

MIXED PAINT

A SURVEY OF CONTEMPORARY PAINTERS

THIS ISSUE OF *Flash Art*, with its special emphasis on painting, comes at a moment when the medium is unwilling to conform to the cycle of its periodically proclaimed death and re-birth, appearing to have died but to be carrying on regardless. Almost without doubt, a major factor in the current predominance of the medium has been the rise to prominence of the Leipzig and Dresden 'schools.' In this issue, Johannes Schmidt offers a comprehensive assessment of current and recent practices in these cities. Across Europe, in the United States, and further afield, a peculiar climate seems to be forming in which the figurative and abstract are no longer rivals, surface and subject matter are no longer wary of each other, where intellect and sentiment find themselves unlikely bedfellows, and in which the unashamedly ugly and the decidedly beautiful have lost their inhibi-

tions and are eager to intermingle. Indeed, the British context is presently reveling in what should be a crisis, pertinently described as a state of 'fever' by JJ Charlesworth in his essay for *Flash Art* on current painting in London.

The diversity of practice attracting attention suggests there has been a certain relaxation of the unwritten conventions determining what is desired from current painting — the academic painter and the most radical practitioner feeling equally comfortable with navigating the idiosyncratic relationships that are developing between previously clearly differentiated domains. Perhaps artists, critics, curators, and collectors alike are enjoying a sense of freedom, liberated from the shackles of theory, which had seemed so heavy in the mid '90s — a freedom that will perhaps allow for a reconfiguration of their relationship to theory, as

discussed this issue in Lane Relyea's essay "Painting and Theory."

There is certainly a sense of a renewed openness to 20th-century styles, genres, and movements among young painters in their search for new languages, matched by an enthusiastic reception for it by their audiences. The revisionism this has already triggered within curating suggests that the boundaries between the conservative and the progressive are, at least for the time being, diminishing — the fashionable is flirting fearlessly with the unfashionable, and the process of convergence is a source of energy driving much of the most exciting painting of today.

—Matt Price

This survey of contemporary painters has been devised and researched by Lavinia Garulli, Valentina Sansone, Francesca D. Shaw, and Livia Zanelli.



KAMROOZ ARAM

Shiraz, Iran, 1978. Lives in New York.

"Excerpts from carpet patterns are combined with other imitations of nature such as military camouflage and Persian miniature-esque clouds. The result is an accumulation of layers, implying abstractions that de-center the carpets' intended narratives, losing them within a war-like landscape. These quasi-landscapes suggest narratives illustrating fantastic events or scenes that can be seen as ecstatic or celebratory, yet at the same time violent and destructive."

(Kamrooz Aram)

Represented by: Oliver Kamm/5BE, New York.

Image: *The Battle of So and So, 2004. Oil on canvas, 152 x 233 cm.*