



Judith Simonian



FRENCH BLUE STUDIO
2007, acrylic on canvas, 16 x 22 in.

Acknowledgments

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Layout and design: Peg Reilly

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Cover: RED FJORD, 2010, acrylic on canvas, 76 x 58 in.

Judith Simonian

Recent Paintings

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EDWARD THORP GALLERY

210 Eleventh Avenue, 6th Floor, New York City, NY 10001

What Belongs Where

A painting by Judith Simonian shifts so deftly from the familiar to the uncanny and back that it is easy to overlook how well it is made. In her collage-like hybrids of photographically-derived material, she taps into the potential for mystery of the most ordinary appearances of the world, opening them up to a range of interpretation which remains inconclusive, even (perhaps especially) for her. This she achieves by means of a thorough understanding of pictorial dynamics and through rigorous narrative editing.

The contrast between the small fan and shaded desk lamp in the foreground of *Fine Asian Atmosphere*, looking both prim and pathetic against the roiling, ragged mountain range beyond, might trigger thoughts of the enduring conflict between nature and culture. Or in the comparison of these quotidian furnishings to the vastness and sublimity of nature, one might see wind and light harnessed to a domestic scale. What is certain is that their placement at the bottom of the picture complicates the viewer's visual entry to that charged space, maximizing the drama of the composition.

Many of Simonian's contemporaries work from photographs, but she takes command of her sources with uncommon verve and authority. They are the delivery mechanism for her coloristic interests and obsessions. For many viewers, the chromatic take-away of *Icy Blue Trail* might be the hallucinatory, peach-pink sled tracks that slice through a blanket of frigid aqua snow in the painting's lower two-thirds. But equally essential is the red-and-gray of the distant mountains, and the enigmatic splat of cobalt blue marking the slightly surreal trailside hut. In Simonian's paintings, as in dreams, seemingly arbitrary details become preternaturally significant.

Incongruities of subject matter coexist with disparities of style. Illusionism clangs against pure, unfettered mark-making in *Orange Temple*. A glimpse of sun-washed architecture holds center stage; swarming pseudo-calligraphy beneath it is corralled by a rail fence and hemmed in by a stand of trees. A looming gray fragment on the right looks flown in from another painting, but is no less enigmatic than the massive blue sky that it partly obscures.

Simonian is in full command of the painter's technical repertoire, playing barely-there washes in whispering hues against full-throated tube colors scraped on with a knife. A fine, fidgety brushstroke describes the waterline in *Red Fjord*, mediating between chiseled red cliffs and serene, gray-green sea. Indicating boats in unison movement (a naval operation?), blue-black dashes belong to another order of depiction from the feathery peaks in the distance, yet the artist avoids any whiff of stylistic pastiche. Incongruities arise not

for their own sake, but for the pictorial contingencies of the work at hand. Simonian does not confection her paintings; she does not concoct them; she hammers them out.

She does so with great finesse, and with the utmost care in working out just what belongs where. There's water imagery again in the melancholy *Piero's Flood*, suggesting the obfuscation of time. Scrambled snatches of a lakeside Italianate villa in neutralized greens bring to mind the gentle palette of fresco, that most vulnerable medium. Two ripply regions intrude on the picture: a blue-green one below connotes a rising tide; streaked with olive and white, a large patch in the upper right might allude to the distortions of memory, or the inevitable encroachment of its loss. An inexplicable flurry of rough, earthy green marks hovers among the hills in *Shining*, slowing the viewer's scan of the plunging ski trail ahead and prolonging the semblance of that exhilarating moment.

These paintings would be merely interesting did they not transcend compositional dynamics and worm their way into the imagination. Spatial disruption and the dualistic impulse it reveals emerge as a kind of geographical dialectic in works like *Sperlonga in Norway*. That painting is a grafting of two views: part dim, dusky impression of a seacoast town—a nocturne in the spirit of Whistler—and part close-up of the prow of an oil tanker adorned with a tiny, ridiculous figurehead, an oxymoron in itself. Simonian has lately come to believe that her Armenian ancestry has a bearing on her fascination with uncertain borders, with mutable and fugitive territories, and it is tempting to ponder, in that light, the absence of black or white in this painting in favor of an evocative range of grays.

These paintings do not look effortless, and they don't purport to be. Though they are bracingly resolved in pictorial terms, the protracted process of their working-out is crucial to what and how they mean. In them, Simonian lifts the curtain on her studio thinking and allows a glimpse of the sifting, shuffling and shifting, the conflations and calibrations, that go into her evocations of place and mood. Commensurately, this exhibition affords a long-overdue glimpse of an accomplished painter in top form.

