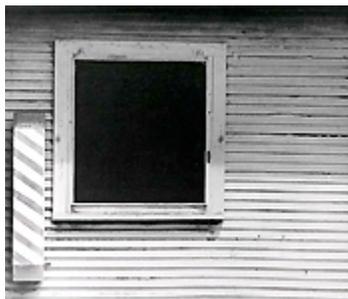




## Print Article



"Sitters and Signatures," photographs by Arnold Newman, at Howard Greenberg Gallery



Arnold Newman's *Barbershop Pole*, West Palm Beach, Fla., 1940), at Howard Greenberg Gallery



Arnold Newman's *Pablo Picasso, Vallaurius, France* (1954) at Howard Greenberg Gallery

## WEEKEND UPDATE by Walter Robinson

How very special is the art critic's profession, looking at art for a living. Devoting oneself to quiet contemplation, seeking a sense of peace and serenity, a world of artistic possibility and ways that history can come alive in the present. Me, I can take such refinement for two hours max before my feet start hurting and I retreat to the office.

So, earlier this week, a deceptively spring-like day found your correspondent in the Fuller Building at Madison Avenue and 57th Street, avoiding the reflection in the elevator on the way to the 14th floor, where **Howard Greenberg Gallery** is located.

Almost always filled with interesting pictures, the gallery is currently about to close an exhibition of photos from the 1940s and '50s by famed portraitist **Arnold Newman** (1918-2006), a show planned with the artist before his death. Like other photographers of that time, Newman sought first small-town genre subjects like barbershops and billboards, and later turned to formalist compositions of architectural details influenced, it seems now, by the parallel abstractionist esthetic in painting.

A separate gallery is devoted to Newman's specialty, portraits of artists and writers. Handsome **Willem de Kooning** peers out from behind some speckled sheets of plastic in 1967. **Pablo Picasso** poses in 1955 by a wall covered by an assortment of Cubist tchotchkes. One gets a palpable sense, from these images, of the cultural formation of popular notions of the bohemian art lifestyle.

Most of the portraits are inscribed to Newman by their subjects. In the broad margin of a 1946 portrait of himself and **Georgia O'Keeffe**, **Alfred Stieglitz** writes with mock humility, "Why I should be asked to smear up the clear feeling of your photograph I don't know." From the amiable **Man Ray**, we have on a 1961 portrait, "for Arnold, who first photographed me when I was six." And **Alexander Calder** writes, in 1957, with admirable precision, "to my friend, Arnold Newman, who did it."

The gallery has published a special catalogue of these pictures, called *Sitters and Signatures*, available for \$25. As for the photos, they range in price from around \$10,000 to \$50,000 or more (a portrait of **JFK** is \$60,000), and many are sold.

On the 13th floor is the **O'Hara Gallery** with its well-reviewed exhibition of transfer drawings from the 1960s by **Robert Rauschenberg**. Much can be said about these intimate drawings, made by soaking newspaper pages and magazine photos with lighter fluid and then transferring the images to paper by burnishing the backs with a dry nib. Rauschenberg would then work the drawings further with color and collage.



Robert Rauschenberg's *Untitled* (1968) at O'Hara Gallery



Robert Rauschenberg's *Self-Portrait* (for *New Yorker* profile) (1964) at O'Hara Gallery



Robert Rauschenberg with art dealers Ileana and Michael Sonnabend at the opening of his 1968 "Drawings" exhibition in Paris

A barely inflected index of '60s pop and political culture, the drawings have a Cagean, Zenlike randomness that reduces all events to ripples on the surface of time. The paper holds anything and everything, Abe Lincoln, a pop-top, a sneaker, a Polaris missile, a lightbulb, the Mona Lisa, wheels and tires, newspaper headlines, the American flag and Vietnamese soldiers, "his own *Guernica* transposed to Vietnam," as **Lewis Kachur** puts it in the accompanying catalogue.

The quickly drawn parallel lines that form the images are also reminiscent, as dealer **John O'Hara** pointed out, of the flickering television that played constantly in the artist's studio.

