



Current
Issue

Newsletter Archives NY

About
Arts

Advertise Subscribe Home

Search

Search

Search GOOGLE.COM

Search

Daily

**March/April 2006, Vol. 11,
No.3/4**

January/February 2006, Vol.
11, No.1/2

November/December 2005,
Vol. 10, No.11/12

September/October 2005, Vol.
10, No.9/10

July/August 2005, Vol. 10,
No.7/8

May/June 2005, Vol. 10,
No.5/6

March/April 2005, Vol. 10, No.
3/4

January/February 2005, Vol.
10, No. 1/2

November/December 2004,
Vol. 9, No. 11/12

September/October 2004, Vol.
9, No. 9/10

July/August 2004, Vol. 9, 7/8

May/June 2004, Vol.9, 5/6

March/April 2004, Vol. 9, No.
3/4

January/February 2004, Vol.
9, No. 1/2

November/December 2003,
Vol. 8, No. 11/12

September/October 2003, Vol.
8, No. 9/10

July/August 2003, Vol. 8, No.
7/8

May 2003, Vol. 8, No. 5

April 2003, Vol. 8, No. 4

March 2003, Vol. 8, No. 3

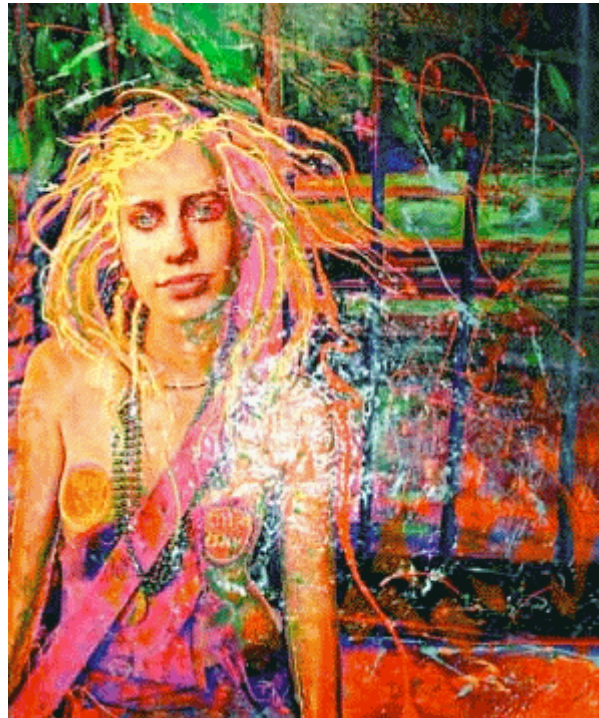
December 2002, Vol.7, No. 12

February 2003, Vol.8, No. 2

January 2003, Vol.8, No. 1

You Bring Light In

Monica Colbert



Olan, God Made Me Gay. Mixed media, 60x72x1.5 inches.

Vibrantly orbiting poised subjects, drizzled liberally onto canvases or brushed violently, colored paint is essential to making art pop. And no one understands the liquid rainbow better than New York City based artist, Olan.

Though his work is regularly available at the Ward-Nasse gallery in Soho, Olan is renown for his rotating exhibitions in the New York City club-circuit. The darkness of the nightclub venues enables the brilliant colors of the works to illuminate the space they inhabit here. By Olan's admission, it is in this environment that his paintings are most at home.

"They're in their element here, color and color. The energy in the paintings comes out. The people in the paintings come out."

Information

Susan Kaprov
Anna VanMatre
Julie Karabenick
Charles Hecht
Carol Caputo
Matthew Barney
Dennis Guen
Bill Viola
Tom Otterness
William Kentridge
John Perreault
Marusela Granell
Jennifer Reeves
Siri Berg
Abraham Lubelski
Gerhard Richter
Paul McCarthy
Wang Nanfei
Jolanta Gora-Wita
Jamie Dalglish
Barbara Rosenthal
Peter Krippans
Keith Morant
Trey Reed
Genacay Kasapci

May/June 2006, Vol. 11,
No.5/6

October 2002, Vol.7, No. 10
November 2002, Vol. 7, No.
11

Dancing drag queens in questionable attire celebrate the night. Club-kids outfitted in vivid costumes scatter the dance floor like wind-up toys. Boy George (in full theater make-up) spins house rhythms in the DJ booth under the magic glitter of a disco ball. Redolent of Studio 54's Warhol days, colorful scenes like this that accompany Olan's roaming exhibitions evoke the still relevant, "life imitating art..." quandary. The surreal effect is compounded by the fact that many of those partying amongst the artwork—the drag queens, club-kids and celebs like "the Boy," are actual subjects portrayed in Olan's paintings. This is not accidental. The artist's work intentionally and continually blurs the distinction between what is real and what is perceived to be real.

