ARTFORUM

New York

Richard Bosman

Nicelle Beauchene Gallery
327 Broome Street
March 21–April 21

Fear eats the soul, and anxiety keeps it up at night, producing a string of symptoms onto which delusions and fantasies may freely attach. Follow the stairs up to Richard Bosman's exhibition "High Anxiety," and find yourself inside the modern human, whose mind balances on the knife-edge of total collapse.

Bosman has been painting noirish scenes of violence, romance, and anomie for nearly forty years—this intimate survey features works from 1981 to 2019. His canvases, which pull from a range of sources, such as comic books and stock photography, feel operatic. Painted wet-on-wet, his stroke is smooth but quick, as if he's grasping for something that's about to escape. In all but one piece, the subject is alone. Yet Bosman's masterful cinematic cropping always implies another presence, lurking, voyeuristic. Take Hotel, 2016, where we see what appears to be a woman lying in bed. Only her legs are visible. The sun is streaming into her room, and a book has fallen to her side. Is someone else there? Is she sleeping? Is she even breathing? Woman in the Rain, 2017, depicts the titular subject, hands on her head, during a torrential downpour, captured mid-scream. The picture seems to tremble. I found myself in a state of transference: Is she the one howling, or am I?

The people Bosman portrays are well dressed and polished, but don't be fooled. There is an insidious tension that emanates from so many fastidiously groomed facades. All of his models are mere moments away from cracking. As we paddle through contemporary life, a psychic rupture seems reasonable, or even healthy—just don't let yourself drift too far. Consider "High Anxiety" a gentle reminder of this.

— Jashin Friedrich

Time Out New York

THE THREE BEST ART SHOWS RIGHT NOW

↑ Richard Bosman: "High Anxiety"

Film noir, pulp fiction and true-crime comic books are all part of the lurid pedigree for these paintings, new and old, by Richard Bosman, a veteran of 1980s Neo-Expressionism.

→ Nicelle Beauchene Gallery (nicellebeauchene.com). Through Apr 21.

← "Neo Rauch: Aus dem Boden/ From the Floor"

Phantasmagoric paintings about German history are what this artist from Leipzig is known for; this show covers his provocative works on paper.

→ The Drawing Center (drawingcenter.org). Through June 28.

↑ *Reich Richter Pärt*

This musical and artistic collaboration by two major composers (Steve Reich and Arvo Pärt) and one major painter (Gerhard Richter) is a highlight of the Shed's performance series at Hudson Yards.

→ The Shed (theshed.org). Through June 2.

The Boston Globe

Looking at Richard Bosman's Tricky Take on Predecessors

By Cate McQuaid GLOBE CORRESPONDENT

MARCH 14, 2012

Richard Bosman's "Barnett Newman's Studio" is on display at Carroll and Sons.

The art world tends to fetishize its heroes. A shovel owned by Marcel Duchamp, a broom from Jasper Johns's studio - such things become relics. Richard Bosman's show, "Art History, Fact and Fiction," at Carroll and Sons, is clearly the work of a fetishist. He has made trompe l'oeil paintings of the shovel and the broom, as well as paintings of the interiors of artists' studios such as those of Willem DeKooning and Barnett Newman.

Trompe l'oeil is the operative phrase here. Bosman pays homage, but there's also something saucy, something tricky, if you will - trompe l'oeil means "trick the eye," after all - about his work. The centerpiece of the show, the installation "Museum Wall," from a distance looks like a salon-style exhibit of masterpieces: a Picasso, a Magritte, a Gauguin, and many more. Get up close, and you'll see that Bosman has painted each with his own loose, assured brushwork. And what looks like a carved, ornate frame from a distance is actually an array of smears and dabs on canvas.

Black-and-white photos in a book are the source for some of his paintings of studios. "Barnett Newman's Studio" is neat as a pin. Chairs sit idly before two large canvases from Newman's stark, legendary "The Stations of the Cross" series, black zips hurtling down white canvases. A black-dipped brush sits on a closed paint can on the floor. Maybe someone has stopped in, and Newman has put down his brush to chat.

While these paintings are fastidious, Bosman adds his own details, such as a newspaper and a girlie calendar in "DeKooning's Studio." He honors his predecessors, but with sly winks and deceptive brushwork; he makes work that's as much about painting itself as it is about painters, and the way paint conjures not only imagery, but ideas, and value, and icons.

THE BROOKLYN RAIL
FEBRUARY 2007

Richard Bosman
Rough Terrain
Elizabeth Harris Gallery January 5–Februrary 3, 2007

In an article for *New Scientist* magazine in October of 2006, John Orrock, a biologist at the National Center for Ecological Analysis and Synthesis in Santa Barbara, California, was quoted, "The sad truth is, once the humans get out of the picture, the outlook starts to get a lot better." The same could be said for Richard Bosman's latest body of work.

In the six paintings constituting his new exhibition, *Rough Terrain*, Bosman presents us with various "man confronting nature" scenarios. The majority of the work is medium-large, between 60 and 100 inches, and is composed of Bosman's masterfully casual, wet-on-wet brushwork. He's one of those painters who can make a series of loose squiggles look like dense foliage, or a dash of light blue oil paint look like car tracks in the snow. What in the past were images of pulp Americana—hunting lodges, Civil War battlefields, crime scenes—have now been replaced with images of pulp nature—a cavern, an icy cliff face, a frozen lake—that are so picturesque and generic that they wouldn't be out of place in an action movie or a PBS nature program. In *Ice Climber*, Bosman's unfussy brushwork undulates between representation and abstraction. The ice and snow clinging to the face of a rock cliff is rendered in light blues, whites and browns that hypnotically play off each other, until you notice an annoying little man in a red jacket climbing the ice cliff in the upper left corner.

Once you discover this annoying little man you realize that his annoying little head pops up in every painting in the exhibition. In *Ascent*, a beautifully realized image of a deep, dark cavern, seen from above, with two long ropes dangling into the abyss, there he is again, clinging to one of the ropes and ruining what would otherwise be a thoroughly enjoyable painting. By sticking these characters into his canvases, Bosman shuts down any manifold readings his images could conjure, and instead turns his truly accomplished paint handling into bad metaphors.

—Craig Olson

Richard Bosman, "Ice Storm, 60" (2006). Oil on canvas, 60" × 84". Elizabeth Harris Gallery.

ARTFORUM

CRITICS' PICKS

Revolutionary War Tent, 2004.

Richard Bosman

ELIZABETH HARRIS GALLERY
529 West 20th Street 6E
October 14 - November 13

Richard Bosman has been exhibiting since 1980, but his paintings look like the work of a much younger man. This isn't to say they're not "mature," but his subjects are the kind of earnest, hokey Americana that Gen Y artists tend to celebrate. The sentiments are similar, too. Despite their over-the-top embrace of American history, manifested as kitsch, his paintings are almost completely devoid of apparent irony. *Melville's Desk* (all works 2004) hangs alongside an old-timey roadside furniture stand, a horror-vacui gift shop full of collectibles, and the exterior of an anonymous *Lumberman's Museum.* The persistence of country crafts (Bosman lives in upstate New York) is reflected in his wet-on-wet brushwork, which initially gives his work the look of something you'd expect from an extraordinarily talented child, or an outsider artist. In a way, actually, he is an outsider artist. A Dutch-Australian born in India, he avoids the big signifiers of contemporary American culture and heads instead straight to this country's less glamorous heart, to the Shakers and Civil War reenactors and the Fort at Ticonderoga, where the humble fires of American history are stoked.

— *Martha Schwendener*

Art in America

November 2003

Richard Bosman at Elizabeth Harris

Many of the 11 paintings in Richard Bosman's first solo show in New York since 1994 featured the woods, lakes and streams of the Adirondacks, occupied by canoes, swimmers or deer. Four wood-paneled interiors depict trophies from the outdoor life, such as deer heads and snowshoes. Compared to Bosman's previous treatments of water and swimmers, which often portray overwhelming waves and clinging survivors, these canvases seem less neo-Romantic, though still not quite specific enough to be Realist. The recent works interpret landscape and related motifs from the plein-air realist painting tradition in the way that some of his paintings of the 1980s reinterpret a figurative tradition from Japanese comics. Where those earlier works limned violence, the works since 2001 are notable for their renunciative, Spartan rigor.

Bosman's style is often called Neo-Expressionist, since it is broadly brushed. But like several Neo-Expressionists (and like Alex Katz), he represents traditionally emotional icons with deadpan Pop simplicity, rather than creating stridently expressive abstract form. Bosman's frontal, centered compositional esthetic could have come from an old Kodak Brownie handbook. His brushed gestures mimic the fluid loopiness of scribbling, but the contours of important objects are left crisp and straight. His palette, like an L.L. Bean catalogue, is dominated by hunter green, brown, tan and light blue, with an occasional pure red or yellow accent. The cold light seems overcast and nonspecific; highlights are simply whitened. What saves the artist's form from complete indifference is high contrast. Pure whites are often juxtaposed with dark bottle greens. Wood grain and parquetry are abbreviated using forceful umber lines. In *Great Camp* (2002), the animal-head trophies have defined shadows behind them on the wall, as if lit with a bare bulb. However, he undercuts any specific sense of light by emphatically outlining the individual stones of the fireplace.

Other painters' interests in atmosphere and fugitive color begin to seem luxurious; what matters here is brute thingness. All the compositions butt steeply receding floor or ground planes against starkly frontal wall planes or masses of foliage. This staginess recalls Neo-Classical Cubism—say late Derain—more than Katz. Intimations of narrative reinforce this effect. For example, in *Lean-to* (2002), one infers campers in sleeping bags on a rocky ground from two brightly lit lumpy masses. The roof of their rough-cut shelter seems half collapsed, their surroundings hacked into disarray, but no matter. They survive their return to Nature, bracingly. —*P.C. Smith*

Richard Bosman: *Lean-to*, 2002, oil on canvas, 60 by 84 inches; at Elizabeth Harris.

THE NEW YORK SUN

THURSDAY, NOVEMBER 4, 2004

By DAVID COHEN

The late work of Philip Guston was axiomatic in the 1980s: it was a harbinger of the new "Bad" painting. Its goofy, almost insolent expressivity and gauche personalism, with its primitive appeal to graffiti and cartoons, almost defined the decade.

