

actually be the message.

Taking their colors and titles from semi-precious materials like lapis lazuli and amber, the four "Pyramids" are centralized triangular forms set within paint-sculpted gold squares. The paintings flip-flop between illusions of aerial views, complete with lightning bolts and clouds, and microscopic surface enlargements of veined minerals. A hypnotic energy created by wavy wrinkles of paint emanates from the mandala-like triangular forms.

Stark is fascinated by the way nature, life and culture appear to mimic each other. *Black Widow Society*, with its swirling spiral of varied red hourglass shapes embedded in glossy black paint, does a meditative riff on gender, seduction, erotics and pure visuality. The sublimely goofy *Spectacled Cobra* is a cartoonish replica of the funny face pattern on the back of a viper's head, which disarms and entrances its intended victim. This snake's brown speckles, actual indentations within a painstaking buildup of paint, force the image to retinally shift from surface to depth and from figure to abstraction, suggesting that painting, too, often relies on elaborate strategies of deception. Humorously, these pieces seem to assert that art, like these carnivorous creatures, must continuously, paradoxically, "kill off" its own traditions in order to be renewed.

The most affecting work in the exhibition was *Cherry Amber Rotation*, created by laboriously building up translucent stripes of red paint arranged like the spokes of a wheel. A mountainlike nipple rises at the center, while the paint trails off in a waterfall of congealed drips at the bottom and right edges.

Within this rosy, frozen bog lie minute leaves, insects, flowers and seedpods that, in tandem with the paint itself, offer a witty repartee about painting's eternal relationship to nature. In the face of perennial pronouncements about the death of painting, Stark, like Scheherazade, spins dazzling tales that seem to assure that its end will never come.

