

ARTS & ENTERTAINMENT

CHARLES DESMARAIS *Art*

Colors and textures in masters' vein

Four exhibitions this summer offer variety of media, moods

I don't know if Ljubodrag Andric, whose show at Robert Koch Gallery (49 Geary St., S.F. www.kochgallery.com) has been extended through July 28, digitally enhances his stylishly minimal, sweetly colorful pictures of walls. His website describes an accomplished commercial photographer with a bent toward image manipulation.

Computer enhanced or not, however, the objects on view at Koch are clearly contrived to compete in the gallery-art arena. The 10 large pictures on view tend toward muted grays with hints of pink and violet, though one image of a brick wall might pass for stacks of gold bullion. They are invariably shot point-blank, filling the frame, inflected only by a chink of light, a signage leftover, a patched scar.

They are seductive in the common sense of the word: satisfying, presumably, to the enticer, but about something other than shared satisfaction or soulful communion.

A monograph published in 2016 and available at the gallery, "Ljubodrag Andric: Works 2008-2016," contains fawning essays by credible writers. They reference, with illustrations, more than a dozen painters from della Francesca to Vermeer to Motherwell to Ruscha. Yet I could find not a single mention of such obvious Andric precedents as Aaron Siskind or Lewis Baltz, photographers who paid reverent tribute to painterly tradition, even as they wryly challenged the art-market primacy of the handmade over the astutely observed.

One interviewer in the book, the respected photography curator William Ewing, goes on about the "painterly" qualities of Andric's work. But, of course, any painterly decisions were likely made by an uncredited laborer, whose work was enhanced over time by the chance contributions of wear, repair and oxidation. Andric is the skillful technician with a prodigious eye for the colors and textures of the masters, calculated to make us swoon.

The Power of the Other:

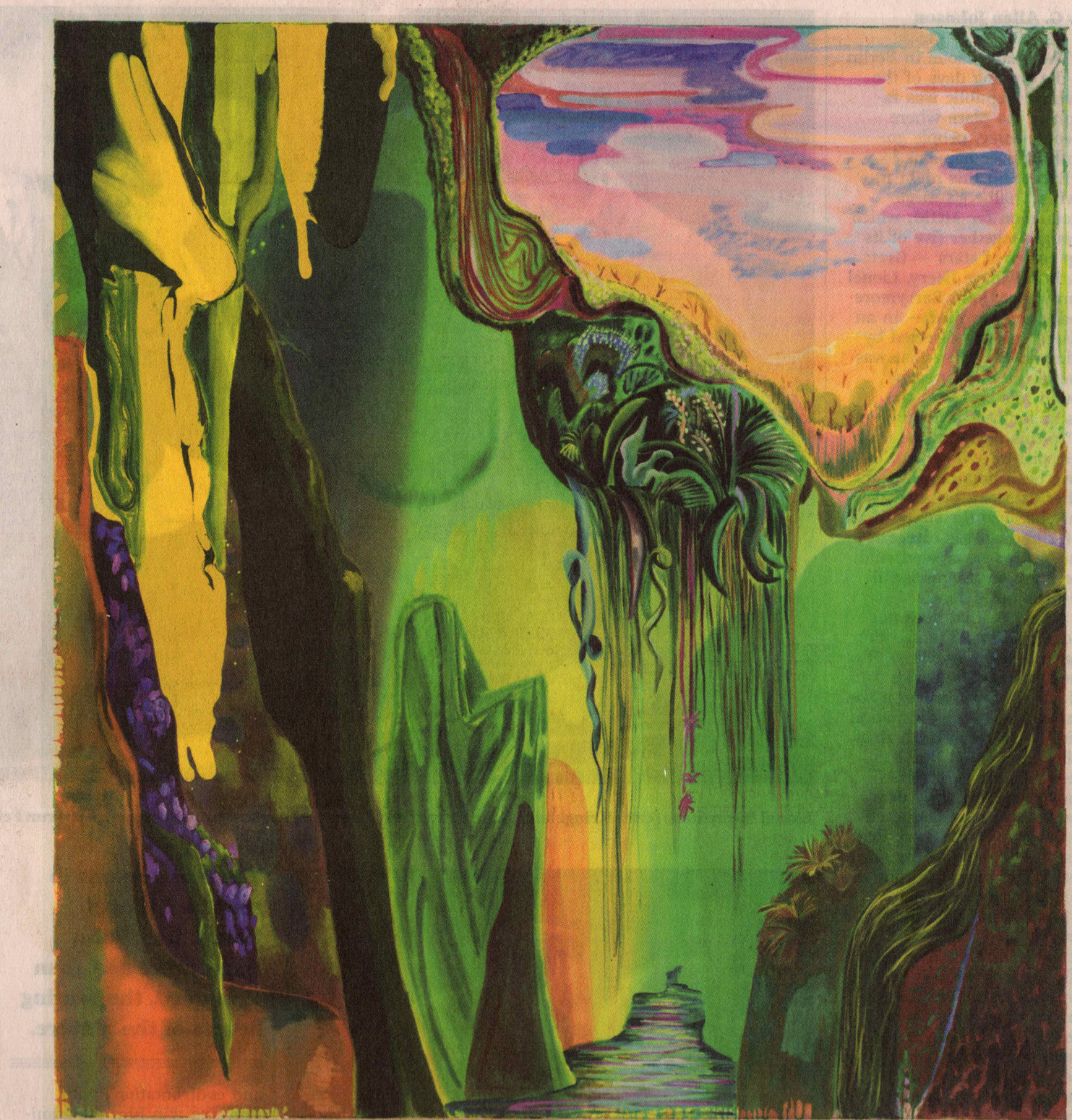
Though she has been successfully exhibiting in the Bay Area and internationally for more than 30 years, Mildred Howard is an artist whose work is not easy to pin down. She has designed permanent public art projects and large-scale installations as well as delicate assemblage sculptures made of glass and found materials. Some works make heavy use of text; others are intuitive object mashups.