Somehow the influence has never gone away: Bad painting was just too much of a good thing. It could be that Guston's importance to succeeding generations of painters had to do with his extreme, urgent expression of a perennial struggle (a kind of romantic-classic opposition) between the formal and the informal, the polite and the brash, felt by every creative painter worth his or her salt.

❖ ❖ ❖

Richard Bosman is a natural carrier of the Guston gene: He studied with the master in the 1960s as a pioneer student at the New York Studio School. His other influential teacher there was Alex Katz, who included Mr. Bosman in a group show last summer at Colby College, Me.

Mr. Bosman can compete with Guston — or any artist — in terms of the depths of vulgarity he plumbs. His paintings are like oversized illustrations, shiny and brash. His Americana borders on kitsch, but there's an energetic ambiguity at play: Equal degrees of earnestness and satire animate his depictions of rural museums, Civil War enactments, historic monuments. He gives us a row of Shaker dresses, a vintage 19th-century forge, a barn full of collectibles, Herman Melville's writing desk, cutout figurines of lumbermen.

But Mr. Bosman offers a very different experience of kitsch than, for instance, Jeff Koons, where smoothness and slickness underline machined banality (though, as if to tease out a comparison, his collectibles include toy lobsters like those favored by Mr. Koons.) Mr. Bosman's painthandling is as ambiguous as his subject matter: The freshness and precision with which he paints wet in wet belies the allusions to painting-by-numbers in his style. The dresses, for instance, recall Wayne Thiebaud in the succulence of their delivery.

ELIZABETH HARRIS GALLERY

Richard Bosman, 'Stone House — Fort Ticonderoga' (2004).

Initially so disconcerting, his paintings end up appealing precisely because of their parity of style and motif. His vulgarity has a perverse purism: His imagery, albeit illustrational, seems to derive from observation rather than appropriation (from photographs, say, or engravings). His images are vulgar in the edifying, original sense: plainspoken, in a common language.

The New York Times

ART IN REVIEW; Richard Bosman

By **ROBERTA SMITH** | MAY 16, 2003

In the early 1980's Richard Bosman contributed to the return of representation with tragicomic, daringly ham-handed paintings of violence and romance that rifled through the history of book illustration from pulp fiction to Rockwell Kent. But as 80's image-making simplified into opposing factions of photo-based appropriation art and (mostly) European Neo-Expressionism, Mr. Bosman and his art were progressively left out in the cold .

The artist's first New York show of new paintings since 1994 suggests that the years in the wilderness were well spent. In the overcrowded field of painterly (wet-on-wet) representation -- from Alex Katz and Neil Welliver to young artists like Dana Schutz and Daniel Richter -- Mr. Bosman has refined and developed his style into something that more than holds its own ground.

At Harris, his thick-surfaced paintings of roiling Adirondack streams, bright stowed canoes, campsites, trophy-lined hunting lodges and people swimming in lakes continue his penchant for parody-homage and crude paint handling. But things are more optically complicated and a note of scintillating deftness has been added. Mr. Bosman's luxuriant, dashed-off brushwork, brings a quality at once antic and powerful to expanses of trees, water and wood grain and staring deer, both living and stuffed.

The images, whose naturalistic palette is sparked with expert additions of white, push toward you with a kind of aggressive intimacy, a little juicy and overdone. Their strength, however, may be quite literal: the slightly clumsy scale relationships between surface agitation, surface size and image.

The show breaks from the Adirondack theme with open declarations of northern artistic allegiances in "Munch's Closet" and "Rembrandt's Collections." And Mr. Bosman revisits the intimations of violence implicit in his pulp fiction paintings with "Raft," which centers (exactly, like a movie camera) on the head and shoulders of a man emerging from a deserted lake onto the ladder of a swimming raft. Maybe he's trying not to wake the woman sunbathing on its surface; maybe he's going to kill her.

Lake scenes and swimmers predominate in the exhibition of Mr. Busman's prints at Solo Impressions, where his sure connection to materials is visible in more abbreviated form. The choice of medium -- color wood cut -- underscores his connection to German Expressionism; and a selection of earlier prints sketchily surveys previous subjects. The list of 80's artists, especially painters, who have deepened their work in the ensuing years often seems depressingly short, but Mr. Bosman should be on it.

Both through May 23

Elizabeth Harris Gallery
529 West 20th Street, Chelsea

Solo Impression
601 West 26th Street, Chelsea

The San Diego Union-Tribune
Thursday, May 26, 1994

Bosman sharply focuses imagery

By ROBERT L. PINCUS
Art Critic

Dark events are drawn so stylishly in Richard Bosman's earliest prints at La Jolla's Hartman & Company that they are pleasurable to behold. They are guilty pleasures, since they depict such sights as a man plummeting into the sea from a large ferry in one print ("Man Overboard") and another about to drown in a second ("Man Drowning").

Not all of the prints have such a morbid aura. Bosman, who developed a considerable reputation for himself in New York during the '80s, has shifted interests through the years. If disasters were his preoccupation in the early '80s, landscapes had replaced them by the close of the decade.

One of the most recent images, "Night Lace," sets a meditative mood unthinkable in Bosman's earliest prints. Branches of a tree, flattened against the sky, form a pattern that frames the stars in a complex, asymmetrical way. Colors are dark but the mood is gently joyous.

What binds seemingly disparate work like "Man Overboard" and "Night Lace" is Bosman's sharp eye for sharply focused imagery. He came to the fore when Neoexpressionism was the rage, a decade or so ago, and in his case the label wasn't entirely wrong.

His pictures from that time (paintings and prints) evoke memories of those early 20th-century German Expressionist images in which angular areas of light and dark colors defined figure and world.

D JAMES DEE

"Volcano" displays Richard Bosman's multipanel concept of landscape and his flair for stylized images of nature.

But Bosman also puts a post-Modern spin on the whole Expressionist ethos, fusing their "bare your soul" type of picturemaking with the commercial versions of the same that started appearing on the covers of cheap paperbacks. The melodramatic content of some of his prints makes a nod toward the cut-rate version of Expressionism.

The convincing "Drowning Man" shows how he melds these influences and creates art that is more than the sum of his influences. You don't know how he did it, but that's part of the beauty of his work.

Bosman has the technical panache to dissolve the body of his unfortunate subject into wavering forms elegantly. It's as if, foreshad-

Reader
SAN DIEGO'S WEEKLY
volume 23 / number 19 / May 12, 1994

ART DOC
Bos

Calendar
ART

The Mellowing of Richard Bosman

These works obsessively establish a subjective mood of catastrophe.

REVIEW
JONATHAN SAVILLE

Richard Bosman, a selection of whose graphic works is currently on display at Hartman & Company, is a contemporary artist of considerable interest. The *leitmotif* of his life and his career is abrupt change, along with a wild energy that characterizes much of his artistic production.

Born in Madras a half-century ago, to a Dutch seaman father and an Australian mother, Bosman lived in Holland, Indonesia, Egypt, England, Australia (where he worked on a sheep station), and Spain, before winding up in New York. Early experimentation with abstraction gave way around 1980 to figurative and narrative art, in a distinctive mixture of expressionism (in the exaggeration, harshness, distortions of perspective, and acid color combinations) and a style reminiscent of comic books, movie posters, and the covers of pulp crime novels (in the coarseness of the drawing, the emphasis on linearity, the closeness and flatness of the depictions, the strong contrasts, the stylization, and the generally lurid character of the subjects). Everywhere in this work we see melodrama, disasters, and crimes, portrayed through violent gestures, extreme emotional and physical tension, disequilibrium, and precipitous movements of falling and careening.

Typical titles of Bosman's paintings and prints, not metaphorical but accurately denoting the physical action, include *Panic* (at the destruction of a city), *The Fugitive, The Prisoner's Suicide, Revenge of the Cat, The Murder of Judge Dee* (from the Robert Van Orlick detective novels), *Prisoner of Love, Poisoned, Mutiny, Assassination, Attacker, Forced Entry, The Clubbing, Death of a Femme Fatale, The Chase, Car Crash, Night Fall* (a fatal leap from a burning building), *The Red Staircase* (on which a bloody body lies), *Nightmare, Floating Head, Intruder, Shattered* (eyeglasses), *Mast on Fire, Hounded* (by a vicious dog), *Studio Visit* (by a murderous bird), *Besieged* (by killer bats), *Out of the Blue* (a swimmer attacked by a shark), *Uprooted* (tree), *Free Fall* (of bodies in an avalanche), *Pursuit at the Beach* (with a knife), *Wave* (throwing men out of a lifeboat), *Capsized, Adrift, Awash, Aground, The Cruel Sea.* These images seem to illustrate stories from generic adventure novels, from horror films, or from reportage in tabloid newspapers.

In all of this, there is scarcely any detectable satirical intent. Bosman's parodies of pulp illustrations do not seem to contain any critique of the genre. On the contrary, he appears to value such crude, popular art as a source of artistic material not tainted by élite traditions. Nor is there any explicit political ideology (such as a condemnation of the violence of our society). Instead, these works obsessively establish a subjective mood of catastrophe, an emotional tone that comes from deep within Bosman's own psyche, and that is no less nightmarishly personal for being expressed in such intentionally pop-art terms.

Bosman has worked in both oil paintings and the graphic media, with a predilection in the latter category for woodblock prints. His color woodblock prints, their technique derived in large part from Japanese artists such as Hokusai and Hiroshige, may in fact be more closely suited to the artist's vision than oil on canvas. It is the nature of such prints to rely largely on outlined areas of flat color, fitted together as though in a jigsaw puzzle; and they consequently dispense, to a great degree, with small details, textural effects and a nuanced treatment of light. This is just what Bosman wants to do, because of the way he wants to represent reality — so that color (and sometimes black-and-white) woodblock prints seem his most natural mode of expression.

The collection at Hartman & Company (a gallery specializing in prints) therefore gives us an acute insight into Bosman's deepest artistic preoccupations. Virtually every aspect of his most characteristic art is visible, for example, in the color woodcut, *Man Overboard* (1981). In the narrow, vertical format, an elongated, splay-armed, barefooted man in a striped olive suit and red tie is seen upside down, falling past the immense, dizzily foreshortened side of a black ship (with ranks of gray-green portholes) into a tumultuous blue sea (with violent white strokes of spume). The water is continuous with the blue sky, in which we see a large white moon and a scattering of stars.

