



ALEX KANEVSKY

"Renovations" (2008), oil on board by Alex Kanevsky, 12 by 96 inches, at Dolby Chadwick Gallery, shows an old apartment, possibly undergoing improvements, in 360-degree panorama.

Henry Jackson — out of style, but succeeding

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ly also restore a smattering of the lost heroic quality that its practitioners claimed for it more than a half century ago.

The abstract painter today can offer something we all need to see: a demonstrated willingness to continue producing that betokens more than mere habit or cussedness. At best, it can represent immunity to nihilism even in the teeth of a merciless profit system and a hollowed-out political order.

To recognize this in Belingheri's work one has to have in common with him a fairly esoteric interest in the material details of color on canvas, and in the difficulties and decisions they evidence. But San Francisco museums provide plenty of material with which to educate this taste.

Belingheri's ellipses make manageable a fundamental difficulty of abstract painting: how to limit and expose to an extent the decisions a work involves.

We cannot reconstruct Belingheri's decisions about color and paint density in "Havana" (2008), for intuition surely guided most of them. But the composition appears to put the full map of those challenges before us in a way that not many abstract paintings do.

The same seeming explicitness marks nearly everything in Belingheri's show. Meanwhile, his painting process, a recipe of media and techniques that eludes easy analysis, seems to have grown richer and more relaxed recently.

Yet the 7½-foot-square "Volverse un Ocho" (2008) puts too many elements in play, as its title ironically hints: too much raw and burnt sienna for a few late touches of violet to temper, and too many figures winking with possibly symbolic intent. Belingheri is right to push his pictures' limits. "Volverse . . ." may not pass the crash test but, like "Havana," it represents a new level

John Belingheri: Paintings. Through June 6. Andrea Schwartz Gallery, 525 Second St., San Francisco. (415) 495-2090, www.asgallery.com.

Alex Kanevsky: Visitations: Paintings. Through May 24. Dolby Chadwick Gallery, 210 Post St., San Francisco. (415) 956-3560, www.dolbychadwickgallery.com.

Henry Jackson: Descendants: Paintings and mixed-media works on panel. Through June 28. MM Galleries, 101 Townsend St., San Francisco. (415) 543-1550, www.mm-galleries.com.

of risk in his art.

Kanevsky in his stride: "We have lost that old nonchalance of the hand," William Butler Yeats lamented nearly a century ago, but apparently no one told Lithuanian-born painter Alex Kanevsky.

His pictures at Dolby Chadwick display an impressive manual ease. But they lack another kind of sophistication: an adequate sense of the fraught condition of representation in 21st century painting.

Kanevsky has his own intuition that after modernism picturing, even in painting, implies more than illustration. It always smuggles in assumptions about how vision works, about the correspondence between the real and the representable and about what depiction asks us to overlook.

Kanevsky faces this problem squarely but unrevealingly in "J.F.H. With Her Portrait" (2008): It describes a model having just slightly more definition than the Kanevsky portrait of her beneath which she sits.

Though most of his full-figure portraits appear dully confident, a kind of disquiet does haunt Kanevsky's better paintings. It arises more often from his work's anecdotal qualities, though, than from grappling with a sense of the art form's own problem-



HENRY JACKSON

Henry Jackson, "Untitled No. 92" (2008), oil, wax and dry pigment on canvas, 40 by 38 inches, at MM Galleries.

atic historical position.

The great exception is "Renovations" (2008), an 8-foot-long horizontal picture that purports to describe an old apartment, possibly undergoing improvements, in 360-degree panorama.

The accordion-fold space of the work takes the painted surface into and out of coincidence with the painted walls it de-

matic unfolding.

Henry Jackson's "Descendants": San Francisco abstract painter Henry Jackson practices what might be called picturesque expressionism, a manner far out of vogue, yet perennially involving when practiced well.

Jackson backs up his new paintings at MM with small mixed-media works on panel in black-and-white.

Jackson's big pictures look almost like relics of the late '50s moment when a number of Bay Area artists — Nathan Oliveira, with notable success — raided the aesthetics of the New York School for means to evoke the alienation to which a global Cold War and a conformist society at home subjected the individual.

Jackson resuscitates that idiom in his paintings, less as existentialist allegory than to respect the fact that we treat a painting that matters to us like an individual: our paradigm of an individual is a person.

This approach has Jackson walking the edge of sentimentality and anachronism all the time. He seldom goes over the line, partly because of his way with color and partly because his best pieces hang together pictorially no matter their level of abstraction.

Consider "Untitled No. 92" (2008), where a central figure-in-landscape appears fairly explicitly. Turn it any way you please, the composition holds well enough to make you wonder whether he does the same when he works.

The mood of Jackson's work in color remains difficult to read, but the black-and-white triptychs treat figures and their settings with a vehemence that yields visually arresting results but leaves you asking whether some measure of misanthropy or despair lies behind Jackson's art after all.

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