

ing things up to the present is a suite of mixed-medium drawings, also on book pages, *Anita of NY Meets Tom of Finland* (2004-05), in which she inserts freely painted women among the joyful ruttings of Tom's boys. Each work is matted with marbled endpapers, a decorative practice Steckel first employed in the early 1960s. Several reductive pencil drawings and collages on paper tweak the gender-bending of Marcel Duchamp. In *Oh What Rosy Saliva* (1997), Steckel adds rosy lips to Duchamp's profile above a woman's bare-breasted torso. In *Rose and Marcel* (2004), Duchamp is about to bugger a big-bottomed, perky-nippled Rose, and in *Rose* (2005), the title figure, hands raised, sports fetishistic high heels. In similar ways, a suite of 2005 collages insinuate George W. into the fray of a misbegotten war. Steckel tells it as she sees it, and it matters.

—Edward Leffingwell

Mary Henderson at Lyons Wier•Ortt

There is something almost frightening about the perfectly shallow lives of the young women in Mary Henderson's small paintings and drawings (none here was larger than 11 by 14 or 14 by 11 inches). Aiming for the superficial slickness of snapshots, she bases her carefully crafted images on pictures posted by the subjects themselves on photo-sharing Web sites. They appear as they want to be seen by friends, acquaintances and total strangers, revealing their exhibitionistic urges. They remind us that the Internet places 15 minutes of fame within everyone's reach, regardless of how undeserving. With digital cameras and cell phones allowing for unrestrained picture-taking, surveillance cameras peering down at us from everywhere, and reality TV bombarding us left and right, an overload of images of ourselves has become central to our identity. As this work implies, our culture is all about surface.

Henderson's meticulous technique in her oils on panel, executed with almost invisible brushstrokes, allows her to attain the luminosity and high finish of a color photograph, though with a slight softness in the modeling. *End of the Year* (all works 2006) shows a brunette girl at a three-quarter angle from above.

She is seated on the grass with her arms and legs bared; her right arm, on which she leans, is cut off just above the wrist by the bottom edge of the panel, in the kind of brutal cropping inherent to snapshots. Her foreshortened body fills almost the entire height and width of this painting, as if she is boxed in—although, on this sunny day, she exudes glee. Like her 19th-century forebears seated or reclining on cloths spread on the ground, she may hardly be as innocent as she seems.

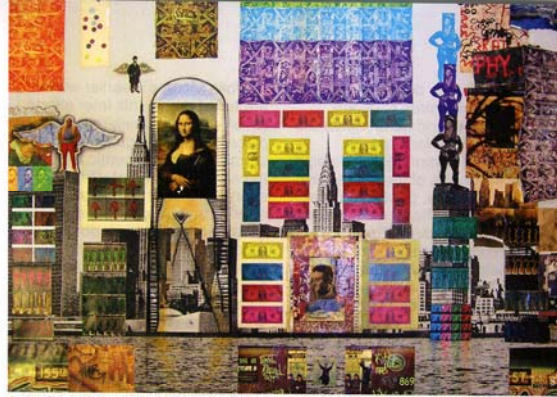
Game Day shows three girls in close-up, arranged bust-length one behind the other, flashing perfect smiles at the camera, with snippets of a sports-loving crowd behind them. As in almost all the other paintings and drawings, here too we are presented with affluent, all-American, good-looking Caucasian girls at leisure, seemingly without a trouble in the world, doing what their class does best. The title of this exhibition is, after all, "Right Clique." They know what they are supposed to like, what they are supposed to wear and whom they are supposed to hang out with. Henderson does not pass judgment. Her glib work is perfectly attuned to this culture of youth.

—Michael Amy

Anju Dodiya at Bose Pacia

Born and trained in Mumbai (formerly Bombay), the painter Anju Dodiya continues to live and work there. In her first solo exhibition in New York, she presented dreamlike, often mythological paintings on textiles (most of them 6 feet high) or paper (mostly 30 by 22 inches) that express mysteries and desires in equal proportion—private readings of narratives told before her time. Dodiya is also at pains to make clear her identification with femininity, exploring the subject not so much from a political point of view as from a personal one. The divine comedies that make up a considerable part of her output are treatises on the condition of being a woman in love—indeed, several of these works are painted on mattresses, the connotations of which are not restricted to rest.

Sometimes, Dodiya invokes Greek myths, such as the story of Daphne, who was turned into a laurel tree to escape pursuit by the god Apollo. In Dodiya's



Anita Steckel: *New York Skyline (Large)*, 1972, found photos and paintings silkscreened on canvas, 66 by 98 feet; at Mitchell Aligus.

Daphne (2004), a large labyrinth is superimposed on the Greek-robed nymph, perhaps indicating the futility of trying to escape fate. The logic of this work and others is essentially private and intuitive; one is not always sure of the relations between objects and people. In *Forked* (2005), two figures seen in close-up are engaged in the strange transaction of having their teeth cleaned by blackbirds; the only other elements in this acrylic-on-fabric painting are the bare branches of a tree in the upper left.

While Dodiya's inventiveness prevents her from repeating herself, the mysterious character of her paintings is a constant. Sometimes a title gives us a clue as to what is happening: in *Pink Clouds (for Penelope)*, 2005, the artist celebrates Odysseus's wife, who kept her suitors at bay for many years while waiting for her long-traveling husband to return. The painting presents three faces partly covered with branches; at top right is a man on a gondola, at bottom right a sloop with full sails. But there is no overt association with Penelope's story—the ship looks modern—so we must take the connection on trust. And in the series "The Secret Garden" (2005), the origins of the imagery—grimacing faces surrounded by foliage—seem obscurely personal. Dodiya is a talented artist whose work resists interpretation, enveloping the viewer in a complex web of meaning, the specifics of which are best known to her.

—Jonathan Goodman

Gary Monroe at CUE

Gary Monroe's first New York solo show consisted of work on paper concerned with a group of evangelical Christians who handle snakes as part of their devotional practice. Monroe lives in Knoxville, Tenn., not far from southern Appalachia, home to the snake handlers. The snake-handling ritual is based on a passage from the Bible (Mark 16:17) that states, "They shall take up serpents." The sect was founded by George Went Hensley in 1880 (he later died of a snake-bite) as a new form of religious expression based on local rural culture at a time when the industrial revolution had forced these communities to give up much of their land. Many handlers have

Anju Dodiya: *Pink Clouds (for Penelope)*, 2005, acrylic on fabric, 72 by 42 inches; at Bose Pacia. (Review on p. 145)