The kinetic sense of swift, violent plunging dominates the image, in which the vast, indifferent forces of nature, as well as the hugeness and impersonal quality of the ship, provide the context for this human disaster. The falling man is utterly alone in this final moment, unseen by anyone (above, on deck, there are only the white lifeboats). Invisible, too, is the story that has led to this drama. Has he leaped? And if so, why? Or was he pushed? Or was he murdered, and then cast overboard by the murderer? And why is this neatly dressed man barefoot? Bosman's narrative, typically, presents the climactic moment of a tale to which he otherwise refuses to offer readable clues. He induces us to experience the world as not only violent but *unintelligibly* violent — which makes our existence even more frighteningly unstable.

There is a similar emotional effect (and a similar thematic connection of disaster with the sea) in Bosman's vividly expressionistic *Drowning Man I*

(1981), which once again shows the figure upside down, the body fragmented by wave patterns, the staring eyes and floating hair shockingly suspended among the olive-green sweeps of the water. *Ashore* (1984) is more ambiguous in its suggestion of violent death: the figure lying above the tideline on the beach may be merely sleeping — but given the tenor of Bosman's work as a whole, he is probably dead.

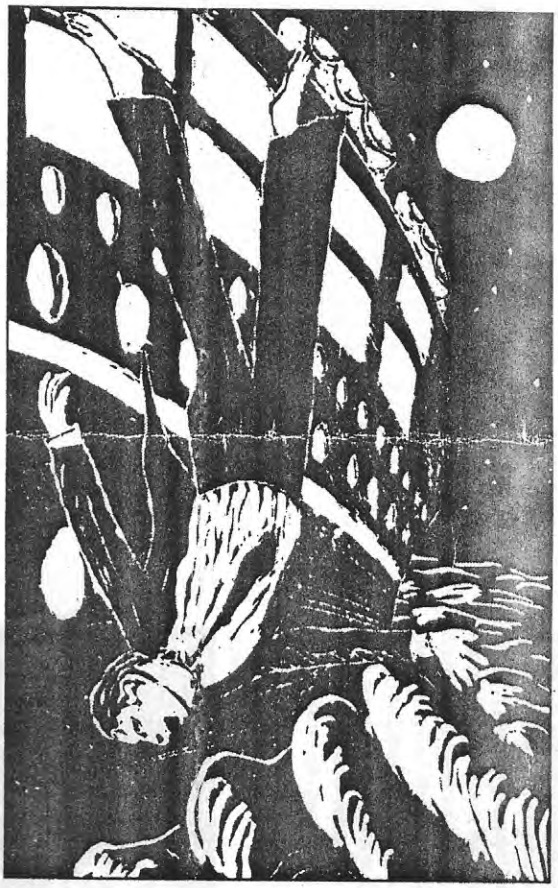
The essence of Bosman's concept of human life is starkly represented in the black-and-white woodcut, *Polar Bear, State II* (1981). The rough, thick, slashing, turbulent lines show us a man stepping into the mouth of a preternaturally huge polar bear, his foot on the animal's arched tongue, his erect body framed above and below by jagged, cruel teeth. These jagged shapes are repeated in the steep mountain peaks in the near background, with the whole scene of heroic struggle and inevitable doom in hostile nature overlooked by a big, coarse circle of a moon in the pitch-black sky. Another image with the same import is *Adversaries* (1982), where the moon in the black sky illuminates a man wrestling with a standing, shaggy tiger, among snow-covered mountains.

In the late '80s, a transformation came over Bosman's art — a change in subject matter and ultimately in style, well documented in this exhibit. The tawdry crime narratives disappear, and even the human figure becomes a rarity, as the artist turns his attention more predominantly to the world of nature in its own right.

In some of these prints, such as *Volcano* (1989), the atmosphere of violent drama remains, even without the *dramatis personae*. It is a literally explosive aspect of nature that Bosman has chosen to depict, and — using a device that becomes common in these landscapes — he shows the eruption at successive stages in time.

The picture is divided in two, horizontally. The upper image of the mountain, seen from a rough sea under a cloudy sky, is all greens, gray-blues, and black, with only one, small, bright-red area of molten lava at the peak. In the lower version, the eruption is in full swing. Blazing yellow flames shoot upward from the crater; sky, sea, and mountainside are streaked and splashed with bright red; the huge black clouds writhe like living creatures; there are immense billows of gray smoke; and to add to the garish color combinations the print is punctuated with salmon-hued areas in the sky and their reflections in the water. The expressionist devices are now in the service of a natural melodrama rather than one from a pulp novel or a crime movie; but the juxtaposition of the two chronological images, like frames of a film, communicates a precipitous kinetic energy that is the equivalent of the plummeting fall in the earlier *Man Overboard*.

Similarly, the three horizontal panels of *Sunset* (1987), aggressive in color and drawing, are even further intensified by the sense of ineluctable time they convey. The sun hovers low over the sea; it sinks into the rough surf; and then it is entirely gone, with only the black night sky left. Once again we see a fall leading to death (a symbolic death, in this case).



Man Overboard

Richard Bosman: Prints 1978-1993
Hartman & Company
Through May 28

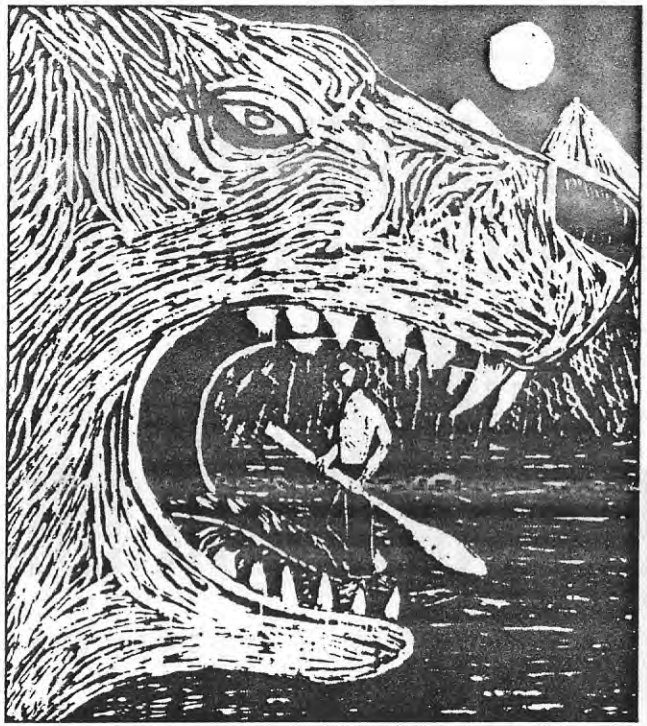
In these pictures, the tragic vision always inherent in Bosman's work is purified of its literary referents as it is traced back to its origin in the fundamental processes of indifferent nature. The tide streams in, the tide streams out (*High Tide, Low Tide,* 1990), while the stark black mountainous boulder looms against the perpetual ebb and flux, like the tragic hero combatting fate. In *River* (1989), the inevitable movement of time is figured in four scenes of a river's winding course, as we follow it between tree-covered hills down to its ultimate extinction in a limitless sea.

The style here retains the sharpness, boldness, and clarity of Bosman's previous use of color woodblock prints. But a new style begins to appear as well, monochromatic, atmospheric, with a softening of edges, and an increasing emphasis on the ambiguous lighting effects of mist and twilight. A characteristic print in this mode is the gray-blue *Phosphorescence* (a 1993 collograph), where the subject itself naturally undermines Bosman's habitual use of color dishar-

monies and incisive drawing for purposes of dramatic expressiveness. This time he shows us the wide expanse of a mild sea (rather than his usual turbulent ocean) under an evening sky.

In opposition to Bosman's earlier work, there is nothing happening here in terms of story, and even the visual contrasts are underplayed. The differentiation between sea and sky is de-dramatized, with the slightly wavy sea surface and the darker blue sky unified by the scattering of white spots over both of them (water highlights below, stars above). There are two "frames" of the lyrical, impressionistic scene, as in *Volcano* or *High Tide, Low Tide;* but the differences between the two moments in time are subtle rather than vivid, chiefly a matter of the greater density of the white spots in the lower version.

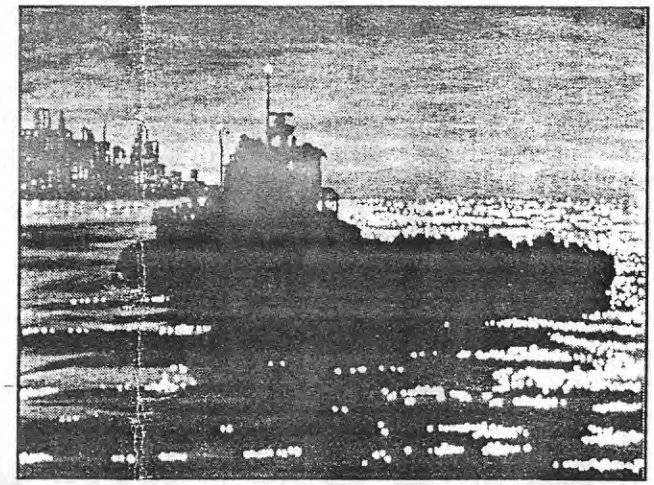
In the same general manner are *Jetty* (1991), an immensely long, black-silhouetted jetty against gray water and sky, dots of white flashing before and behind it; and *Fog Bank* (1988), a lonely silhouetted figure in a rowboat, surrounded by a misty gray expanse of water. The loveliest of these images (notice that we are now talking about suggestive visual beauty rather than about expressionistic power) is the monochromatic *Night Haul* (1991), which shows the vigorously outlined black silhouette of what seems to be a garbage scow against the water of a river or lake and a blue-gray night sky.



Polar Bear, State II

At the left of this beautiful woodcut (our photograph, by the way, reproduces Bosman's painting of the same subject), in a slightly darker blue-gray, tall apartment buildings rise on the shore, dotted randomly with lighted windows. The water, streaked with several shades of blue and black, has its own spots of white, highlighted spume and reflections, growing denser toward the right.