—STEPHEN MAINE

STEPHEN MAINE is a painter and critic. He is a contributing editor at *Artcritical.com* and writes for *Art in America*, *Artnet.com*, *Art on Paper* and *Artecontexto*.



FINE ASIAN ATMOSPHERE
2009, acrylic on canvas, 64 x 76 in.



SPERLONGA IN NORWAY
2010, acrylic on canvas, 48 x 64 in.

“If a ‘building’ is objective, the place it defines isn’t and this truth is at the heart of Simonian’s work: she abstracts the concrete, reifies the intangible, and, in the process, has a way of making her places open to everyone.”

– SHANE McADAMS, *The Brooklyn Rail*,
review of exhibition at Janet Kurnatowsky

“Strange things are doing midst the blasts of mysterious light in your work.”

– GEOFFREY YOUNG, Poet, Curator, Gallerist, NY



SHINING

2010, acrylic on canvas, 76 x 58 in.



MONTECAVELLO BLUE POOL
(with parts completed by Katherine Bradford)
2009, acrylic on canvas, 42 x 64 in.



ORANGE TEMPLE

2009, acrylic on canvas, 50 x 72 in.



PIERO'S FLOOD

2010, acrylic on canvas, 64 x 76 in.

Judith Simonian

Born in Los Angeles, CA; lives in New York City, NY
Received MA, BA from California State University, Northridge

Solo Exhibitions

- 2006 Janet Kurnatowsky Gallery, "Chronic Civilization"
Brooklyn, NY
- 2003 Eyewash@Girdle Factory, "Web of The Map"
storefront installation, Williamsburg, New York
- 2001 Sloan Art Gallery, "Wet" Colchester, Vermont
- 2000 Kai Hilgerman Gallery, "Wall to Wall Eros"
Berlin, Germany
- 2000 Sideshow Gallery, Collage/Painting Portraits
(tandem with Bob Witz sculpture) Williamsburg, NY
- 1999 Spensieri Contemporary Art, "Selected Paintings from
the Last Decade" San Francisco, CA
- 1996 NY Kunsthalle, "Between Wuthering Heights" Video
Hybrid Installation, NYC, NY
- 1994 Ovsey Gallery, "Repainting Balthus", Los Angeles, CA
- 1991 Peter Miller Gallery, Chicago IL
- 1990 Ovsey Gallery, Los Angeles, CA
- 1989 Jayne Baum, New York, NY
- 1988 Ovsey Gallery, Los Angeles, CA
- 1986 Rena Bransten Gallery, San Francisco, CA
Ovsey Gallery, Los Angeles, CA
- 1984 Peter Miller Gallery, Chicago, IL
Ovsey Gallery, Los Angeles, CA
Leila Taghinia-Milani, NYC, NY
- 1983 Ovsey Gallery, Los Angeles, CA
- 2005 Islip Museum, "The Nature of Things" (catalog),
East Islip, NY
Anita S. Wooten Gallery, "Intimate Abstraction
(catalog), Orlando, Florida
Kerrigan Campbell, "Home Economix" New York, NY
"TheTateChelsea.com", "Winterview"
- 2002 Barbara Levy Gallery, Fire Island, New York
Cooper Union, Grand Hall Gallery, New York, NY
- 2001 Sideshow, "21st Suffragettes", Williamsburg, NY
Pierogi, "Flatfiles", Williamsburg, NY (1997-2001)
- 2000 Side Street Projects, "Urbans Art of the 80's",
Los Angeles, Ca.
Margaret Bodell Gallery, "Facts and Figures",
New York, NY
London Biennale, International Festival of the Arts,
London, UK, organized by David Medala
Freudian Center for Research and Analysis, "Imaging
the Wunderboard" Koan Jeff Baysa, curator, London
- 1999 Im n il, "Out of Y2K" Greenpoint, NY
Richard Anderson, "The Passion/Passions of Art",
New York, NY
- 1998 Scott Pfaffman, "Color Pictures", New York, NY
- 1997 Stamp, "Dis'Place", Williamsburg, NY
- 1994 Henry Street Settlement, "Lower East Side Artists
Re-think Neighborhood Spaces", NYC, NY
- 1992 The New Museum, "The Art Mall" (drawings and
plans for "Two Dressing Rooms"), NYC, NY
Newport Harbor Museum, "Selections From
The Permanent Collection", Newport Beach, CA
- 1991 The Art Museum, Florida International U.,
"American Art Today", Miami, Florida (catalog)
Montclair Art Museum, "Selections from Chemical
Bank Collection" (catalog), Montclair, NJ
- 1989 Mercantile Exchange, "Four Painters", Chicago, IL
- 1988 Jayne Baum Gallery, "Reconciling Modes", NYC, NY
- 1987 Fresno Art Museum, "Passages: A Survey of California
Women Artists", Fresno, CA
One Penn Plaza, "MovieTone Muse", NYC, NY