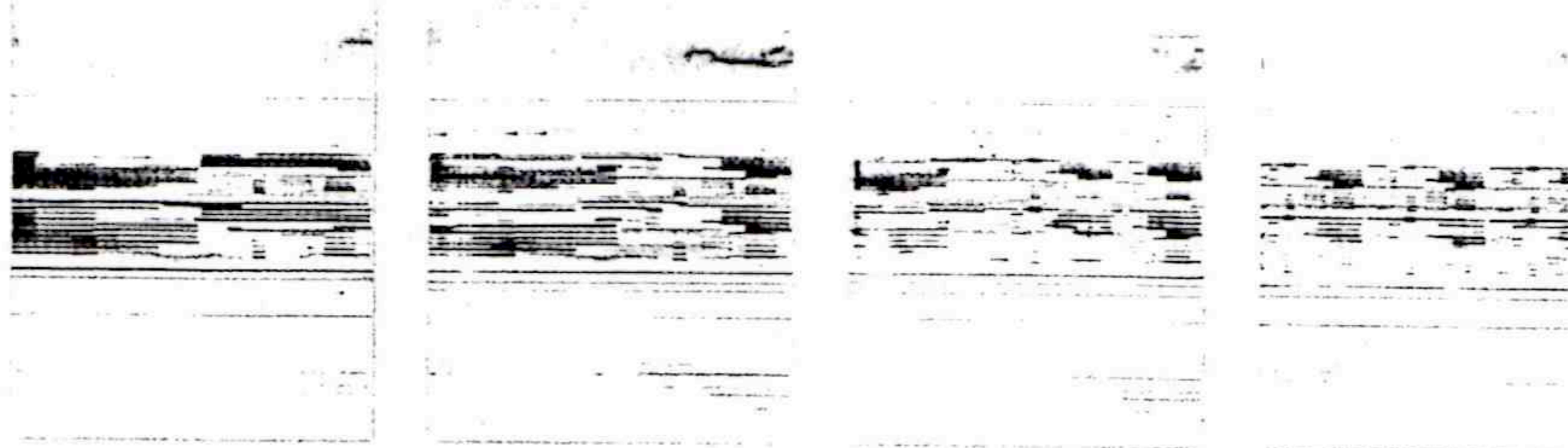
—Constance Mallinson

SANTA CLARA

Julius Hatofsky at the Triton Museum of Art

Julius Hatofsky (1922-2006) had a long career that received little critical attention. He began painting in New York during the 1950s and moved to San Francisco in 1961 to teach at the San Francisco Art Institute, eventually retiring in 2001. During the 1960s, he worked in a Bay Area Abstract-Expressionist mode, creating sumptuous, almost iridescent surfaces animated by streams of sinuous energy. After 1973, his paintings gradually moved toward a symbolist-inspired figuration influenced by William Blake, Odilon Redon and Albert Pinkham Ryder. These works often feature obscure, scurrying phantoms painted in a frothy multihued and multilayered oil impasto. But whether they were created in an Abstract-Expressionist or semi-abstract symbolist manner, Hatofsky's paintings are sensually generous and richly nuanced.

This exhibition focused on the last four decades of Hatofsky's



John Pomara: *Arrested-development Nos. 1-4*, 2003, oil enamel on aluminum, 4 panels, each 48 by 32 inches; at the Dallas Center for Contemporary Art.

career. It closed on Jan. 1, the day the 83-year-old artist passed away. The show contained two modestly scaled untitled works from the 1960s, but the majority of the 30 oils on canvas and acrylics on paper were created after 1978, emphasizing Hatofsky's abstract-symbolist period. A particularly stunning example is the large *Dream Fragments with Columns* (1984), in which vivid warm reds are balanced by cool greens and violets that capture the eerie, evanescent light that precedes sunrise. In the foreground of this windswept landscape, what appears to be an open tomb shelters a slumbering, intertwined clutch of human figures, oblivious to the turbulent world that surrounds them.

About half the works in this exhibition were keyed in brilliant and boisterous hues, while the rest embraced a nocturnal palette of deep violets and viridians that demonstrated Hatofsky's ability to find chromatic surprises in shadowy tonalities. This was especially apparent in a stupendous, irregularly shaped three-panel work measuring 10 by 33 feet (*Untitled*, 1968-89), which the artist repeatedly returned to for more than two decades. In it we see several groups of figures struggling to extricate themselves from dark recesses, as if to ascend a symbolic mountain of ebullient, glistening color at the center of the epic composition. A compendium of the artist's style and imagery—a kind of Achilles shield offering a vision of what life is and should be—it is an engagingly complex work with a totemic feel.

—Mark Van Proyen

MONTREAL

Paryse Martin at Circa

Paryse Martin lives and works in Quebec City and has been exhibiting in Canada and abroad since 1992. In early works Martin utilized materials as diverse as wood, egg tempera, wrought iron