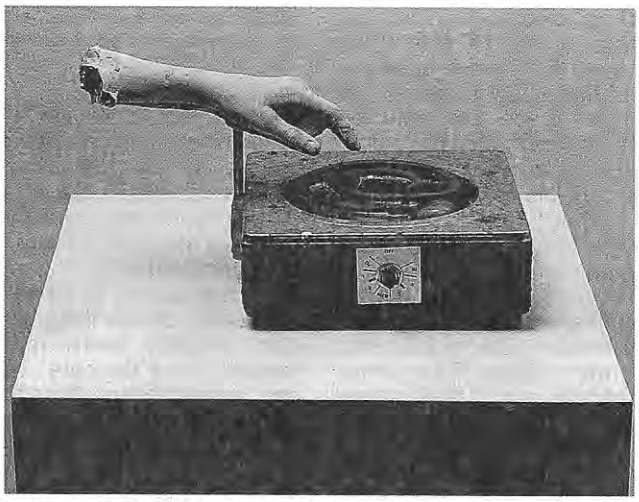
There are expressive contrasts here, as in all Bosman's work, but what is expressed is a mood rather than a drama, and the contrasts are gentler and more nuanced, in the varied patterning of horizontals and verticals, of dark and light, of the staid, orderly, defined shore and the rippling, contourless water, and of the grubby, unending task of the working boat and the weary, dreamlike sense that the town's citizens are preparing for sleep. If Bosman once seemed a cross between Hokusai and the German expressionist Ludwig Kirchner, the world of his impressive art is now magically coming to resemble that of James McNeill Whistler. ■



Night Haul

Art in America

June 1994



Richard Bosman: *Don't Touch*, 1993, acrylic on cast plaster with hot plate, 7½ by 13 by 9½ inches; at Brooke Alexander.

Richard Bosman at Brooke Alexander

Richard Bosman has long been known to use disaster as subject matter for his paintings and prints—murder, animal attack, sharp plummet from a cruiser's deck. Here he again depicts disasters, but pretty minor ones, like cuts and scrapes, and he shows painted plaster casts as well as several series of small oils. This is a child's world—a world of catching butterflies, getting poison ivy, fishing and talking to old people.

One series of paintings catalogues such routine household problems and treatments as splinters, insect bites and ear drops. In these works, strongly brushed tan backgrounds surround distressed Caucasian flesh. The backgrounds do not provide specific contexts, but the stories they suggest are familiar, like illustrations in Boy Scout manuals. In *The Nail*, there is strange, rough brushwork on a foot, and a nail emerges from a red wound. A van Gogh-like intensity of brushmarks distinguishes *Bandaged*—a physical, somewhat sculptural fashioning of image out of brute elements observed.

Each of the "Adult Afflictions," presented as a series of wall casts, is somehow magnified by the grossness of the plaster. The names of the afflictions are written in pencil on the wall next to the sculptures: shaving scrape, pimple, banged fingernail, blister. Cancer seems an anomaly on this list, because it's not exactly minor, but this is a child's world. To a child, cancer is one of those bad things that happen to adults, like shaving cuts.

Another series of sculptures details incidents in children's play and daily activity. *Cat's Cradle,* one of the best works in the exhibition, depicts two tiny hands up to the wrists as they are engaged in playing the timeless game with bright green yarn. Fine detailing of nails, knuckle wrinkles and skin folds contrasts with a mottling of plaster fragments on the sculptures.

In the gallery's second room, *Clip*, a painting of white human hands poised with clippers about to snip the wings of a defenseless, upside-down bird, is juxtaposed with *Don't Touch*, which consists of an actual hot plate about to be touched by the (plaster) finger of a child. Bosman painted the heating element red. The whole thing has the feeling of old camp stories or memories. In the same room is a mysterious wall painting of the silhouettes of a standing adult and child, holding hands. The effect is of real rather than contrived shadow. This elegiac painting is a paean to childhood and as such is emblematic of the show. —*Vincent Katz*

Susan Tallman

High Tide, Low Tide

The Unsettling Work of Richard Bosman

Richard Bosman, *Volcano*, 1989, Color woodcut, edition of 45, 43½" × 30". Courtesy Brooke Alexander Editions. Photo: George Staley.

Asked to name ten major painters of the 1980s, denizens of the art world could rattle off widely divergent lists, owing as much to personal taste as to any abstract notion of quality, which might—or might not—include the name of Richard Bosman. Asked to name ten major printmakers of the same decade, Bosman's name would definitely appear, probably right near the top on most lists. Bosman may (and does) say that he thinks of himself as a painter first and a printmaker second, but it is as a printmaker that he has received his widest exposure and his greatest acclaim. The museum retrospective of Bosman's work that has been traveling the country for the last year and that recently wound up at Brooke Alexander Editions in New York, is a survey of his prints—woodcuts, etchings, lithographs, monoprints, and pochoirs (a type of stencil)—from 1978 to the present. Whatever one might think of Bosman's paintings (and that opinion would likely have much to do with whether one thinks of Neo-Expressionism as a significant art movement or as a stylistic fad on the order of fluorescent tube tops), in the short space of a decade Bosman's prints have become "classics" of the genre.

In 1981 those prints appeared as some of the most visible heralds of the revival of Expressionism as a style and of woodcut as a medium. Working with the late printer Chip Elwell, Bosman devised images—violent vignettes—presented with a crude and coy simplicity. An oarsman in the mouth of a giant polar bear; a man falling overboard from an ocean liner; the kiss between a bearded man in a captain's hat and a topless "native" girl—the subjects were both primal and clichéd; the stuff of a deep and dreaming subconscious, but also the stuff of cheap pulp fiction. The style with which they were conveyed was dramatic, direct, prone to angst-ridden elongation and exaggeration, and balanced precariously between expressive force and trite overstatement. A shade less well-composed and they would be merely jokey; any less hyperbolic and they would seem sincerely bombastic.

At the time, the choice of woodcut as a medium seemed extremely eccentric. If a decade later that time is hard to remember, and woodcut seems as reasonable a working medium as offset lithography, it is in no small measure due to the combined influence of Bosman and Chip Elwell. Even Elwell had been trained in the more refined and esoteric Japanese woodblock tradition. He and Bosman had to work their way back to something more primitive, something intentionally crude and corny but nonetheless powerful. Bosman took the process to an extreme, drawing with a not-entirely-controlled knife, slashing away to make patterns of waves and hair, laying on thick inks and flat colors. It was the perfect wedding of medium and message. The prints that resulted displayed an absurd melodrama that, ironically, made their gruesome subject matter less threatening. Bosman's *Car Crash* (1981–82), for instance, with its garish flames and Gumby-like woman in flight, is far less upsetting than Warhol's deadpan "Car Crash" paintings. Like the memorable *New York Post* headline "Headless Body in Topless Bar," the delivery overpowers the actual horror of the information. (It was Bosman who once characterized the *Post* as a "Neo-Expressionist newspaper.")

Most peculiarly, these prints are a real pleasure to look at. In the midst of what should be deeply distressing action, they are beautiful and perversely charming. In *Adversaries* (1982) a man and a polar bear are locked in what should be a deadly embrace but which looks less like a dance of death than a never-ending waltz. In *Confrontation* (1985) deer and hunter face off in the snow; logically, it is clear that things don't look good for the deer, but one is somehow convinced that everything will turn out alright. It is sim-

Bosman once characterized the *New York Post* as a "Neo-expressionist newspaper."

ply impossible to imagine something so still and so perfectly composed exploding in a mess of blood and bone. The moment is frozen; it can last forever, and therein lies the prints' perversely reassuring quality.

In the mid-1980s Bosman began to move away from man-made violence to disasters of a more natural sort—volcanos, lightning, whirlpools. The exploding gun of *Suicide* (1980–81) and the knife-wielding maniac of *Attacker* (1983) gave way to the overpowering tidal surge of *The Wave* (1987) and the now-you-see-it-now-you-don't lifeboat in *Fog Bank* (1988). In *Estuary* (1987), a skiff floats empty in the middle of a waterway—an image of serenity with only the slightest overtone of trouble, that nagging reminder in the back of one's mind that skiffs ought either to be tied up or habited.

In fact, there is a slightly unsettling effect to looking around the gallery, from *Suicide* (1980–81) to *High Tide, Low Tide* (1990); a bit like watching a play in which all the people walk offstage, leaving the scenery to take over the action. There are, especially in the last couple of years, prints in which there are no people, no traces of people, and nothing untoward happens at all: *High Tide, Low Tide* presents two states of the same shoreline; *Night Sky* (1990) depicts two different sets of constellations floating above a watery horizon. Removed from the context of a Bosman show (where, as with a Roger Corman movie, we expect and search out the macabre), these subjects might seem utterly banal. Whatever narrative implications they possess are the result of Bosman's use of that peculiarly filmic device, the multiple frame. Stacked one above the other, he presents sequential views of the same thing, or simultaneous views from different vantage points. The early works operated like film stills, portraying one intriguing moment snipped from the midst of an exciting ongoing story. The new works are equally indebted to the movies, but designed to spin a narrative from anything. They are more like really great film trailers (the one for *The Shining* comes to mind), where it is clear that the movie will never measure up, and is probably irrelevant. As soon as there is more than one frame, the emphasis moves from the pictures themselves to the relationship between them. The significant action seems to occur in the ellipse between the frames.

It is a device adept at making the innocuous appear ominous: the tide is in, the tide is out. Either picture, alone, would suggest merely ocean. In sequence, they provide a clear articulation of time passing—not, perhaps, so innocuous after all. That sense of stillness, so potent in the single pictures, implies the inexorable progress of nature.

One of Bosman's most recent prints is a woodcut called *River* (1989), done for the Metropolitan Museum of Art's Limited Edition Print Program. It consists of four views, arranged in a quadrant—four different sections of a waterway as it flows from its mountain source (in the upper left) to its mouth (in the lower right). It is, Bosman says, "all about a journey." In rough conception, then, it bears a certain resemblance to Anselm Kiefer's woodcut book *Der Rhein*, where page after page of black-wooded silhouettes loom over dark water. But where Kiefer's book is about a specific place, full of emotional exhortation, and even a sense of possibly unhealthy obsession, Bosman's river is curiously generic. The point is less the river itself than it is the passage down the river.