Selected Group Exhibitions

- 2011 Janet Kurnatowsky, "Paper 2011", Brooklyn, NY
- 2010 Edward Thorp Gallery, "Talk Show" New York, NY
Sideshow Gallery, "It's a Wonderful 10th"
Williamsburg, NY
- 2009 Truman State University Art Gallery, "American Race"
Kirksville, Missouri
- 2006 Weatherspoon Art Museum "Art on Paper, Biennial"
Greensboro, NC (catalog)
Venice Printmaking Studio, Venice, Italy

- 1986 Cirrus Gallery, "A California Collection"
Los Angeles, CA
Quint Gallery, "Sixteen x Twenty-Six Landscapes"
San Diego, CA,
- 1984 Newport Harbor Art Museum, "First Newport
Biennial-Los Angeles" (catalog) Paul Schimmel,
Newport, CA
California State University, Fullerton, "Face To Face—
Back to Back" (catalog), Fullerton, CA
Design Center of Los Angeles, CA, "A Broad
Spectrum: Contemporary Los Angeles Painters and
Sculptors 1984" (catalog), Los Angeles, CA
Peter Miller Gallery, "Boston, New York, Los Angeles",
Chicago, IL,
Palm Springs Desert Museum, "Between the Freeways"
(catalog), Palm Springs, CA
Fresno Art Center, "Five West Coast Artists of
Armenian Ancestry" (catalog), Fresno, CA
Jan Baum Gallery, "Theatrical Expressionism",
Los Angeles, CA,
San Francisco Museum of Modern Art, "Fresh Paint"
(brochure), San Francisco, CA
Exile Gallery, "Sex in Exile", Los Angeles, CA
American Gallery, "Behavioral Patterns of Los Angeles
Art Dealers", Los Angeles, CA
Security Pacific Gallery Plaza, "Art in The Public Eye",
Los Angeles, CA
- 1981 Franklin Furnace Touring Exhibition, "Bookworks",
New York, NY, The Utah Museum of Fine Art,
Salt Lake City, UT, University Museum, Albuquerque,
NM, University of Arizona Museum of Fine Arts,
Tucson, Arizona, Eaton/Shoen, San Francisco, CA
California State University, "New Fauves" (brochure),
Los Angeles, CA
LACE (Los Angeles Contemporary Exhibitions),
"On and Off Broadway", Los Angeles, CA
Nelson Gallery of The Atkins Museum of Fine Arts,
"Bookworks", Kansas City, MO
Sparks Gallery, "Five Los Angeles Artists, Denver, CO
- 1980 Seibu Museum, "Visual and Sculptural Bookworks"
(catalog), Tokyo, Japan
Los Angeles Institute of Contemporary Art (LAICA),
"Urban Alterations", Los Angeles, CA

Site Specific Projects and Commissions

- 1996 Long Island University, Brooklyn, NY, "Six Sculptors"
(Sculpture Center, NY), "Talkin Trash" catalog
- 1988 Creative Time "Art on the Beach", Hunter's Point
L.I.C., N.Y., site installation "Villa San Itta"
- 1985 MacArthur Park Public Art Program, "Talking
Pyramids", public sculpture, Los Angeles, CA
- 1984 MoMA PS1, Long Island City, NY, "Modern Excavation"
- 1983 Construction site for the Century Freeway,
Lynwood, CA "Transitional Use", (sponsored by FAR/
Foundation for Art Resources, Inc.) site installation
"Freeway Vessel"
Washington Project for The Arts (WPA),
Washington, D.C., "Streetworks", site installation
Madison Art Center, Madison Wisconsin, "The New
Art of Downtown Los Angeles", site installation at
Truax Airfield "Carpet-Tar Pit" (catalog)
Santa Barbara Museum of Art, CA, "Downtown L.A.
in Santa Barbara", (site alteration) (catalog)

Grants and Competitions

- 2011 Artists Alliance Lower East Side Rotating Studio
Program (6 month residence)
- 2009 MacDowell Colony Fellowship (5 week residency)
supplemental grant from Leon Levy Foundation
- 2008 Blue Mountain Center, Blue Mt. Lake, NY (1 month
residency fellowship)
- 2006 Adolph And Esther Gottlieb Foundation
- 2004 Virginia Center for The Creative Arts (3 week
residency fellowship)
- 2003 Fundacion Valparaiso, Almeria, Spain (1 month
residency fellowship)
- 2000 Adolph And Esther Gottlieb Foundation
- 1999 Blue Mountain Center, Blue Mt. Lake, NY (1 month
residency fellowship)
- 1990 National Endowment For The Arts, Visual Artists
Fellowship Grant

