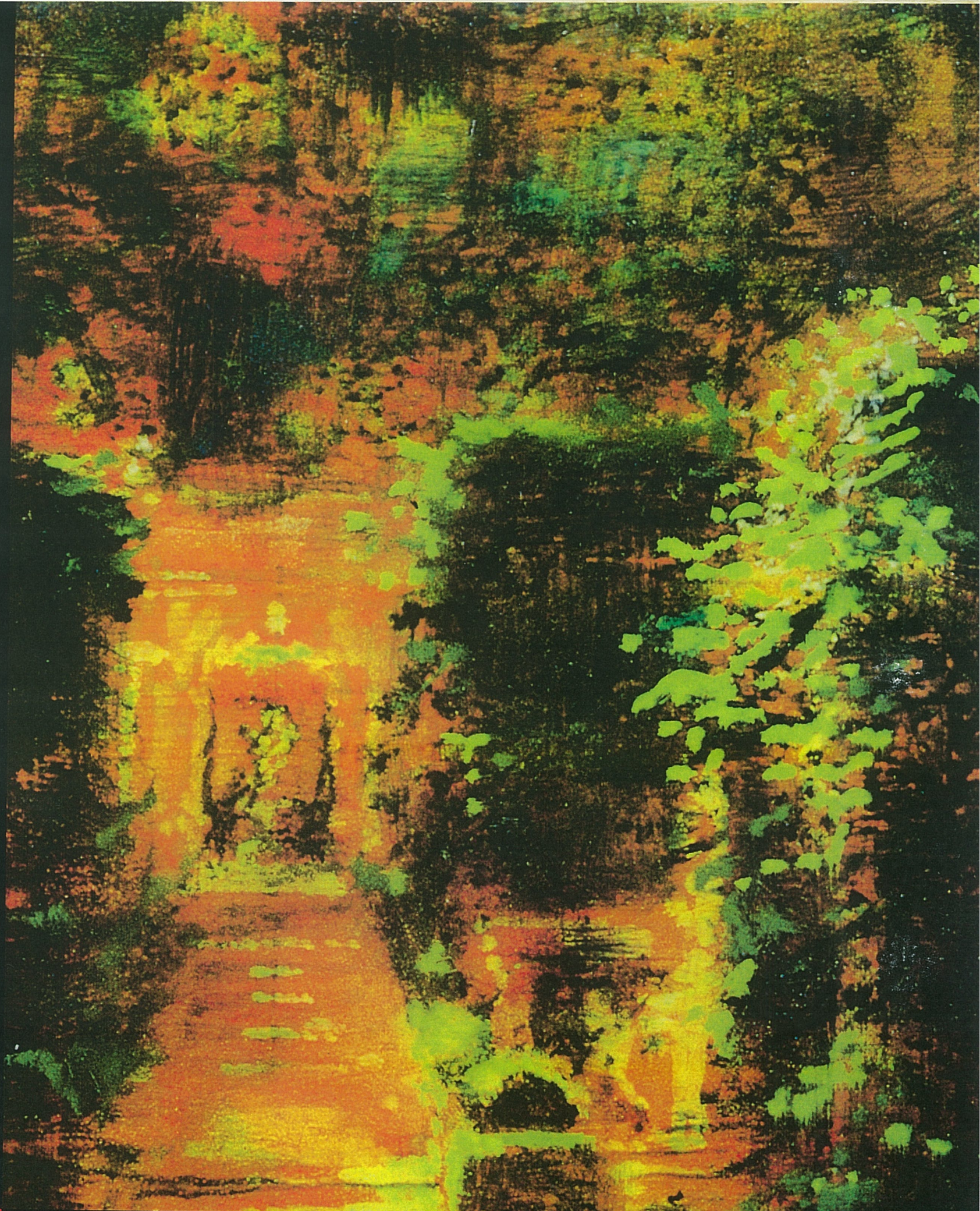


# Artweek



■ Reinventing Photography ■ Great Books ■ Jim Campbell

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# Artweek

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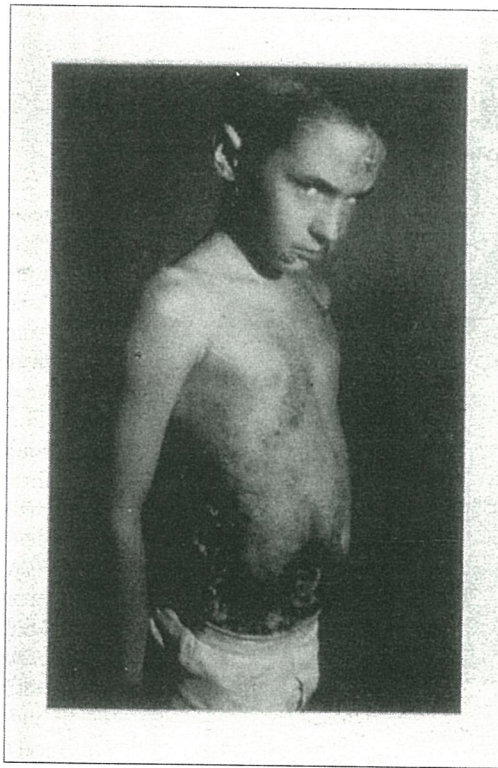
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Cover: Stephanie Peek, detail of *La Pietra (warm)*, oil on panel, 15" x 15" x 2", at Triangle Gallery, San Francisco. page 23

# Introductions '97

The San Francisco Art Dealers Association presents the 23rd Annual program celebrating new talent in the visual arts. Twenty four SFADA member galleries and 4 non-profit arts organizations invite you to view exhibitions of innovative painting, sculpture, drawing, photography and installation throughout the month of July.

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GALLERY PAULE ANGLIM	GEORGE KREVSKY FINE ART
BRAUNSTEIN/QUAY GALLERY	MAXWELL GALLERIES
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CLAUDIA CHAPLINE GALLERY	NORTH POINT GALLERY
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CATHARINE CLARK GALLERY	SHAPIRO GALLERY
SUSAN CUMMINS GALLERY	DOROTHY WEISS GALLERY
OLGA DOLLAR GALLERY	
EBERT GALLERY	<b>NON-PROFIT</b>
ERICKSON & ELINS GALLERY	<b>PARTICIPANTS</b>
GARZOLI GALLERY	NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF ART AND DISABILITIES
BRIAN GROSS FINE ART	PRO ARTS
HACKETT-FREEDMAN GALLERY	RICHMOND ART CENTER
JERNIGAN WICKER FINE ARTS	SOMAR
ROBERT KOCH GALLERY	

## OPENING NIGHT BENEFIT PARTY

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Join the artists to enjoy food, beverages, live music, an art presentation and a silent auction of luxurious items. Proceeds benefit the San Francisco Art Institute's Scholarship Fund.