In other works, Bosman uses multiple frames in a more farcical way, as a lead-up and a punch line. In *Awash* (1988), the first frame shows a boat, floating sweetly at anchor, while the second shows us the same swatch of sea with only the boat's mast poking up sadly above the watery deep. It is a reminder that this device owes as much to the comic book as it does to film.

Multiple frames are also a natural outgrowth of the multiple states that occur in printmaking, where a plate or block can be printed, then altered, then printed again. Bosman has often released two different states of his prints—*Man Overboard* appeared in both black-and-white and color versions; *South Sea Kiss* occurred as just two kissing heads on a blank page, and in full color with tropical scenery—suggesting that there is more than one answer to any given question.

If Bosman's stories have become less homicidal, less about knives and guns, his means of making those images (and the ultimate impression lent by them) has also become less ferocious. His technical repertoire has expanded to incorporate lithography, monoprints, and etching. Of these, etching is his strongest second suit, which may seem peculiar given its reputation as a refined and delicate medium, and given Bosman's predilection for things dynamic. But etching is a clunky, obstreperous medium in its own right, and Bosman has a gift for tucking into its suggestive peculiarities: *Night Sky* is almost a parody of the "velvety midnight" that etching can muster; *Fog Bank*, which was printed with that least visceral of all etchers, Aldo Crommelynck, is the perfect encapsulation of the aquatint's misty character. Even his woodcuts have become thinner, lighter, more complicated and more colorful, more dependent on the natural grain of the wood and its subtle evincing of sky and water. His least successful prints, by and large, have been lithographs—a medium prized for its adaptability. But it may be that the price of that adaptability is that it prompts less in the way of guidance, just as it carries less in the way of associations.

In his opening statement for the retrospective catalogue, Bosman talks about drawing with a scratch-board when he was 12 years old: "All the images seemed to be dictated by the materials and the process. Today, I still strive to have the same sense of inevitability in my print images."

And it is precisely that "sense of inevitability" that makes Bosman's prints so effective: a successful symbiosis between the picture's subject, its narrative implications, and its physical presence. But a sense of inevitability is more than a technical trick, it is an emotional state—a state that can be seen as Bosman's real subject, from the elegant resignation of *Man Overboard* to the unavoidable *River* flowing to the sea. □

Susan Tallman is an artist and writer. Her column on prints and editions appears regularly in Arts.

Artnews
December, 1990

RICHARD BOSMAN

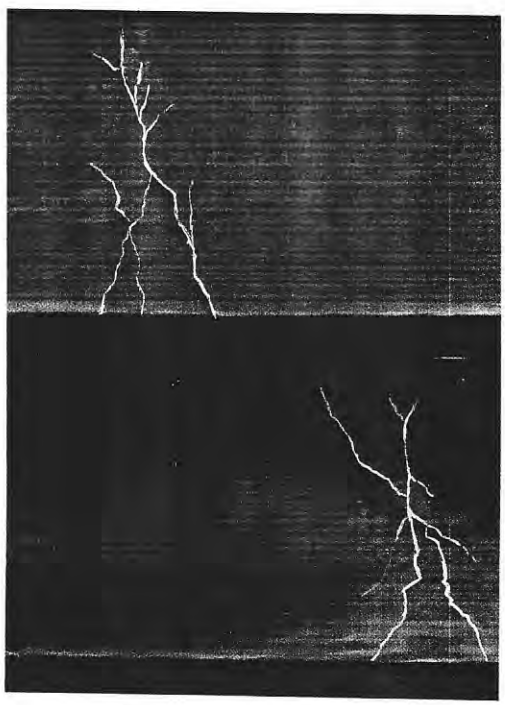
Brooke Alexander

Richard Bosman has become a painter of surprising subtlety. His best-known works are action-packed narrative scenes with figures in extremis painted in an energetic expressionistic style. In the past few years, however, these vitriolic images have given way to views of land, sky, and sea that are, if anything, emotionally remote. But while they lack the forcefulness of his early work, the new paintings engage the viewer in a more cerebral way.

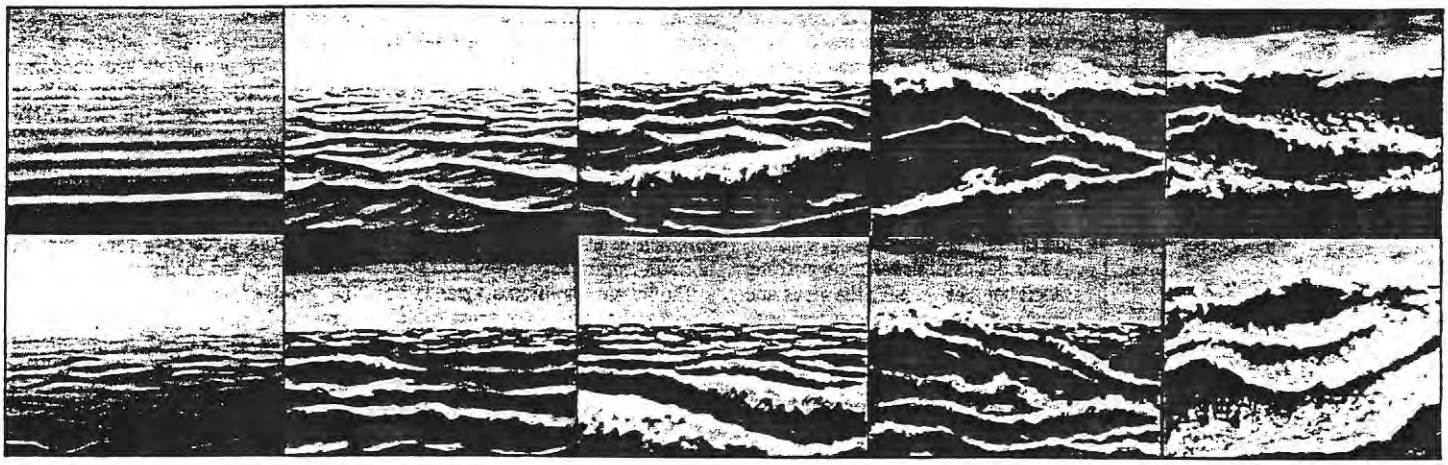
Bosman's recent exhibition consisted exclusively of pictures depicting large-scale natural environments. Humanity is entirely absent from these scenes except for the occasional manufactured object.

Bosman's images are meant to be read in sequence, with the canvases stacked in groups of two or three. The images vary little, one to the next, like the frames in a roll of movie film, and a transitional logic ties one panel to the next.

In *Approach*, for example, the two panels depict a blank wall of clouds and the emergence of a commercial airliner. But the conceptual focus of the work is fixed upon its narrative hinge, that is, the transition between images and the event that transition suggests. Significantly, given the air of expectancy that pervades the work the appearance of a DC-10 is somewhat anticlimactic. In all of the other works Bosman's narratives are similarly subtle, even banal. The absence of dramatic incident coupled with the vastness of his pictorial space underscores the sense of alienation evoked in these paintings. One is never certain if Bosman's sequences are meant to indicate the passage of time or a change of scene or both. The length of time or distance implied is also a matter of conjecture. Bosman uses this arrangement ironically, to question the veracity of pictorial sequence in the way Magritte used imagery to question the reliability of pictures. **—David Hornung**



Richard Bosman, *Rain Maker*, 1989, oil on canvas, 84 by 60 inches. Brooke Alexander.



'Sea States' and other paintings by Richard Bosman are the current exhibition at UCSD's Mandeville Gallery.

Bosman's sea images also examine self

By Robert L. Pincus
Art Critic

Art review

In Richard Bosman's art, at times the sea is a place of peril and at times simply a seductive image. Either way, it is a recurring motif in his paintings and the current exhibition at UCSD's Mandeville Gallery traces its presence as both image and symbol.

Nine years of pictures by this New York-based painter have been assembled by gallery director Gerry McAllister for "Richard Bosman: Gifts of the Sea." They commence with dramatic paintings of 1980, such as "Floating Head," which depicts a gruesome, blue-skinned face bobbing in rough waters, and "Vertical Boat," which pictures a lone man in a tiny red boat precariously situated on the crest of an immense wave. And they culminate with recent paintings in which the artist fixes deliberately on the sea itself for its stylistic possibilities: of palette, of fluid brushstroke and of interplay between panels within a single work.

Bosman's exhibition history begins 1980, too. That year, at 36, he had his first solo show — an advanced age in an art world where some artists have midcareer museum shows by their mid-30s.

Born in Madras, India, and raised in Holland, Egypt and Australia as well as India, Bosman was trained at art schools in London and New York. He first made his mark in New York as a Neo-expressionist.

That label proved useful, even if it lumped together artists of varying sensibilities. The obvious link between their work was style. As a group, they drew upon sources such as the paintings of James Ensor, Edvard Munch, the Fauves and German Expressionists. But Bosman's work of the early to mid-'80s possesses a more subtle bond with that of contemporary Expressionists such as Francesco Clemente of Italy and Salome of West Germany. Like their pictures, his are heavy with psychological overtones.

Bosman's first sea paintings are filled with archetypal scenes of violence and death. They bring to mind lurid pulp fiction as much as reputable precedents such as paintings by Winslow Homer and stories by Jack London. But Bosman's consistent use of life-and-death scenes seems a reflection of the artist's own struggle to establish himself as a painter.

The fate of the figure in "Vertical Boat" is precarious; Bosman has positioned him high in a vertical canvas, accentuating the height of the waves. "Overboard" (1985) functions as a kind of loose sequel. Amid a mountain of waves, a boat has overturned and the figure, turned upside down at an angle, is about to plunge into the sea.

The autobiographical implications of these pictures are confirmed, too, when we come upon "Studio Series: Adrift" (1986). The artist's tools — tubes of paint, brushes and so forth — are scattered across the surface of an iceberg. Ominously, the artist is nowhere to be found and the depicted canvas is covered in a bleak-looking gray.

Ironically, this picture offers evidence that Bosman wasn't adrift at all. In the paintings of 1985 and 1986, his work is more stylistically confident, the images more boldly presented. At the same time, the emphasis on melodrama wanes. The deliberately rough look of the earlier pictures, in which he favored the palette knife as much the brush, gives way to a more finished look.

