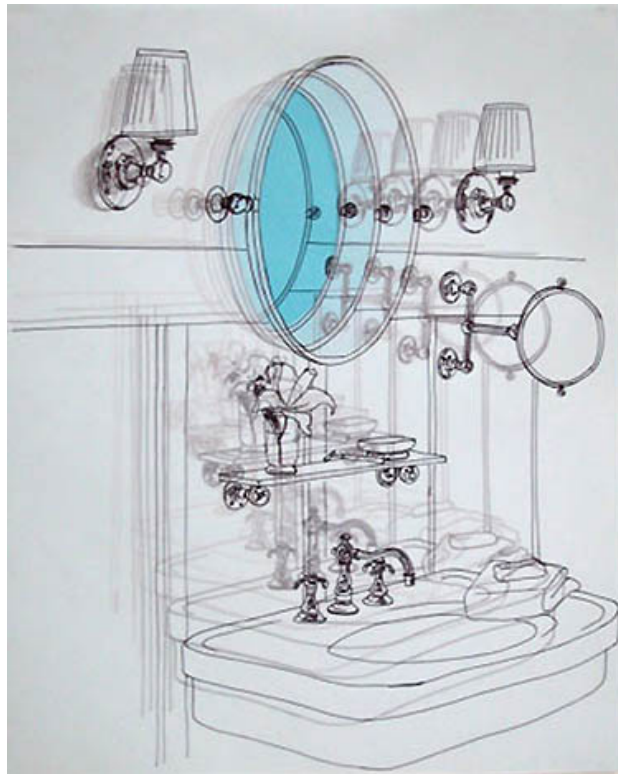


SMALL IS BEAUTIFUL

by Charlie Finch

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Beth Campbell, *See Through*. 2003

When the sun came out after eight days of deluge, we set out in Chelsea on an early Saturday morning, on our limited budget, looking to buy.

First stop was David Zwirner, where Luc Tuymans is trying hard to be Gerhard Richter in his grey period. Please lose the soft focus, Luca. Yet, there's a nice ambiguous little study of State Department dreamboat Condi Rice. Already sold, of course.

Next stop was ATM Gallery, for the return of Chris Lucas, an '80s painter who showed with John Good gallery, like Chris Martin and George Negroponte, who also have solo shows up this fall. Based on a noble Korean woman at prayer, the core paintings in this show are translucent visions, done in motorboat epoxy paint, just gorgeous.

ATM likes to clutter its space with toys, a disservice to Lucas, who insisted on dumping an immature spaceship, priced at a ridiculous \$75,000, among his masterpieces. We lusted after the lavender Womb in ATM's back office, which at \$7,500 was priced just a bit too steep. But you go buy it, okay?

Our current favorite living artist, "The Daughter of Duchamp," Beth Campbell, has a knockout exhibition at Nicole Klagsbrun Gallery, featuring her sculptural time/space continuums from the last two years, and some of the most complex drawings since Picabia -- we tried to buy the green *See Through*, a journal of hours overlaid on tracing paper, for the low, low price of \$3,000, but the Whitney Museum had already put a reserve on it. Tant pis.

We cruised into Leo Koenig, for the shocking but dull exhibition of Christian Schumann abstractions (!). Long known for his eclectic cartoon paintings, these blue and pink monochromes are tessellated with a tiny painted weave pattern -- cartoon Color Field, you could call it. We tried to purchase the one small gem in this otherwise sad effort, *Beforewards*, a portrait of the artist's father.

“It’s not for sale, Charlie,” Leo Koenig told us, as he showed us the “NFS” mark on the back of the piece, “but if it were, you could have it for \$1,500.” Punked again.

Cruising up Tenth Avenue, we spotted a cute sticker on a pay phone. “Stop Errorism,” but couldn’t peel it off. We love Christine Callahan’s wry suburban photographs, but her basement gallery, Capsule, was temporarily shut, due to flooding.

Brian Mahoney is a promising Yale photographer, debuting at Buia Gallery, and we almost snapped up his *Flowers* in the back room, but it just wasn’t a must buy.

Two not-so-good Pattern + Decoration shows are Nick Lowe at John Connelly Presents and our pal Jay Davis at Mary Boone Gallery. Ginger Rogers used to say that “an actress is something more than a woman, and an actor is something less than a man,” and Mary Boone has a similar effect on her artists. Why Jay Davis is doing elaborate frou-frou interiors on vinyl, only the Boonster knows for sure. On the other hand, we look forward to spiritually macho paintings from Chie Fueki, at Mary’s place, next year.

Our last stop was Laurie Thomas’ simian studies at Magnan Projects. We tried to buy a Halloween-inspired chimp painting, which we loved, for \$1,800.

“Sorry, Charlie,” Alberto Magnan told us, “Beth Rudin DeWoody just bought it.”

I guess we’ll just have to collect baseball cards.

CHARLIE FINCH is co-author of *Most Art Sucks: Five Years of Coagula* (Smart Art Press).