All the work, though, seems part of a larger search for latent truths in the hand-worried leftovers of daily life and is marked by a unifying confidence in her own poetic sense of what those certitudes might be.

Her exhibition at Anglim Gilbert Gallery (1275 Minnesota St., S.F. <http://anglimgilbertgallery.com>), on view through June 30, is "Casanova's Assignations: The Power of the Other." It includes two computer-rendered tapestries, but the heart of the show consists of 27 works on paper that are printmaking tours de force, with collaged antique engravings and chromolithographs enhanced by contemporary chine collé, digital and lithography techniques. Most of the works rely on old prints to establish themes of male/female, black/white relationships.

Though palpably conscious of racial and sexual conflict, these are not political or polemical works. Some, in fact, are so open-ended as to resist interpretation entirely. Instead of statements, Howard relies upon the simple act of inserting old ideas of courtship into new contexts to pose questions.

These are works clearly designed to hang in polite homes,



Berggruen Gallery / JSP Art Photography

"Getting Out From Under" (2018) is one of a dozen paintings by Shara Hughes on view through Saturday, June 23.



Robert Koch Gallery

Ljubodrag Andric's "China 9" (2013) is one of 10 large pictures clearly contrived to compete in the gallery-art arena.

as the kind of ancillary decor for which old prints have long been used. If, under cover of that function, they conceal a minefield of subversive social attitudes, I think they will have served the artist's purpose.

Last chance: Before it closes this Saturday, June 23, try to see the dozen colorful paintings by Shara Hughes on view at Berggruen Gallery (10 Hawthorne St., S.F. www.berggruen.com). Large canvases, all but one painted this year, purport to be landscapes. In the best tradition of Modernism, however, they provide the artist with opportunities to demonstrate her exceptional formal skills and her knowledge of past art.

Overall, the works owe a debt to another female painter of the

moment, Dana Schutz. Just five years separate the two, and both were included in last year's important Whitney Biennial exhibition, yet Schutz has been in the spotlight for well more than a decade.

But if the Hughes paintings currently on view in the exhibition "Sticks and Stones" display a Schutzian color sense and embrace of warped space, they also quote traditional Chinese painting (in a work also called "Sticks and Stones"), Gustav Klimt ("Chaos Chasm"), Salvador Dalí ("Getting Out From Under") and German Expressionism (throughout). The great pleasure of the show is to see her entering such hallowed ground and getting out with both authenticity and virtuosity intact.

Shades of the Sixties: I am not so sure the Berlin artist Gwenaël Rattke is much concerned about "authenticity," in the sense of reinvention. His exhibition "The Human Error," on view through July 21 at Romer Young Gallery (1240 22nd St., S.F. www.romeryounggallery.com), is an unabashed paean to a strain of American art of the 1960s.

Crammed images and texts are the order here, printed in lurid color on unconventional substrates like Mylar and age-browned papers. Viewing the crowded exhibition feels like a walk back into a psychedelic media moment, though all the work shown was made in the past 10 years, and much of it is considerably more recent.

Rattke has long had a deep

fascination with San Francisco, I was told, and it is apparent throughout the show. A mesmerizing blue-and-pink-plastic portrait of the legendary Bay Area artist Jay deFeo demands our attention from across the room. One essential thread that runs through Rattke's work is its embrace of gay sexuality and its market trappings of an earlier era (think bath houses).

It is a lively presentation, and yet one leaves the gallery with an overwhelming sense of melancholy.

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