By 1986, Bosman was making paintings with no human drama at all. In these later paintings, two interests dominate: the image of the sea itself and the sensuality of the picture surface. In "Sea States" (1988) with its 10 panels of ocean that range from calm to raging, the foam is thick and tactile. In this painting and others such as "Breaker" (1986), passages of brilliant white offer an elegant counterpoint to the elegant blues and greens that swirl in and around them to create memorable likenesses of the sea.

Neo-expressionism is no longer the hyped trend it was five or six years ago. Legions of painters who cultivated the style in the late '70s and early '80s have since been forgotten or shifted their allegiances. Bosman may have gained attention because his work suited the whims of art fashion, but the development of his work is singular and distinctive.

He is, as critic Peter Schjeldahl writes in the accompanying catalogue, "a conservative painter." Bosman is an artist who takes the long view of art history. His work begs comparison with that of earlier painters as much as with his contemporaries. And though his career is still young, his paintings persuade us that he just might be up to the task.

"Richard Bosman: Gifts of the Sea" is on view through June 25. The Mandeville Gallery is open Wednesday through Sunday, 12 to 5 p.m.

VINCE COMPAGNONE / Los Angeles Times

Artist Richard Bosman, whose "Gifts of the Sea" expressionist oil paintings are on exhibit at UC San Diego's Mandeville Gallery.

Conrad of Canvas Brings the Sea to Life in Expressionist Paintings

The ship, a fragment detached from the Earth, went on lonely and swift like a small planet.
—Joseph Conrad

By HILLIARD HARPER,
San Diego County Arts Writer

LA JOLLA—Like Joseph Conrad, Richard Bosman tells colorful adventures of the sea, only Bosman lays them on thickly with a paintbrush.

Bosman, 45, was in town last weekend for the opening of "Gifts of the Sea," an exhibition of his densely textured oil paintings at UC San Diego's Mandeville Gallery through June 25.

His paintings heave, hiss and seethe with the motions and sounds of the sea. Bosman's curling, white-capped breakers and foggy, still waters are not realistic but expressionistic, pulsing with the ocean's contained energy. And yes, they do tell tales. He admits as much, unlike some artists.

SAN DIEGO COUNTY

"The biggest problem painting is you have to communicate with an audience," Bosman said Friday after a walk through the exhibit.

Please see BOSMAN, Page 5

BOSMAN

Continued from Page 1

"The art of communicating is a basic problem. I don't know what it is, but some images have it and some don't.

"Most of my work is concerned with allegory or metaphor. If I do a painting of a volcano, it may be about passion. Then, I have to turn it back into the material [the application of the paint] so that those ideas will be available, easy to get at in reading the painting."

Bosman, who lives in New York, had an adventurous childhood, which was supported by the sea. He was born in Madras, India, to a Dutch ship captain and an Australian mother who loved reading novels and mysteries.

Bosman grew up in India, Holland, Indonesia, Egypt, Australia and England. For a while, his father held a job as a Suez Canal pilot. When riots began erupting in Egypt, Bosman was sent at 6, to a boarding school in Perth, Australia.

At 19, Bosman spent two years as a "jackeroo" on a sheep station near Kalgoorlie, Australia.

"I didn't want to do that," Bosman said. "I found it lonely and boring."

In his spare time on the sheep station, he painted some watercolors. The satisfaction convinced him to continue.

With the support of his parents, Bosman entered the Byam Shaw School of Painting & Drawing in London, a traditional art school, for four years. Then, he spent two years, from 1969-1971, at the New York Studio School in New York City.

He came to the United States fascinated with American art, especially abstract expressionism.

"It was much more energetic," Bosman said. "European art was more decorative.

"But when I came to the New York Studio School, I found I was 10 years behind time. Minimalism was in."

The abstract expressionists were out. In the trendy world of art, their time had come and gone.

Bosman took to New York.

"It seemed very much like home to me," he said. "I think I was attracted to the mix of all the cultures in one place, the eccentricity. It is a very accepting city."

In New York, the artists hung out together and drank together and supported each other. Artists survived by painting—not canvases—but people's apartments and lofts. If someone had a job doing a loft, he would tell his friends, and they would all have work for a month.

Bosman continued to paint his own pieces at night. When he had enough paintings, he would make photographic slides to take to the dealers. But the rejections got to be depressing as time went by, and the survival mode began to wear.

Then, in 1980, after almost a decade of struggle, he was selected for a group show titled "Illustration & Allegory" at the Brooke Alexander gallery.

His three paintings were derived from detective novels and showed Chinese men and women. "High Tide," depicted a Chinese woman on a raft in a costume with moons on it. Beyond her was a full moon. "East Wind" showed a Chinese man wearing a kimono that was blowing back in the wind. His back was to the viewer and he faced the sea.

Bosman's work from the early '80s period, which used images and symbols, the way detective books used clues, was loved and hated. Later pieces were titled, "The Assassin," "The Red Staircase" and "Death of a Gambler."

"It was kind of contentious work," Bosman said. "The idea of doing a painting about violence caused some pure-minded artists to resent it and to resent the success of it."

In the three earlier Chinese paintings, the sea was in the background. Gradually the water rose in importance to the foreground. In part because of the consistency and nature of oil paint, he said.

"It's a physical experience for me—painting. Getting that thick, juicy paint up there . . . and trying to make it into the real substance of the sea. The paint is thick. It buries objects, the same as the sea."

AT THE GALLERIES / DAVID LEWINSON

Bosman Works Are Full of Water, but Still Come Off Dry

Landscape hasn't been much more than a sideshow in avant-garde art for what seems like eons—since Postimpressionism, about 100 years ago. But it may be making a comeback. In the way it splits down the middle, "Richard Bosman: Gifts of the Sea" abruptly signals this possibility.

Of the 13 works on view at UC San Diego's Mandeville Gallery, seven produced from 1980 to 1986 focus on the figure set in a variety of marine contexts. In six works from 1986 to the present, the figure disappears entirely, and only the seascape remains.

The style of these seascapes, which constitute a type of landscape, evades classification. The earlier figurative works, however, clearly reveal this 43-year-old artist's major debt to neo-expressionism, a European-born style that hit American shores in the late 1970s.

For example, Bosman's 1980 "Floating Head" employs typically neo-expressionist brushwork and scratchy, nearly sculptural handling of form to produce an image of a frightened blue face vomiting blood and bobbing bodiless in a cold patch of sea.

Another 1980 work, "The Rope," depicts a terror-filled figure falling into the sea from the rigging of a sailing ship. "Beached," from 1985, shows a man and a woman heaped together on the shore amid remnants of a shipwreck. (The woman, somehow, still wears her red high-heel shoes, and her lipstick is perfect.)

This group of figure-involving imagery then ends with the 1986 "Studio Scene: Adrift," in which a painter sprawls face-down, apparently dead, on a flat chunk of Arctic ice, with only brushes, tubes of paint, a palette and a blank canvas for company.

Given the deadly nature of these last images, it's not so surprising to see Bosman jump ship and end 1986 as a landscape, or rather a seascape, painter. The main thing he seems to carry with him from the maritime miseries he previously painted is a quite adept skill in representing water, in making the plastic qualities of paint tightly equivalent to the look of the frothing, foaming, rolling and tossing of the sea.

There's undeniable delight in seeing this skill in operation, but it's not all that unique or inventive. A classic Dutch still life offers similar, although more delicate, experience in which a quick streak of white pigment highlights the rim of a goblet or the shiny skin of a piece of fruit. But this is skill, not art; or certainly not all there is to art.

Proof of this lies in the generally banal impact of the seascapes that emerges from Bosman's hand beginning in 1986. In all of these, at least two and as many as 10 separate panels are combined in a single frame. "Shoreline," from 1986, combines three separate scenes of relatively tame waves running up a sandy beach. The multiple panels invoke time and changing conditions; but the reference barely obscures the triteness of the imagery. It's more like you get three paintings—and three looks at Bosman's paint—for the price of one.

In the 1987 painting "Beacon," two panels depict day and night views of a lighthouse isolated on a spit of land. Bosman handles the inherently subtle colors well enough, and his paint here is even more alluring than in previous works. While this indicates that his considerable skill in manipulating paint is continuing to grow, we're again confronted with post card imagery that seems to be no more than an excuse for Bosman to do his painterly shtick.

VINCE COMPAGNONE / Los Angeles Times

Richard Bosman's 1986 "Studio Scene: Adrift" is among the works at Mandeville Gallery.

In "Awash" (1988), there's even a hint that the artist recognizes the vulnerability of what he's doing. The upper panel of the two-part image shows an unmanned skiff facing into the swells of a white-capped sea. The lower panel shows only the skiff's mast sticking out above waters that are now calm. Whether the wry wit of the story implied by the image is intentional is difficult to determine.

The dubious usefulness of Bosman's multiple panels reaches its pinnacle in "Sea States," a 1988 work in which 10 images in two horizontal rows produce an overall work measuring 5 by 15 feet. The individual scenes present a sequence of states of agitation in the open sea, from calm to extremely violent.

The colorations of the water and the sky follow similar variation, from soothing blues and greens to turbid greens, yellows and grays. But while each single panel suggests itself as a study for some eventual masterpiece, locked together they cancel each other out, like mixing hot and cold water.

If the goal of the multiple images is to subdue the emotional responses that any one of the scenes might provoke, that would constitute a rationale of a sort and would be consistent with the exhaustion of emotional reserves expressed in "Studio Series: Adrift," Bosman's last figurative work. Nevertheless, for all its technical accomplishment and aqueous imagery, this painting is pretty dry stuff.

As to what Bosman's work has to say about a possible resurgence of interest in landscape—seascape being a subset of landscape—the message is only the most general one: that something is happening. Bosman has sensed this and picked up on it, just as he seems to have quickly adopted neo-expressionism when it arrived from Europe.

This new interest in landscape may result from something as simple as artists finding that abstraction and figuration are depleted for now, while the domain of landscape has been lying fallow long enough to have become ripe for harvest again. There also may be something more subtle occurring: a reflection of the deepening recognition that the landscape that the industrial revolution started to pollute in a big way around the time of Postimpressionism has now become so abused that it threatens to return the favor and kill us.

