but itself. And yet it resembles evening sky, or the petals of a Georg Arends rose. Menco's



From Ambreen Butt's "What is passed, or passing, or to come" at the Bernard Toale Gallery.

work takes the risk of aspiring to beauty for its own sake.

Ambreen Butt is a Pakistani native who was first trained as a painter of miniatures and now works within a tradition of illuminated manuscripts. For this show she has painted large rectangular "pages" on the gallery walls in grey-blue with red borders to act as larger overall frames to the smaller, manuscript-size paintings. Within these boundaries, her paintings, in groups of two, three or four, form narratives as if they are



A work by Heidi Christensen at the Danforth Museum, Framingham.

manuscript pages from a disassembled book. Many are built up on layers of translucent vellum, with ricepaper layers underneath, so that the bright, flat surface image sits atop depths you must get up close to see.

Butt's narratives involve a woman who is both strident and self-protective; who strives to overcome real and symbolic beasts; who is in motion and is in harmony with the motion around her, often symbolized by groups of cranes, or other repetitive, swirling shapes. Her finely detailed images give pleasure by their beauty of workmanship, where her art begins. She is intent on making new her tradition, which means taking in the subject matter of her and our moment.

William Corbett

Jaune Quick-to-See Smith
Through January 11, 2004
Heidi Christensen
Through November 16
Danforth Museum of Art
123 Union Avenue
Framingham



A work by Jaune Quick-to-See Smith, at the Danforth Museum.

Through nearly 40 large images, Jaune Quick-to-See Smith offers us a glimpse of what it is like to be an American Indian in today's United States.

Using mixed media painting, monoprints, and charcoal drawings, she combines ancient images with contemporary ones—along with none-too-subtle acerbic commentary—in confronting the delicate balance between two distinct societies and mind-

bernard toale gallery

October 1 - November 8, 2004

AMBREEN BUTT
New Drawings

GREG MENCOFF
Sculpture

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