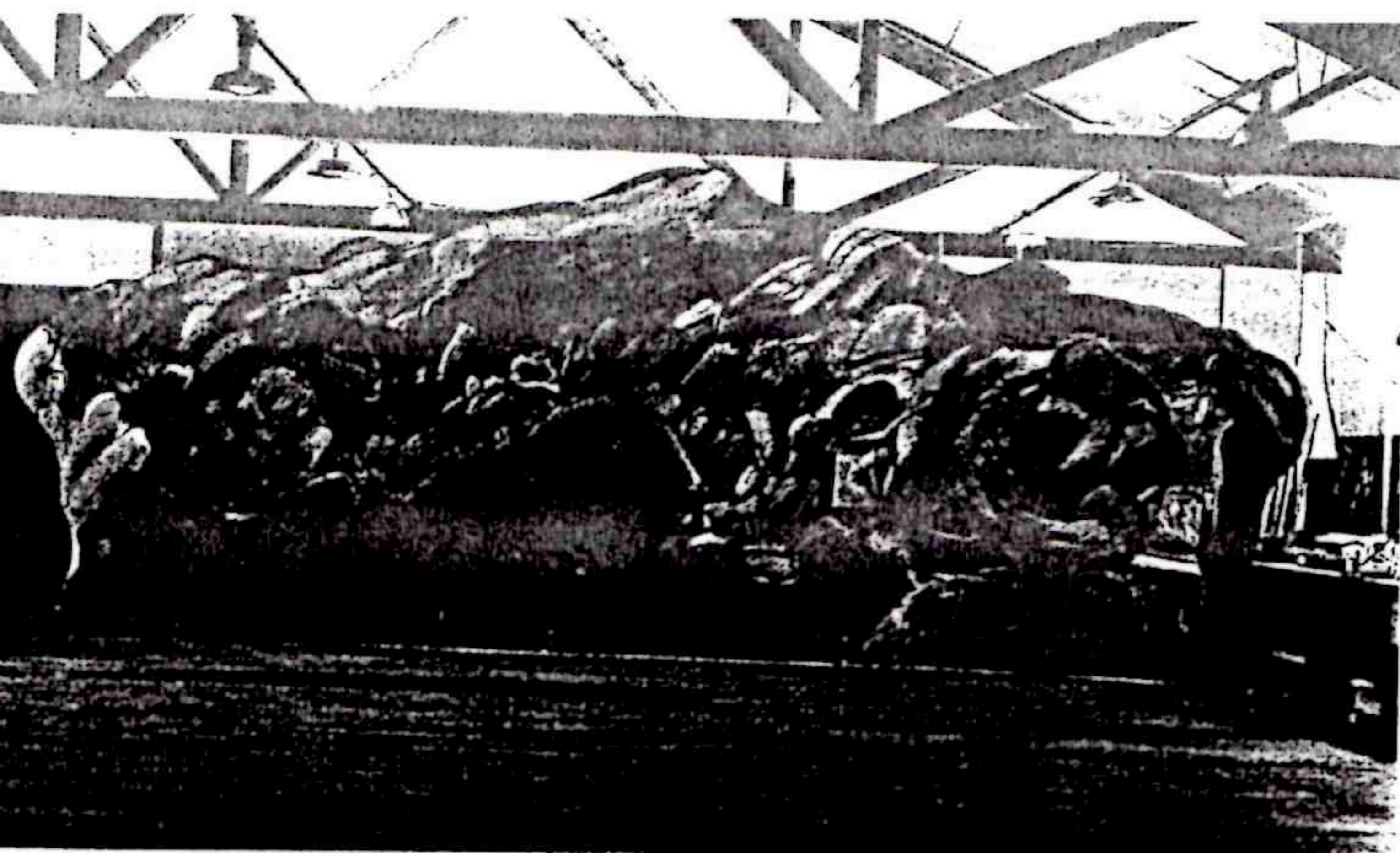
and ceramic. Her recent exhibition showcased sculptures made entirely of paper and cardboard. Martin employed an extraordinary variety of techniques in the creation of 26 detailed, colorful sculptures. In her deft hands corrugated cardboard becomes a detailed topographic map, coiled paper takes on the form of delicate spirals and papier-mâché objects become "high art."

The installation's title, *Manoeuvres Exquises* (Exquisite Operations), 2005, alludes, perhaps, to the seemingly clandestine activities of the 10 papier-mâché garden gnomes, each approximately 3 feet high, which carefully transport human-sized skulls in wheelbarrows. The skulls are patterned in gingham, stripes or flowers. Garden gnomes as subject matter are a cliché—one immediately thinks of the urban myth of the traveling gnome mailing tourist snapshots back home. But in Martin's work, the charming irony of combining decorative kitsch and icons of death is satisfyingly original.

Making sculpture out of paper or cardboard isn't new either—think of Tom Friedman or Kirsten Hassenfeld. Yet Martin's interest in exploring and manipulating the modest material is perhaps more evident. For example, on one large wall of the gallery, an oval-shaped dome was covered in obsessively smoothed silver-foiled paper, the mirrorlike finish reflecting the entire exhibition. Two other sculptures are constructed of corrugated cardboard that has been cut, torn, wrapped and coiled to resemble topographic models displayed on cardboard tables. Two 10-foot-long roses composed of 60 papier-mâché segments, each a foot high, were installed on the floor, fitted together like pieces of a puzzle.