Perhaps we're responding.

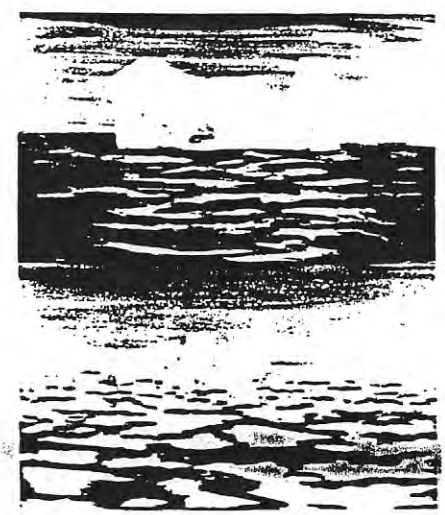
ART ISSUES
February 1989

Richard Bosman

at Asher/Faure

The oil paint is thick, and the waves are stiff. Nothing but ocean everywhere you look. The paint does not look like water at all, but like itself: tarry, chunky, smeary, crudely brushed on, maybe applied with the artist's thumb. Bosman paints seas so heavy-looking that all one can think about when one peers at them is sinking, if one can imagine sinking into a solid. Bosman's skies are anything but airy, just a little lighter than the water they hang over like disinterested, streaky ceilings. The foam that caps these waves looks like some badly clotted milk product. Scary forest colors are used: deceased greens, blunt go-nowhere greys, asphixiated blues, and greenish blacks that resemble the foliage of very old trees that have been watered for years with blood. A sentence like that sounds as though it's well on its way to romanticizing these works, but the paintings give off a strong smell of oil paint and an equally potent whiff of being anti-romantic. Most of the paintings in the show are multi-panel canvases, but they don't seem to represent any progression; rather, a stasis, a tonguelessness. Something about the paintings looks mute and stuck. They seem to hint at an attempt to obliterate or repudiate something. It could be that they are intended to be a complete departure from the artist's earlier work—odd, stilted paintings of peopled scenes of disaster and mayhem. Or perhaps they are meant at least in part to jab at the type of landscape painting where nature is depicted greased with so much human emotion that it shines with a completely unnatural light. If this is "man against nature" painting, then man has already lost and nature has gone on to other things. The paintings seem to embrace the opposite of eloquence. These oceans are dumb abysses that swallow everything and don't even burp.

Amy Gerstler

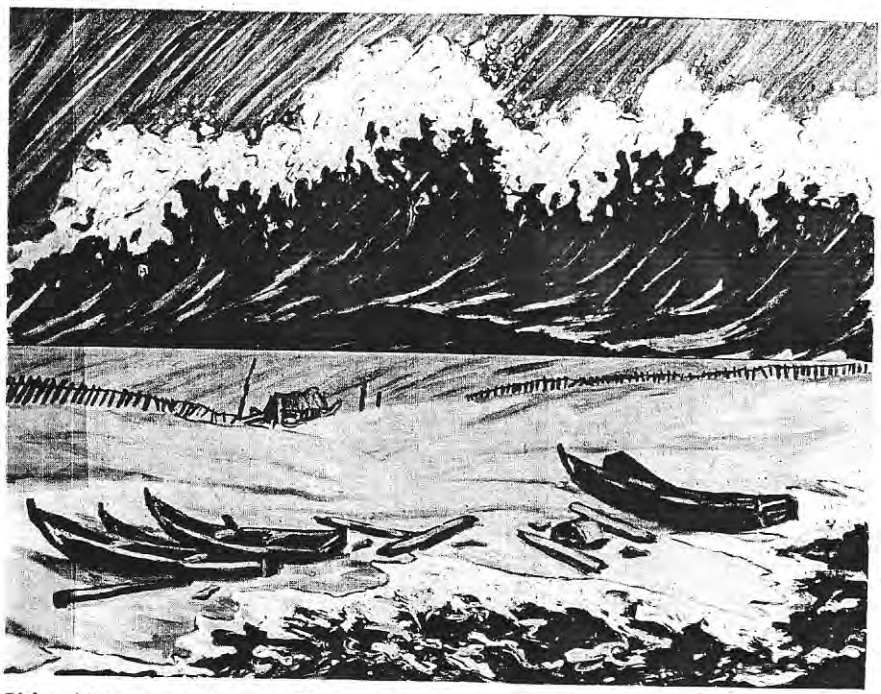


ARTNEWS JANUARY 1988

RICHARD BOSMAN

Brooke Alexander

In his multipaneled scenes of breaking waves, this veteran Neo-Expressionist nearly obliterates human presence: apparently, the anonymous protagonists that



Richard Bosman, *Aftermath*, 1987, oil on canvas, 66 by 84 inches. Brooke Alexander.

Bosman formerly pitted against the elements have lost. The bits of flotsam that occasionally wash ashore—a life preserver, some empty, battered dinghies—only record the tragic conclusion of a struggle at sea. If the artist's earlier work always held out the possibility of a happy ending, these strangely formalist paintings leave the viewer with nothing but stretches of ominously fermenting brine.

Bosman built his career on a knack for applying the logic of the film still to painting. By freezing, in thick slashes of paint, a moment wrested from an adventure yarn or crime story, he pushed the viewer's imagination beyond the frame of the canvas. Scenes fraught with peril and suspense induced anxiety by forcing spectators to contemplate their potentially disastrous outcomes. In the new paintings narrative persists, but in a cooler, more minimal form. Melodrama gives way to a meditation on the unrelenting movements of sea and tide, appropriately rendered in masses of stiff, churning paint.

In the two-paneled *Breaker*, Bosman relies on a multiple-frame format to convey the passage of time. The top canvas depicts a seething bank of sea rearing back as it prepares to rush the shore; the bottom panel shows presumably the same wave crashing against a dark cliff. Mimicking the beat of surf, Bosman's rhythmic strokes pound out a characteristically bleak scene. The sky is leaden, ocean and rock threatening, the tide inexorable and oppressive.

Bosman relieves the suffocating heaviness of the paintings through his blackly humorous exploitation of cliché. This is the old Bosman breaking through, now tackling the genre of the crested wave—that uncanny arrest of motion that has fascinated the best and worst artists. Here, as in the past, Bosman's heavy hand shoves cliché toward symbol. His waves of agitated pigment draw an analogy between the sea's elemental power and that of paint, between the hazards of the deep and the difficulties of making art. **—Nancy Grimes**

The New York Times, Friday, October 16, 1987
Michael Brenson

Richard Bosman

Brooke Alexander Gallery
59 Wooster Street
Through Oct. 24

It might be instructive for someone to study the number of contemporary artists who have recently attempted to ride the motif of the wave. They range from Deborah Kass to Sonia Gechtoff to Pat Steir, who painted an entire series based on art historical approaches to the motif. Waves are featured in the new paintings by Richard Bosman, whose father was a sea captain.

By omitting people from these two- and three-panel works — each panel is horizontal, and they are placed on top of one another — Mr. Bosman has watered down the narrative dimension of his work. It is still there in the way the sea comes up and licks a life preserver on the sand, or in the hole in the water that sits there like Poe's maelstrom, or in a cluster of rocks that may be in the process of rising out of the sea like a new Atlantis. On the whole, however, not only is the narrative element less consuming, but there also are mercifully fewer art jokes, and more attention is focused on the artist's considerable ability to handle paint.

Indeed, Mr. Bosman has taken a great deal of pleasure in the paint process. He makes waves sit up like the wheatfields of van Gogh, and then orders the whitecaps to erupt in a way that is almost orgiastic. He uses paint to climb cliffs. He makes a sliver of gray in "Landfall" more ominous than any of his storms. What has not changed in these works is Mr. Bosman's curious debate with his own modernist detachment, a debate that is in some way the subject of his work. His mind and hand do not hold back. While his heart does, his paintings remain filled with the memory of painters who did not worry about drowning in their work, and sometimes they did.

ARTFORUM

PRINT I December 1986

Richard Bosman

GALERIA TOSELLI
MILAN

Aerial visions and acrobatic flashes of a tragic ski run animate this show by *peintre maudit* Richard Bosman. Bosman's reputation as a lover of the criminal, the cruel, and the frightening preceded his arrival in Milan for this, his first show of paintings here. His images are accelerated film frames, instantaneous takes, and rapid sequences, translated into paintings. *The Skier*, 1985, is like a film: an unsettling subject unfolds amid the snowy landscape. The images follow the descent: an immaculate setting, crisp air, trees enveloped by wind, the purifying vista of nature; then a flight, the fall, physical damage, blood.

How are these paintings different from *Uptown Murder*, 1981, for example, or *The Burden*, 1983? In the former, a woman stands between window and victim; one doesn't know if she's the author or the discoverer of the crime. In the latter, a boy drags behind him the cumbersome load of a human head. These paintings are condensed representations of events, successive phases, silent, an epilogue. To paraphrase the rule for ancient tragedy: they have a unity of time, of place, and of anguish.

While one comprehends the protagonist's anxiety, what holds the phases of Bosman's painting together is the deliberate way he breaks down the boundary between interior and exterior. Bosman's painting is an amplified representation of events both external and internal. The representation spells out what has happened, including states of mind and psychic reactions to the event. In fact, it has been justly suggested that this painting is both Freudian and Jungian in that it examines what lies in shadows in terms of both the individual and the expression of a collective anxiety. In Bosman's work, with its expanded emotive elements and chronicled event, the painting exists on a level more typical of the theater; the tragedy is recited with intent to purify The painting's narrative aspect achieves an ethical sentiment and aims at catharsis. The white snows emit a sense of the clear and clean, but the outcome is written in fate, as in classical tragedy.

Bosman's paintings have an abstract expressionist fabric. This "perverse" nephew of Pop art, heir to Lichtenstein's illustrations, overlays his painting with a cultural coating all his own. His expressionist references translate the difficulty of a dialogue with reality into imagery that touches the heights of exasperation.

—*Jole de Sanna*

Translated from the Italian by Meg Shore.

ARTnews - January 1985
Gerrit Henry - Reviewer

RICHARD BOSMAN

Brooke Alexander

"THE HUMAN Condition," the title of a recent group show at the San Francisco Museum of Modern Art in which Bosman's work appeared, points to the great strength in this artist's new paintings. In these works, all dating from 1984, he has adapted a current style—Neo-Expressionism—to his own ends, displaying great insight into the "underground man" each of us has become since the depth-psychology discoveries of Freud and Jung.