### TICKETS:

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**T**he most interesting thoughts I catch aren't necessarily the ones I'm chasing. Slouched into the easy chair, most enjoyably avoiding a book of art criticism with *The Pride of Chanur*, a work of science fiction, I find an image that helps me think about one of art's puzzling realities.

*Whatever had begun to happen at Meetpoint had played itself out already, while they existed only as a probability in the gods' intentions ...*

Why is a sun-dappled landscape, painted with bits of color, world-beating art when Monet makes it in 1890 in Paris, almost unnoticed when Granville Redmond makes it in San Mateo in 1910, and seen as just barely above the level of a craft when made by a painter anywhere, today? A rich and fulfilling experience may have been had by all three painters, each may have approached the task with dedication and care in observation. Although I admire the Monet most, occasionally I wonder why.

*... There had been a chance. There was less and less. It was four months back at Meetpoint, as hyperlight ran down the starlanes, but not by the way they traveled; whatever had happened there was four, five months old and about to get older.*

—C. J. Cherryh, *The Pride of Chanur*

The starship crews in the story have a relationship with time that comes unhinged as they jump through hyperspace. Coming out of a jump, they are months and years ahead of the news as it appears to the ships "behind" them. As I toy with a mental picture of time travel, the journey of the spaceships reminds me of the travel of ideas. The "news" of something like Impressionism is like a ship that calls at different ports, arriving as something new and exciting in one port when it's already old hat in another. The inhabitants of the new planet unload the cargo, marvel at its contents, and put it to use while, across the galaxy, others poke their fingers through big old holes in a worn out lot of the same cargo.