The strongest works in the exhibition were two pedestals, shaped like occasional tables, covered in thousands of inch-long coiled-paper paisley shapes in exquisite hues of pink and purple

Julius Hatofsky: *Untitled*, 1968-89, oil on canvas, 10 by 33 feet; at Triton Museum of Art.



or gray and teal. As if taken from a Victorian sitting room, each pedestal holds curios: calico-patterned paper rabbits modeled after ceramic ornaments, figurative plaster forms or paisley coils under a glass dome (notably, the only nonpaper objects in the exhibition). Despite the somewhat vague relationships of one object to another in Martin's installation, this ambitious exhibition was, nonetheless, rewarding.

—Melissa Kuntz

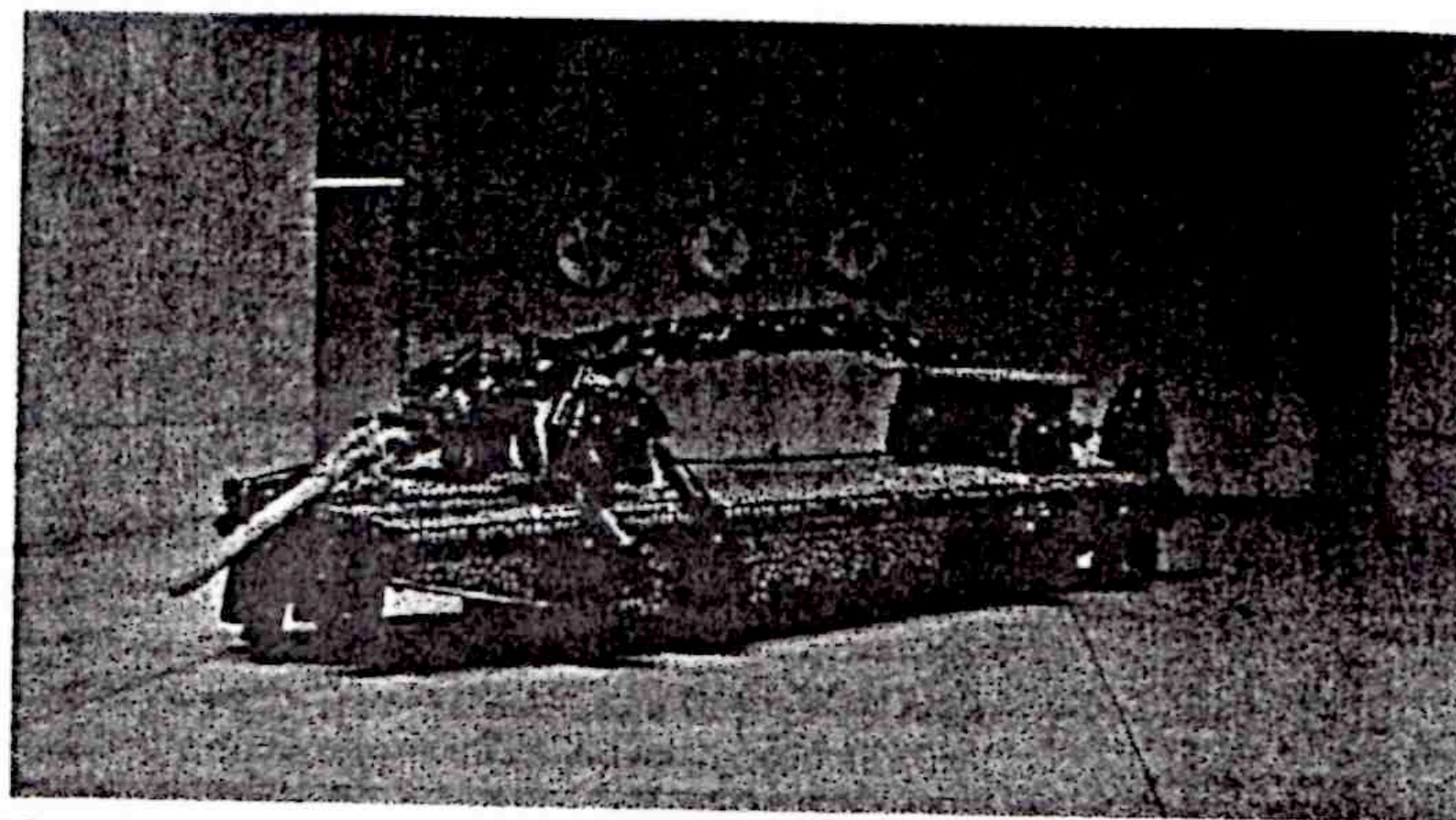
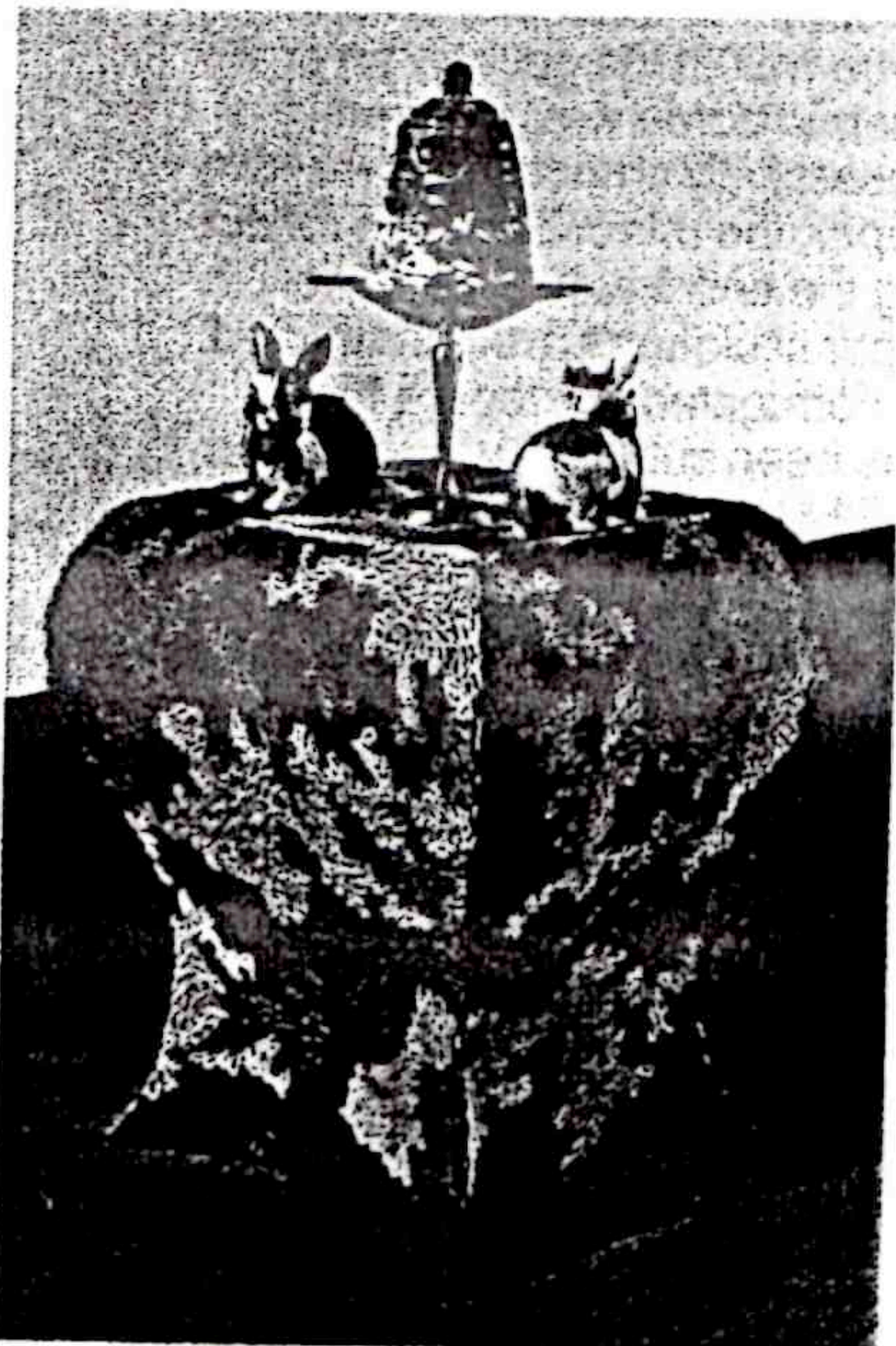
SAO PAULO

