

with vibrating, striding color and thick, encrusted painterly passages, Hazlitt's concern with the painting as object is manifested in his diptychs and triptychs wherein the space of the wall is incorporated into the piece. The show also includes a number of drawings that, while sharing the same general themes, are rendered in more precise forms and effect a more poetic response. (Rosa Esman, February 15-March 12)

MARTIN JOHNSON

The source of the zany sculptures/paintings/objects at Phyllis Kind Gallery in February is in the all-encompassing imagination of Martin Johnson. With a degree in architecture as well as in art, he quite clearly demonstrates a predilection toward construction and assemblage. A painter, a sculptor, a photographer, and a poet, to name but a few, Johnson constantly gathers found objects and inexpensive materials as the "stuff" of his visually dynamic art.

Walking into the gallery, one is literally assaulted by the explosive variety of colors, designs, shapes, and objects. Chairs, tables, mirrors, wall pieces, shopping carts are but some of those definable objects whose function becomes irrelevant if not altogether nullified by the optical busyness of the whole and the obsessive focus on minute details. One's overall experience of the room as a playground of overwhelming visual dynamism is complementary to one's closer inspection of objects which reveals their multi-level richness.

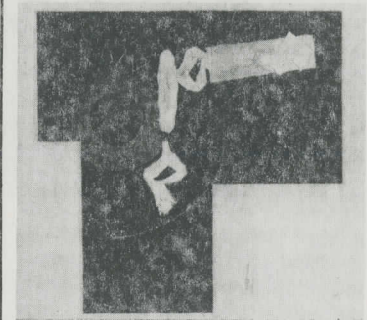
The bottom fourth of one wall piece is a simple, naively rendered landscape with a desert, house, cactus, and road. In the area of the sky (3/4 of the painting), a circle is cut out through which one can see the wall. In a configuration of triangles, the work juts out aggressively into the viewer's space, creating a disjointed experience with the landscape below. Continuing in this vein, Johnson inserts a blue and orange, three-dimensional owl, wedged between the two sets of triangles.

In this fantasy playground full of colors, shapes, things, and non-things, Johnson demonstrates, if obtusely, his idiosyncratic view of the world with its myriad of objects,

ideas, and above all, contradictions. (Phyllis Kind, February 2-26)

GÉRARD GAROUSTE

In collaboration with Leo Castelli Gallery, Sperone Westwater showed Gérard Garouste in his first one-man exhibition in America. In content, the paintings and drawings clearly draw on the past: on older art historical sources and on mythological legends, most notably on Orion. In rendition, too, Garouste can be seen looking back to his forebears (Baroque and Mannerist



David Hare, Event Horizon No. 1, 1982. Mixed media, 84 x 84". Courtesy Hamilton Gallery.

Gérard Garouste, Scène de Famille, 1982. Graphite on paper. Courtesy Sperone Westwater Gallery.



masters) and one noting similarities to his contemporary, Sandro Chia. Large, full-bodied figures pervade Garouste's drawings and paintings. In *Dejeuner sur l'Herbe*, for example, two robust women composed of balloon-like forms crowd the entire picture space which exists in a non-specific, door setting. Chia's compositions, too, are often of one or two large figures filling an entire canvas in a nebulous space. Garouste's luscious, fluid brushstrokes, together with his allusions to mythological legend, are sympathetic to Chia's methods and sources as well.

As Europeans with a strong cultural and historical heritage, these similarities are surprising. Lacking, however, any imperative or innovation, the validity of Garouste's art is brought into question. His paintings are unquestionably beautiful and visually quite effective. He is a virtuoso painter. But what is he doing or doing that has not been done, said by others? His drawings seem to stand out a bit more strongly on their own. A quality of 'line-iness' is combined with largeness of contour drawn in *Scène de Famille*. It is a bizarre family portrait done in the grand portrait tradition with incongruous, misplaced characters and an odd focus on two viciously fighting dogs. His personages seem half real, half myth, harkening back to Picasso's Neo-Classical figures and characters of the Minotaur series. In the end, one is left with a body of work that is only memorable for technical accomplishment. (Sperone Westwater, February 5-26)