

# Dan's Papers

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## Arts Commentary

### Jane Martin's "Reckoning and Rapture" at Guild Hall

by Marion Wolberg Weiss

Guild Hall is especially good at recognizing artistic talent, and its current show is certainly a testament to that fact. The winner of the 2006 Guild Hall Artist Members Exhibition, Jane Martin's work is also a testament to experimentation, diverse aesthetic sources and creative risk-taking.

The experimentation evolves around images taken from her video works. The visual results depict often misty, slightly out-of-focus stills where figures retreat into the background of a forest or show fragmentation of

body parts, like a woman's hand, breast and hair.

Such images (in addition to Martin's digital prints) may also signify a variety of influences or sources. In her video, for example, what comes to mind are her mythic connotations, particularly Joseph Campbell's concept of the Mythic Hero. While Martin isn't telling a story in the conventional way, with an ordered beginning, middle and end, her video is a narrative (or more precisely a non-narrative) nonetheless.

Simply put, it's not what follows what in the video, but what goes with what. That configuration shows a journey for the heroine: from the known world to an unknown one; an emersion into this magical setting; and a return to the real world with insight and understanding.

Another source may be a cinematic one. While Janet Goleas compares Martin's "otherworldly aesthetics" to the poetics of Russian filmmaker Andrei Tarkovsky, the observation can be taken a few steps further by relating her work to those by surrealist film director Louis Bunuel. The specific movie that comes



"RECKONING I" by Jane Martin

to mind is Belle du Jour and the protagonist's journey into the forest. Her sense of being both a victim and victimizer recalls Martin's "Invitation," which shows a nude female figure with her hands up in the air. The sexual (S & M) reference present in Bunuel's film is also noteworthy in Martin's piece.

Martin's "Reckoning I," featuring a nude woman walking into the mist, can also be interpreted

as either self-sacrifice or revenge: again, victim and victimizer as one person.

We may even consider a third source for Martin's work: Freudian symbols abound, although we're not sure they apply. For example, there's the long hair that predominates many of the video's visuals and the forest locale. Then there are the water images in a series of stills and in the video itself. Of course, water signifies many life-affirming elements, like purity and youth, but it can also mean drowning and death.

Regarding the water imagery, we can't help but recall Pat Steir's wave series that soared and crashed to great heights and depths. That characterization would also apply to Martin's works as a whole and thus her risk-taking demeanor.

She will stop at nothing to share her world vision, no matter where it will take her.

*Martin's exhibit will be on view at East Hampton's Guild Hall until Jan. 18, 2009. An free opening reception is scheduled for Saturday, December 13; 4-5 p.m. for members, 5-6 p.m. for general public.*