Put into words, the metaphor seems trite, yet something in the image touched me. The planetary worlds, each with their own ways of thinking, each living in their own time-space, are so distinct and, in the tone of the story, so equal. The interstellar pilot survives and—after many thrilling battles—thrives because she combines great integrity about her own ways with curiosity about and respect for the ways of others. But what nerve is this touching for me? As a student, I was told by no less an artist than Joan Brown that if I was ambitious I should move to New York. I'm still here, so either I wasn't ambitious enough or, as the space metaphor suggests to me, ambitious in a different way. Ambitious enough to want to live by the gravity of my own place. And optimistic enough to think that ideas travel both ways.

Putting one's own experience at the center, finding pride in one's history and countering inner and outer colonialism have been primary themes in recent art. Yet, again, I find relevant material not in a book of art theory but in the popular works of linguistics by Deborah Tannen, author of *Talking 9 to 5* and *You Just Don't Understand*. She speaks of two axes which are present in every human conversation, an axis of hierarchy and an axis of connection. Some people are more attuned to one axis than the other, but we all, with every utterance, use these unconscious coordinates to guide our speech. We know it when someone strays off course; if, for example, a not very-well-known (read: lower in the hierarchy) artist yells at a famous curator. At least one senior

Bay Area artist has earned a reputation for being "difficult" because he bristles at any subtle hint that a curator considers him—and other artists—lower in the hierarchy than representatives of the museum. Plans for at least two major museum shows of his work have curdled after his angry objections to perceived slights.

Of course, such sensitivity betrays an awareness locked onto the axis of hierarchy to the exclusion of the axis of connection. There's not much point, really, in attempts to escape differences in power and status by getting on top. It would be silly to promote art here by demeaning art there—any here, any there. Such a tactic, at any level, merely keeps the focus on a struggle for power. And there's something much more interesting going on.

This "something" broke the surface in a recent conversation I had with a dealer. "It's so hard to get people to come by," she said. "I'm just trying to make a go of it for my artists, but I don't have any social connections ..." And it appeared again when an art consultant expressed her desire to "get in with circle of people who are real collectors." And also in a graduate student's overheard comments about "meeting the right people"—and finally, when I heard a nationally famous artist complain about the way his work was received in another country. It's not that the gallery owner or consultant or student—or artist, for that matter—couldn't meet other people who could help them. But I'm increasingly certain that if they do locate "the right people" those "right people" will be struggling in relationship to some other circle. A sense that the center is somewhere you're not seems to plague even souls with a gift, those who find themselves with money, or talent, or influence. Perhaps the remedy lies along the axis of connection. Perhaps one finds the center only in those rare interactions when concerns of power balance with concerns of relationship.

When I finally do make it to the book of art criticism, *Picture Theory* by W. J. T. Mitchell, I find delicately nuanced essays on the relationship between verbal and visual representation. Mitchell's book exemplifies intellectually the willingness to hold, as if in solution, thoughts which seem be contradictory. He examines each side of an argument until a greater whole appears. His discussion of abstract painting is particularly fascinating, addressing it as a visual-verbal matrix; a tradition that leans on language in the form of theory just as heavily as early Renaissance painting leaned on language in the form of biblical narrative. Mitchell's book deserves a return visit; but this time through I remember not so much what he says but the way he threads his way through seeming opposites to find an interdependent whole.

His words illuminate the slippery experience of thinking I've just been having, words calling up a daydream of a ship, which maneuvered its way through the mind's black spaces to touch my feelings, which I tried to understand with words, which led to a writer who described communication with a visual image—a pair of axes—which led back to my question about "centers" again; words and images twining endlessly together, just as *Picture Theory* says they do.

*Postscript:* More serendipitous linkages appeared when I left my easy chair to edit this issue of *Artweek*. In the initial planning, a "books" section joined the special issue on photography merely because summer is the time people catch up on their reading and photography was scheduled for July. Then the writers on trends in photography began to talk about "narrative" and "commentary," tropes from the realm of language. And photographer Richard Misrach, in his interview, eloquently addressed the specific connections between literary structure and his work.

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