

AT A GLANCE: GO FIGURE BY JANICE MCCORMICK



Michael Neary, *Nude on Green Cushions*, Acrylic on paper, 24" x 36"

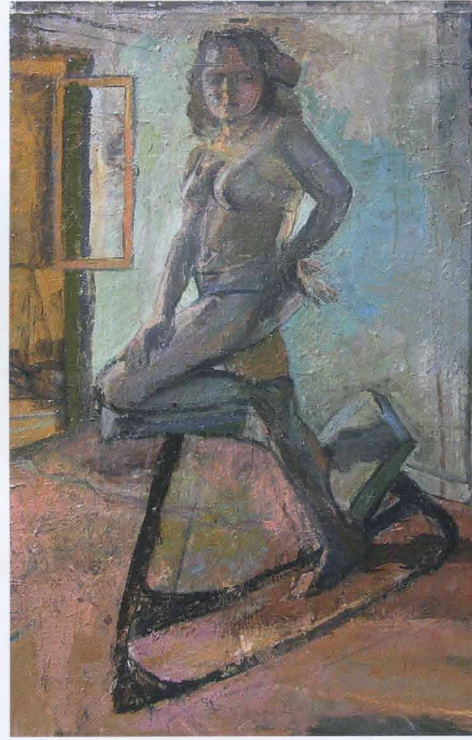
The Figure at the University of Tulsa's Alexandre Hogue gallery in March revealed contemporary artists drawing upon past styles to explore an equally traditional subject matter – the human body. Sixteen artists contributed to this exhibit - nine members of the Midwest Paint Group and seven distinguished guest artists. The following three works, all by members of the MPG, will give you some idea of the scope and diversity of this exhibit.

Most of the posed figures are female, often nude, depicted within the confines of an artist's studio. Especially powerful is Bob Brock's *Reclining Figure*. The nude model's elongated form stretches out across a deep red couch. She appears to be open and vulnerable, but that is not the case. By closing her eyes, she remains closed in on herself. Both the couch that cradles her and the dark walls that almost wrap around the couch add to this psychic remoteness. A well-placed brown box in front of the couch further distances the viewer from the model. Even the surface treatment of her limbs in terms of angular blocks of color (à la Paul Cezanne) gives her a subtle edginess.

Glen Cebulash's large scale work *Three Figures* (96" x 56") reflects his cubist approach. Only at a distance can one decipher all three figures. Out of the myriad of geometric patches, each figure gradually coalesces around a key shape that signifies a body part. Thus, the uppermost figure emerges out of a jumble of pink, flesh and white color blocks once the viewer reads a black triangle as a sign of her gender. A second figure in the lower portion of the painting proves more difficult to discern. It is a purple outline of a two-toned gray oval that helps you recognize the top of a head. Only now do you see the torso receding back in space and splayed legs bent at the knees. Once again a black triangle signifies the figure's gender. This style shows just how little visual data is needed for human beings to recognize their own.

Fauvism, with its unnatural colors, inspired Michael Neary's *DEB*. A woman sits at a small round café table upon which sits an empty mug. Her bright orange complexion makes her bright blue eyes pop out as they vacantly stare out of the picture. She is bored. Yet, the contrast of blue bricks right behind her orange hair creates a visual liveliness that

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(left) Lester Goldman, *Kathrin*, Graphite on Paper, 24" x 18" (middle) Jeremy Long, *Colleen Folding Laundry*, Oil on canvas, 16" x 20" (right) Timothy King, *Elizabeth*, Oil on canvas, 48" x 36"

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runs counter to her boredom. Her pose is inert, self-contained. Her left hand holds her chin, while her left elbow rests on the table. Her right arm rests on the table, her right hand cupping her left elbow. A straight red line forms her mouth. The slightly tilting table top is held up by spindly wrought iron legs. Her red, pink and green floral skirt clashes with her dull brown stockings and brown blouse. Oddly, she does not wear the pair of white shoes that sit underneath the table. The overall reading of her personality is one of eccentricity.

As these three examples show, the human body still fascinates and inspires artists working in diverse styles and viewers of diverse tastes alike. ■

Janice McCormick is an art reviewer who has been writing about art in Tulsa and Oklahoma since 1990. Currently she teaches philosophy part-time at Tulsa Community College. She can be reached at artreview@olp.net.