One atypical drawing, from 1964, is the artist's thumbprint, labeled "RR" and made for a *New Yorker* profile. Considering the several attempts in recent years to authenticate potentially valuable artworks by searching for the artist's fingerprints somewhere in the paint, this *Self-Portrait* suggests that Rauschenberg was happy to remove any doubt for future forensic art historians.

Many of the drawings are not for sale, and those that are have drawn interest from museums and top collectors at prices in the \$450,000-\$650,000 range. Later this month, O'Hara opens "Facing Family," a show of paintings by **Brenda Zlamany**, Mar. 29-May 5, 2007.

Also in the Fuller Building is the **Katharina Rich Perlow Gallery**, typically a place to find vibrantly colored modernist painting, such as the present show of new "Vibrascapes" by "Heartland Painter" **Harold Gregor** (b. 1929), a longtime professor at **Illinois State U.** in Normal. Indeed, Gregor's forest and woodside scenes have a brightly hued vigor that carries on the Fauve spirit.

Next door, the **Alexandre Gallery** is presenting a group show. Among the choice works by artists ranging from **Arthur Dove** and **Oscar Bluemner** to **William King** and **Brett Bigbee** is a notable life-sized sculpture of a Cuboid cat, made of blocks of lumber and painted orange, by **Anne Arnold** in 1956. It's not for sale. Forthcoming this spring at Alexandre is a show of paintings by **Gregory Amenoff**.

Across the street at **Pace Prints** on the third floor of 32 East 57th Street is a selection of seven large new "Pinocchio Prints" by **Jim Dine** (b. 1935), woodcuts with hand paintings in small editions, showing Italian author **Carlo Collodi's** eternally foolish marionette, who made his first appearance in 1881, the same year as **Pablo Picasso**. In Dine's incarnation, poor Pinocchio could not look more eager to get in trouble. Can we add one to the White House art collection? The prints range in price from \$11,500 to \$17,000.

Down the spiral staircase at **PaceWildenstein** proper on the second floor is an installation of four new works by **Robert Ryman** (b. 1970), one of which is in fact a row of 10 paintings, each about 55 inches square. This time around, under the title of "No Title Required," the most Minimalist of artists has used white enamel, flatly applied to large squares of wood of one of three types -- cherry, maple or oak -- surrounded by a simple, unpainted frame of the same material. The pictures appear to vary slightly in size, an eccentricity that seems sublime in that special Rymanesque way.

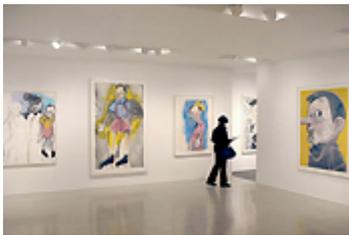
Back in the 1970s, I worked on a newsprint magazine called *Art-Rite*



Harold Gregor's *Cool Windy Day (Vibrascope #195)* (2006) at Katharina Rich Perlow Gallery



Anne Arnold's *Cat* (1956) with Brett Bigbee's *Couch* (1990-94) at Alexandre Gallery



Jim Dine's "Pinocchio Prints" at Pace Prints



Robert Ryman's *No Title Required* (2006) at PaceWildenstein

that had covers custom-designed by artists (thanks to the bravado of my co-editor, **Edit deAk**). **Dorothea Rockburne** designed a cover that was folded on the diagonal (by hand, by us, all 2,000 copies), and we used potato stamps to hand-print red, blue and yellow roses for **Pat Steir's** cover image. In 1975, Ryman did the cover for our special "painting issue," with that same perfect eccentricity, repositioning the magazine title, which was in Boldoni type, in the middle of the cover and spelling out "painting" in capital sans-serif letters directly beneath it.

Over at Mary Boone Gallery in 745 Fifth Avenue is a show of new paintings by **Karin Davie** (b. 1965), who has long been celebrated for taking the sedate Color Field stripe and turning it into a swooping figure with more energy than a rollercoaster. This time around, Davie has made a series of large gouaches that feature a whirl of heavy black brushstrokes almost completely obliterating solid colored grounds. These surfaces, displayed underneath reflective glass, are punctuated by random arrays of grommets inset with slowly blinking LEDs. Everyone likes Karin!