This is reinforced by his technique of meshing layers of colored paint with a digitally altered photographic backdrop and then fusing it all in plastic, challenging viewers on their ability to distinguish the true focus of the work. "The whole point," Olan once told a reporter, "is that I feel like I want to create a struggle in my work, and the struggle is between what do you see first: Do you see the color, or do you see the soul of the individual?"

This fall the artist used his talents to bring attention to a worthy cause. He participated in a silent auction, benefiting the National Multiple Sclerosis Society, held at hipster lounge, Kanvas in West Chelsea. Olan first became involved with G-Crew, the group sponsoring the auction, when he was invited by its co-founder Stacy Vogol to attend a "Swim Across the Hudson" benefit held for the cause.

"When I work on a piece," said Olan, "I try to capture a moment. I have never been more inspired than when I attended the swim and saw a friend of the Vogol's, J.P., who had lost his leg to cancer, swim across the river. Here was a man who had gone through so much himself...he couldn't even get into the water without help. The moment he finished and they brought over his crutches to help him out of the water, that moment, defined everything good about humanity."

The exhibition at Kanvas was called "light attracts

light." It included works, whose subject matter varied from features of the "Hudson" swim benefit to strikingly beautiful, but unknown figures and some celebrity portrayals. But different as they were, the paintings all revealed a common sentiment: the ability of color to serve as a medium for self-expression. This was underscored by the theme "light attracts light" which is suggestive of color's nature to draw and espouse energy. Olan hopes this effect will provoke action in others.

And judging by the past, there is good reason to believe it will. Olan's ability to shed light on people and causes through his art was never more apparent than when he agreed to help Carla Settle, manager of the Chase Manhattan Bank in Greenwich Village, boost the decor of the branch two years ago by creating portraits of all the employees. "I would stand in line at the bank," said Olan, "and watch people step up to the window, conduct their business and never even look at the person who was helping them." The portraits he created for the bank, 30 by 36 inches, hung above each employee's station. Olan said he began to see people smile and engage in conversation once they made the connection that the subject in the painting was the teller in front of them. "I want people to start looking at one another. To stop, listen and communicate. I want people really see one another as human beings."

Olan plans to team up once again with Stacy Vogel, this time for the benefit of New York's homeless. Their idea is to have various artists create portraits of homeless individuals and on a designated day, have each person stand next to their likeness. According to Olan, the intention of the project is to get people to stop and pay attention, and to realize that the homeless are people worthy of attention and humane treatment. Olan and Vogel intend to work closely with The New York Coalition for the Homeless to see the project through to fruition sometime in the near future.

Whether they are politically minded pieces like *God Made Me Gay*, or practically based works like his "Employees of the Bank" series, Olan's art

encourages recognition and respect.

John Tedeschi, an attendant at the Kanvas benefit, said Olan's work adheres to a philosophy expressed best in the words of Andy Warhol, "Unless everyone is beautiful, no one is beautiful."

Subjectivity

At an opening reception last September at the Ward-Nasse gallery, Evan Schultz, a friend of Olan, stopped by to support the artist and view a portrait created by the artist of himself. I took the opportunity to prod Mr. Schultz for some insider insight on Olan's work.

Monica Colbert: How did you come to be one of Olan's subjects?

Evan Schultz: It was a complete surprise, actually. I had no idea until Olan called me one day and told me. I was flabbergasted.

MC: So you didn't pose for him?

ES: Well no, not knowingly at least. I remember him taking the picture though. We were walking along the beach in Rehoboth, Delaware and I wasn't having the best day and suddenly Olan just snaps this picture. And I was actually angry that he had taken a picture when I wasn't feeling my best.

MC: Are you still angry now?

ES: Oh no, of course not. I like what came of it.

(We are interrupted when two long-legged model types, who had been throwing zigzag glances between Evan and the portrait on the wall, approach to ask Evan if the image in the portrait is really him. When they learn that it is they ask for a picture and the three of them begin striking various poses alongside the portrait.)

MC: How does that make you feel?

ES: First, I was flattered that they recognized me. It was very surreal. It felt like a moment out of the movies. And (laughing) being gay, straight girls don't

usually pay any attention to me.