

the village
VOICE

Caragh Thuring's 'Assembly'; Muntean/Rosenblum at Team Gallery

Plus Justine Kurland's 'This Train Is Bound for Glory' at Mitchell-Innes & Nash

By Daniel Kunitz Tuesday, Oct 27 2009

Caragh Thuring, an exciting young Belgian artist living in London, dissects paintings in order to reanimate the medium. At first glance, the five canvases in her first New York show seem to be groupings of disjointed abstract marks on unprimed linen. Look longer, however, and the marks coalesce, resolving into loose though structurally sound compositions, all versions of a country picnic. Each of the paintings takes as its source and inspiration a Renaissance work, Titian's *Pastoral Concert*, which depicts two men in the countryside disporting with two nude ladies. Thuring pulls elements from it—the form of a seated man playing a lute, the bow on a red hat, the tilting line of a tree trunk—combines them with elements culled from other artworks, some perhaps from her head, and reassembles them all into original and beguiling pictures. But the secret of Thuring's concert is, I think, controlled discord. The artist maintains tension in these reassembled pictures by treating the elements within differently—she might draw a tree trunk in outline while portraying a body in an expressively rendered, roiling mass of white and black. Some of the shapes are hard-edged, some soft; some of the drawing is precise, some gestural. The resulting mix is a complex melody without stuffiness or nostalgia.



Courtesy the artist and Simon Preston New York
Painting Renaissance: Thuring's 1 (2009)

Details

Caragh Thuring: 'Assembly'

Simon Preston Gallery
301 Broome Street, 212-431-1105
Through November 1

Muntean/Rosenblum: 'Untitled '09'

If, in recent years, we've not seen much good painterly painting like Thuring's, that's because the medium has been dominated by the sort of work done by the Viennese artist duo Muntean and [Rosenblum](#): conceptually inclined, narrative-based, illustrational canvases. Austrian-born Markus Muntean and Israeli-born Adi Rosenblum have worked together since 1992. The six oils in their current show mark a shift in strategy. As always, the pictures portray young women and men in rounded "windows" that don't reach the edges of the canvas and which sit above enigmatic captions. But the illustrational painting style is freer now, the brushwork looser, the colors chalkier, and the settings more realistic. The realism extends to the stories the images suggest, which, in this series, are rooted in the everyday—a moment of transcendence on an escalator, for instance. Or consider the untitled picture with the caption, "The best way to take people is to take them for what they think they are. Then leave them alone." In an alley, under a large piece of graffiti, a bum sits against the wall, watching a woman walk past on the street. In the foreground, a younger girl looks back over her shoulder, as if startled by someone following her. Like all the paintings here, this one presents a believable, suggestive, if somewhat ambiguous scene, one that will keep you pondering. *Team Gallery, 83 Grand Street, 212-279-9219. Through November 7*

Justine Kurland: 'This Train Is Bound for Glory'

For two years, the photographer Justine Kurland traveled with hobos to make these pictures—which is not nearly as surprising as the fact that hobos still exist. They do, at least in this gorgeous photo series, which can, at times, seem like a fantasy. All 11 images are in color. A number are straight landscapes, such as one depicting the "[Keddie Wye](#)," where two train tracks on bridges diverge in opposite directions around a forested hillside. But while undeniably beautiful, the landscapes are not the pull here: The wonderful characters are. A few—like the bearded, bare-chested old guy in makeshift gators riding a burro beside some train tracks—slot easily into our received notions of hobodom. However, a little blond boy squatting on a rock watching a freight train across the river does not fit the hobo image, and putting him in that category of romantic homelessness is shocking. One hopes he would have a chance at some stability before choosing the lifestyle. These pictures gain power by being seen together as a kind of journey—from the uncomplicated beauty of the landscape to the quaint squalor of the hobos' lives to the unsettling consequences of the nomadic life. *Mitchell-Innes & Nash, 534 West 26th Street, 212-744-7400. Through November 14*