

Compass

The Art Scene: Leon Graham

Jane Martin's Women . . . Mysterious, Seductive, Ambiguous



Jane Martin's video, "Reveal," at The Hotchkiss School's Tremaine Gallery in Lakeville, CT; Photo Marsden Epworth

Artist Jane Martin is fascinated with the power and mystery of the female body, with the historical feminization of nature and with those especially calm moments before a show of nature's ferocity. In her exhibition at The Hotchkiss School's Tremaine Gallery, all are explored in gorgeous photographs, abstract paintings and a video.

Martin spent years in France working as a cinematographer and film editor. Most of her images are taken from digital videos she has shot. They are cinematic in their concern for light and pure emotive quality, and they capture a fraction of time. (Each still is a single, enhanced video frame, one of the 30 frames comprising a single second of video.)

They are also painterly in their composition, color and suggestion of texture. Her female "actresses" are models posed either in wooded, often misty sites near Martin's East Hamp-

ton, NY, studio or in constructed spaces with wind and fog machines and sprayed-on water.

In "Shelter Sky," a nude woman protagonist is seen halfway into the image field. She has her back to us, her abundant hair is blown by what must be strong winds. The forest to her left is dark and ominous, the glow in front of her unearthly. She is in the midst of angry nature, naked and unafraid, and her moment is preserved under thick layers of resin that seem to encase and protect her in crystal.

The woman in "On Wings, Lifted II," is also walking into the image field, but her arms are stretched behind her as if she is about to run through the mist around her toward a mysterious light in the distance. Yet she too is frozen in a moment before action under her layer of resin.

In "Closer Far Away I," a still from a video series, Martin's female nude is better defined and lighted. She is semi-crouching, as if waiting for a sign from within the forest ahead. A deeply fissured tree trunk fills the right of the image plane;

it seems almost unreal in its flat brown and black under the resin coating.

Martin's pictures of ocean waves are powerful. "Undulate I" is an arrangement of four panels, each a fractional moment in the foamy breaking of an ocean wave on a beach. The foam is richly alive and caught in mid-motion. "Rogue Wave #1" is a huge, blue-black monster capped with a horizontal line of foam.

Martin looks for the connective moment between events. In a series she titled "Force Majeure," the French term for an uncontrollable devastating act of nature, she explored the eerie time before tornados strike, when nature suddenly becomes utterly still and the skies fill with huge gray clouds and a strange greenish light. At Hotchkiss, a triptych of images from the series is both calm and frightening.

The best paintings in the show are abstracts of video stills. "Neither Day Nor Light" is made of heavily impastoed acrylic. A crashing, horizontal line of white froth lies above a dark horizontal band of blue-black and beneath what must be a pale, multi-

colored sky. The power of the image is palpable.

"Force Majeure XVIII," another acrylic, is made of horizontal bands of mottled, rusty reds that converge in a central funnel of color that descends onto a band of grays, whites and pale yellows.

In "Reveal," Martin's short video that is shown continuously in a small, curtained-off space, a nude woman moves behind what might be a glass window with water running down it in vertical rivulets. She is shrouded in mist and her long, gray hair blows gently. She comes close to the glass, then moves away; she shakes her hair or runs her fingers through it. She is mysterious, seductive, ambiguous; she is comfortable with herself and with nature; she is the enigmatic feminine.

Jane Martin: Beyond Boundaries continues at the Tremaine Gallery at Hotchkiss through January 26. The gallery is usually open daily, but check for holiday closings. Call 860-435-4423 or go to www.hotchkiss.org/arts.



"Immersion #1" by Jane Martin