Public Collections

The Broad Art Foundation, Paris, France
Grunwald Center for the Graphic Arts, UCLA/Hammer Museum, Los Angeles.
The Broad Art Foundation, Los Angeles, CA
Pfizer Inc., NYC, NY
Fresno Museum of Art, California
Laguna Beach Museum of Art, Laguna, CA
Museum of Contemporary Art, San Diego, CA
Orange County Museum of Art, Orange County, CA
AMICO Library (Art Museum Image Consortium)
<http://www.amico.org>
St. Michael's College, Colchester, Vermont
Community Redevelopment Agency, Los Angeles, CA
Barbara Sinatra Children's Center, Palm Springs, CA,
"Secret Speak" (site installation)
Los Angeles City Art Collection, MacArthur Park Public Art Program, "Talking Pyramids"
Prudential Insurance Co. of America, Newark, NJ
Security Pacific Bank, Los Angeles, CA
Security Pacific Bank, New York, NY
YMCA, Honolulu, HI

Selected Bibliography

Foster, Howard, "Talk Show at Edward Thorp Gallery, Romonov Grave at *RomanovGrave.com*, Sept. 11, 2010
Naves, Mario, *CitiArts*, "Talk Show" April 20, 2010
Garwood, Deborah, *ArtCritical.com*, Jan. 17, 2006
Mc Adams, Shane, *Brooklyn Rail*, Dec. 2005-Jan. 2006
Cotter, Holland, Weekend, "For Hikers Seeking Art, Brooklyn Is a Left Bank", *New York Times*, Dec. 15, 2000
Cotter, Holland, "Sculpture Under The Sky", *New York Times*, August 26, 1996
Kandel, Susan, "Gender Gaze", *Los Angeles Times*, March 11, 1994
Frank, Peter, "Africano, Simonian, Wagner, Stockholder", *L.A. Weekly*, June 2-13, 1991

Curtis, Cathy, Gallery Reviews, *Los Angeles Times*, Feb. 16, 1990
Mahoney, Robert, "Talking Buildings", *New York Press*, March 24, 1989
Mahoney, Robert, "Art on The Beach", *ARTS Magazine*, November 1988
Brenson, Michael, "Outdoor Sculpture Reflects Struggle of Life in the City", *New York Times*, July 15, 1988
Knight, Christopher, "Painter Relocates Landscapes", *Los Angeles Herald Examiner*, May 13, 1988
Muchnic, Suzanne, "Galleries: Wilshire Center", *Los Angeles Times*, April 25, 1986
Drohojowska, Hunter, "Someone Left the Art Out In the Park", *Los Angeles Herald Examiner*, November 1, 1985
Pincus, Robert L., "Art As Artifact", *Flash Art*, Summer 1985
Garris, Laurie, "The MacArthur Park Program", *Arts and Architecture*, July 1985
Larsen, Susan C., "First Newport Biennial", *ARTnews*, Feb. 1985
Donahue, Marlena, Gallery Reviews, *Los Angeles Times*, December 7, 1984
Pincus, Robert L., "An Artist in Search for Dialogue", *Los Angeles Times*, November 28, 1984
Knight, Christopher, "It's Art, Plain and Simple at Newport", *Los Angeles Herald Examiner*, Oct. 28, 1984
Shipper, Merle, "Neo-Expressionism, Judy Simonian", *Images and Issues*, November-December 1983
Rubin, David, "Art Reviews", *Art in America*, October 1983
Muchnic, Suzanne, Gallery Reviews, *Los Angeles Times*, Apr. 15, 1983
Knight, Christopher, "Los Angeles—Art on the Move", *ARTnews*, January 1983
Knight, Christopher, "Artworks That Fill A Corridor", *Los Angeles Herald Examiner*, Sun. Sept. 19, 1983
Wilson, William, "Insecure Love-Or An Affair to Dismember", *Los Angeles Times Calendar*, Oct. 31, 1982
Albright, Thomas, "Fresh Paint", *ARTnews*, September, 1982
Knight, Christopher, "Art That An Demands An Audience", *Los Angeles Herald Examiner*, Aug. 15, 1982
Boettger, Susan, "Fresh Paint, New Fingerprints", *San Francisco Chronicle*, Sunday, June 27, 1982

