

Essay on Ilona Sochynsky by Jeffrey Wechsler

The diversity of art of the modern era has sometimes been viewed as a conflict between two basic approaches, the realistic and the abstract. How enlightening and enjoyable it is, therefore, to see an oeuvre that renders the issue moot through a hybrid art that encompasses both realism and abstraction, delving into the visual and conceptual potential of both of these artistic worlds. The paintings of Ilona Sochynsky, as represented by the several series in the current exhibition, demonstrate that the visualization of the non-objective and the natural may be marked by a surprising mutual interrelationship, and that a fascinating art can be built on the borderline of the two approaches. While this selection covers a relatively brief chronological range, from 2006 to 2009, it displays the ongoing development and transformation of the artist's vision into connected yet distinct themes, each partaking of essential aspects of Sochynsky's basic concepts of image construction.

Crucial to Sochynsky's art is the emphasis upon, and appreciation of, the detail. In general, paintings are usually perceived as a whole, after which an observer may study various small parts – details – that comprise the full image. Sochynsky's paintings can be apprehended as overall compositions, of course, as all well-made paintings should be, but they are in essence created from details. They may coalesce from bits of shattered imagery that interlock, as in *Odyssey* or *Night Shadows*, or they may dominate a surface, presenting nothing but what would normally be considered a mere detail, such as the textured surfaces of *Fragments #13* and *#14*. In such works the potential for abstraction inherent in a detail becomes the visual building block from which the total image is generated.

With their highly irregular contours, relatively large size, and pinwheeling complexity of imagery, the *Capriccios* are perhaps the most spectacular of the series, and also the most demonstrative of Sochynsky's methodology. In these paintings, a multitude of objects have been eccentrically fragmented, usually to the point of unrecognizability, and then cunningly arranged and interspersed so as to produce powerful conjunctions of color and shape. An odd yet compelling psychic state is created, like the tug of imprecise memories, or the enticement of a partially obscured scene. The effect may be humorous, providing the viewer with a game of perceptual hide-and-seek – is that a golf ball over there, a bit of a toothbrush over there? But the works are also puzzling, sometimes even unsettling, in their frenetic press of unknown things, providing a sense of the allusive and the mysterious.

In the *Fragments*, Sochynsky forgoes complication and presents primarily single-image, small paintings that focus down upon a detail. With their reduced dimensions inviting close-up inspection, the *Fragments* enjoin the viewer to appreciate the visual properties of the tiniest bits of reality and the stark or sensuous compositions that reside within them. *Fragment #5*, with its vague suggestion of a folded surface and linear network, almost seems a mathematically derived abstraction of graph paper. But its imagery and diamond shape offer it as a possible transitional work to the *Fetishes*, the most recent series on display. Here Sochynsky has decided to embrace, to some extent, a more straightforward realism, with images that are immediately recognizable as folded fabrics upon which a delicate mesh has been overlaid. Indeed, the *Fetishes*, as may be surmised by the series title, add to this oeuvre a flirtation with eroticism, acknowledging the use of mesh materials in fishnet stockings, lingerie, and the like. But as with virtually all imagery in Sochynsky's art, it is a fragment, a fleeting suggestion, ultimately subsumed within the overall structure of the composition.

In its evocation of vaguely organic forms – the indistinct flickerings of suggested vegetal or flesh-like surfaces in the *Capriccios* or the seductive involutions of fabric in the *Fetishes* – Sochynsky's work prods the viewer's imagination toward an animation of the abstract. In its impingement upon geometric art and near non-objectivity (see *Fetish #5*), this art acknowledges both the underlying structure of nature and the artificial constructs of human intelligence. Ultimately, through the blending of the naturalistic and the abstract, the ongoing stylistic progression of Sochynsky's art offers both stability and transformation, and an art of intriguing effect.

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