Bosman is not afraid of entering the sublime and infernal realms of the Freudian subconscious and id—or what Jung called "the collective unconscious." Sometimes the visit down under yields straightforward but horrific visions, as in *Fertility Idol*, where a mass of bare-topped men and women stand in a circle against a green jungle backdrop, worshiping a perfectly hideous huge wood idol with horns. We've seen it before in movies, but never before has idol worship been so monstrously, magnificently the subject of "high" art, conferring a dignity on the diabolical that Jung would have applauded. *Besieged*, showing a man fighting off bats, is similarly graphic and unnerving. *The Hunters* is a horror show consisting of two hunters with rifles bearing home a blood-and-snow-speckled boar on a pole, the sheer primitivism of both the act of hunting and the image of the dead animal riveting the viewer before the canvas.

Indeed, all of these brusque, brushy paintings command attention—they reveal to us our "shadow side," the reality of human evil, as baldly as Lichtenstein's works revealed our social superficiality through comic strips. Sometimes Bosman chooses to render our darker side symbolically, as in *Conflict*, in which a zebra and a tiger on a brown plain are about to go at each other, with a blue-black sky and a full moon above. Another piece of symbolism is *Low Tide*, which features a man tied with white rope to a post with two seagulls hovering hawklike above him.

*Richard Bosman, **Besieged**, 1984, oil on canvas, 84 by 60 inches. Brooke Alexander.*

But Bosman does not forget the main vehicle for our perceptions of the subconscious—dreams. The artist gets our rapt attention in a painting like *Crossing*, which has all the breathless fearfulness of our night visions: against a rushing waterfall, a man holds on to a very slight vine while another man holds on to *his* leg. We don't know the outcome, but we do recognize ourselves in these two figures, in the fabulous predicaments dreams regularly place us in. And *The Fall*, in which a bare-chested, barefoot man is seen upside down, on a free fall to nowhere, rivals Hitchcock's *Vertigo* in its exploitation of the fear of heights.

Somehow, Bosman has obtained the key to our imagination. His paintings are black magic gone white by virtue of sheer psychological honesty and an integrity that bars no subject from consideration. **—G.H.**

ARTFORUM

PRINT I Summer 1983

Richard Bosman

BROOKE ALEXANDER GALLERY
NEW YORK

Richard Bosman presents a somewhat similar problem. Another painter who looked hot when he first appeared, Bosman has so far been unable to develop his starting position into anything more substantial than a good beginning. He has fallen victim to that familiar syndrome: one big hit followed by too many, too similar remakes. Three years ago the corny violence he favored in both image and handling seemed timely, exactly keyed to pressing issues centering on the debate about appropriation (itself suffering from a repeater problem). For a while Bosman, like the Berlin painters, seemed to be concerned with intervening in that debate. His use of comic-book pictures and a patently borrowed, authentically inauthentic painting style placed him firmly within the "pseudo" rather than "neo" camp. The paintings looked highly romantic yet cynical. The stories they told, too-familiar melodramas of love, death, and detectives, were presented in a painting style which matched their degraded heroism.

The new paintings look the same, if a little larger, and that is the problem. There is no evidence in the new work of a continuing dialectic. A stasis has been reached, an understanding accomplished. Perhaps as a result of some complicity between the earlier paintings and their critical reception, the work has solidified into a mannerism, a barely conscious repetition of proven formulas. Worse, instead of thinking about what he paints or why he paints, Bosman has been concentrating on how he paints. The new paintings are much smoother than the earlier work, the awkwardness of flailing limbs and torn faces is lost, and what could once be understood as a defamiliarizing device ("bad" painting) now seems much less exact, perhaps nothing more interesting than a kind of slovenliness.

What has happened is that the paintings have been reduced to stylized repetitions of their precursors. The detectives and hoods become emblematic not of the aspirations our culture, in high and low forms, invests in charismatic heroes, but of their already known existence as Bosman's trademarked production. They have ceased being the means through which Bosman advances his art and have become talismans that identify it and so take it over. The most emblematic of these new paintings illustrates the point only too well: a chase; two figures advance, but they are frozen into an awkward, relief like immobility, suspended in a bright red field of brushstrokes, of bloody repetitions mirroring the collapse of art into production, practice into product, work into its representation.

—Thomas Lawson

ARTFORUM

PRINT I January 1982

Richard Bosman

BROOKE ALEXANDER GALLERY
NEW YORK

Richard Bosman's new paintings are ugly like a Mickey Spillane novel is ugly. They're mannered, gutsy, and intoxicated with the poetry of vernacular violence. Scenes of escalated mayhem are thickly painted with mean, muddy colors—lots of yucky gray and blue and red. The jagged intensity of the figures, all of which are caught in moments of impending or resolved brutality, is reminiscent of the alienated Expressionism of Edvard Munch. Bosman doesn't have Munch's cathartic sense of subject—he's still thumping away on the bass where Munch fine-tuned the treble; and the work can be a little dippy in its "Oh, my God" hysteria. But when Bosman tempers the melodrama with a little gestural psychology, the results can be very powerful.

Most of the paintings share a narrative device that juxtaposes what is clearly a victim with what may be either a bystander or a perpetrator. Feet entering or fleeing the frame are the least interesting variation on the theme. Some paintings court the viewer by setting up scenes of cinematic familiarity: a *noir* heroine stands impassively by a window ignoring the bloodied corpse on the shag rug; a man catapults backwards out the window into a starry night, while his companion is caught in a position of menace or assistance. Ultimately, Billy Wilder and Alfred Hitchcock have done these scenes better.

There are, however, three paintings in which Bosman is brilliantly on target, in which his agitated paint handling coincides with compositions that unnerve. The quietest of the three shows a man putting on his coat in a Hopperesque bedroom. The man is standing between the bed and the window. Outside, it's raining; the neutral meanness of the room and the slashes of rain on the window set a Willy Loman mood. Then, turning it all around—a gun on the bed. This is a pristine evocation of menace.

In Bosman's largest painting (a diptych, in fact), a wall of golden wheat rises by the side of a dirt road. A man stands by the open door of a sedan. In the foreground, in a puddle of blood, is a corpse. A crack in the sedan's windscreen hints at a reciprocal violence but does not emphasize it. Here Bosman has beautifully synthesized a genre of Great Plains Gothicism in all its murderous banality.

The most disturbing painting shows a girl (not a woman) rushing into the sea. Standing on the shore is a man clutching a knife. The tension is palpable. The contorted poses of the couple, caught in the steely light that suffuses the painting, produce an incisive delineation of terror. This is the most economical of Bosman's paintings, and it dominates the show.

—Richard Flood

RICHARD BOSMAN

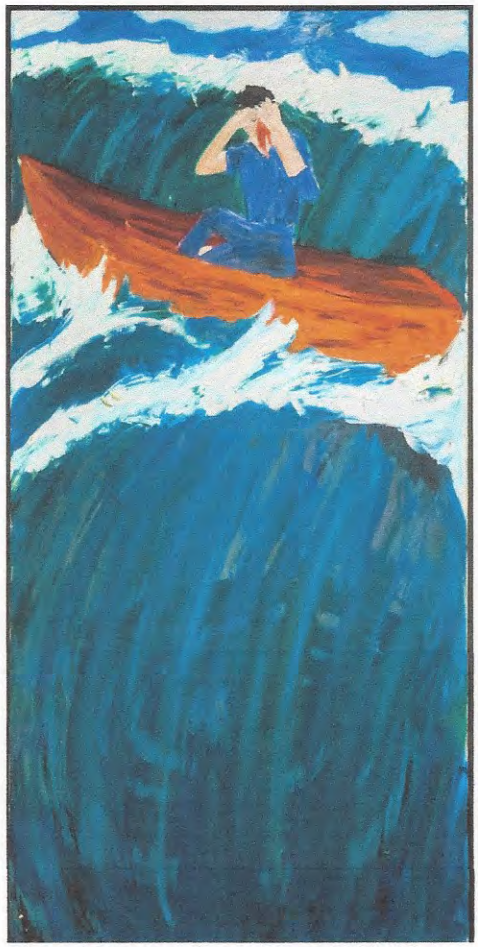
Brooke Alexander
The Drawing Center

Nature, they thought, was the only threat. Stranded in a lunar landscape, on some tropical isle or adrift on the open sea in crafts too small to withstand the swells, the characters in Richard Bosman's paintings must face the elements alone. They can do little but pray that they will somehow escape their plights, that the rescuers will arrive and put an end to their isolation. Winslow Homer's *The Gulf Stream*? Yes, but Bosman has a different understanding of the notion of assistance: shots from the gun of an unseen assassin hit their mark just when these characters thought they had enough to worry about *Bang*!

In *The Gulf Stream*, sharks and a storm are the immediate threats, and a ship on the horizon, the potential savior. Homer's hero simply sits back and ponders his fate: will he be the food? his boat, the plate? Both the adversary and the ally are recognizable and are depicted with exacting care. Homer shows us the situation in detail, and everything, with the exception of the narrative's outcome, is clear. Bosman's paintings present a similar set of circumstances, but, as they are draped in the mysteries of moonlit nights, we can be sure only that we are in the midst of a dream. Neither the enemy nor the helping hand is ever visible, but it is clear that some force, watching from beyond the edges of his paintings, is always willing to interfere. At times malicious, in other instances benevolent, the interventions of this unnamed agent are always mischievious: insult is added to injury; a potentially logical narrative is made mythic and absurd; and isolation and pain are transformed into harmless, often silly sensations.

The characters in Bosman's paintings are usually helpless; they have no control over their destinies and are at the mercy of a murderous, prank-playing Hand of Fate. For Bosman, our inability to master our own lives is a state of affairs that is best portrayed in an innocent, humorous fashion. We are sitting ducks, bath-tubbed boats in a position to hope only that no one will pull out the plug, make waves or throw the soap.

Douglas Blau



Richard Bosman, *Vertical Boat*, 1980. Oil on canvas. 91 1/2 x 45 inches. Courtesy Brooke Alexander, New York.