In the small side gallery is one big sculpture, a kind of madcap Moebius strip made of oversized ribbons of mirrored vinyl and some kind of blue or green material backed with gray foam and lined with what looks like a zipper. It's a big and frantic pile, and called *Induction: Symptom 1*. The paintings are \$30,000 each.

Down the hall is **Edwynn Houk Gallery**, where the celebrated dancer **Mikhail Baryshnikov** (b. 1948) is having his first photo exhibition. About seven years ago I saw Baryshnikov perform a classic avant-garde dance work by **Yvonne Rainer** -- he held a ball against his shoulder with his chin, among other actions -- under the direction of **Martha Graham** epigone **Richard Move** in a small theater called **Mothers** on West 14th Street.

Baryshnikov proved his chops then, and he does so again here, with large color photographs of dancers and musicians in clubs in the Dominican Republic. Predominately red and yellow in tone and blurred with movement, the guy doesn't waste time in the quiet neighborhoods -- about half of the pictures seem to be shots of go-go girls and cabaret pole-dancers. The photos, done in editions of five, are \$16,000 each.

In the same building is **Forum Gallery**, now presenting a dense show of a dozen new paintings by **Odd Nerdrum** (b. 1944), many of them as large as the walls can hold. Though the look of the people populating his canvases has not changed, the celebrated Norwegian artist seems to take them away from his signature post-apocalyptic landscapes and cast them across the heavens like so many constellations.

Nude figures, healthy and blonde, float in a star-speckled cosmos, sharing the space with the occasional planet or nebula. *Drifting* features a horizontal couple, the man elevating a foot or so above the woman. The one earth-bound image is the small (ca. 15 x 13 in.) canvas at the entrance to the show, *Self-Portrait (Head on a Table)*, perhaps a conundrum from the French Revolution, when the guillotined heads were thought to live for several extra seconds. The paintings are priced in the \$150,000-\$300,000 range.

Below 57th Street on Fifth Avenue is the Crown Building at 730 Fifth Avenue, home to **Playboy Enterprises** as well as the new **Gering &**



Karin Davie's new gouaches with LEDs at Mary Boone Gallery



Karin Davie's *Induction: Symptom 1* (2007) at Mary Boone Gallery



Mikhail Baryshnikov's *Untitled* (2006) at Edwyn Houk Gallery



Odd Nerdrum's *Drifting* at Forum Gallery

**López Gallery**, which opened last month with a show of three new works by digital artist **Leo Villareal** (b. 1967). Despite the august surroundings, dealer **Sandra Gering** has stripped the space down to the bare concrete, for a decidedly industrial effect.

Villareal's light objects fill the space well, especially *Field*, a 24 x 7 ft. lightwork that seems to be a 21st-century version of **Claude Monet's** water lily paintings, randomly cycling through a spectrum of soft-edged color effects, sort of like a tropical sunset in a box. Similarly hypnotic is *Diamond Sea*, a 10 x 15 ft. grid of white lights that moves through an endless series of random patterns, abstract, figurative and systematic. The works are \$300,000 and \$270,000, respectively, and strike me as utterly irresistible. **Hugh Hefner**, come on down!

Gering also predicts, in passing, that the building is likely to become even more of an art destination, especially after American paintings dealer **Deedee Wigmore** moves in.

In the meantime, one floor up is **Greenberg Van Doren Gallery**, which is featuring an exhibition of drawings and photographs by an artist named **Barry Ratoff** (b. 1948). The work that caught my eye was a small neon spelling out the word "ow" in a corner of the entry gallery. A bargain at \$1,000 in an edition of 15, it also expressed my sentiments exactly.

Sadly, **Joe Brainard's** erotic drawings at **Tibor de Nagy**, plus visits to **Marian Goodman**, **Luxe**, the **Project** and other galleries on the East Side have to wait till another day.

**WALTER ROBINSON** is editor of *Artnet Magazine*.



Odd Nerdrum's *Self-Portrait (Head on a Table)* at Forum Gallery



Leo Villareal's *Field* (2007), viewed in the artist's studio, now on exhibition at Gering & López Gallery



Barry Ratoff's *Ow* (2006) at Greenberg Van Doren Gallery