João Pedro Vale at Galeria Leme

Among the world's most populous cities, São Paulo is a 3,000-square-mile sprawl of high rises, residential neighborhoods and favelas. At a distance from the city's tony gallery precincts, today's destination gallery is Galeria Leme, an unpainted, blocklike, bare-concrete, skylit structure located in an anonymous neighborhood of ateliers, warehouses and light industry not far from the Museum of Contemporary Art at the University of São Paulo. Designed for dealer and collector Eduardo Leme by Paulo Mendes da Rocha, winner of the 2006 Pritzker Architecture Prize, this spectacular fort of a building establishes a new benchmark in a city already rich with designer galleries.

At the time of the city's excursion into the international world of art fairs [see "Front Page," this issue], and under the rubric

Paryse Martin: *Summer*, 2005, paper, cardboard, glass and silver plate, 3½ by 3½ by 6 feet; at Circa.



View of João Pedro Vale's installation *This Was a Great Party*, 2006, at Galeria Leme.

"Neobarroco," Leme presented celebrated Portuguese artist João Pedro Vale's 2006 installation *Foi bonita a festa, pá* (This Was a Great Party), titled for a song by Brazilian composer Chico Buarque celebrating Portugal's "Carnation revolution," which concluded the mother country's 40 years of dictatorship in the spring of 1974 (Brazil's own 21-year military regime ended in 1985). Driven by memory and fueled with nostalgic references to the joined history of Brazil and Portugal, Vale's multiply referential installation included a 17-foot-long "jangada," a handmade Brazilian fishing boat from the country's Northeast, resting on wooden launch rollers and surmounted by an arch of plastic carnations. Further festooned with empty beer bottles like marker buoys, the hull was studded with bottle caps, some labeled "Sagres," a popular brand of beer named for a town in the south of Portugal regarded as the cradle of navigation. (Vale has produced other works using boats, one of them recently displayed at the Pinacoteca do Estado de São Paulo, and a thematically related project, *Heroes of the Sea*, 2004, a lighthouse made of sand presented at ARCO '04.)

On the towering wall beyond this installation, Vale deployed a series of 20-inch-diameter serving plates made from discarded packages of Portuguese cigarettes of the brand name Suave, a reference to the ornamental Portuguese architecture popular during the country's military regime. In the manner of prison art, the spent packages were cut, folded and fitted in patterns resembling the blue-and-white designs of 18th-century Portuguese tile, and fitted with lines from Portuguese and Brazilian poetry. "Neobarroco" also included small sculptures and sequential photographs by Brazilian Camila Sposati, along with highly worked impasto paintings

of palatial interiors by German artist Friederike Feldmann.

—Edward Leffingwell

LONDON

Cecily Brown at Gagolian

In the erotic expressionist oil paintings that have made Cecily Brown one of contemporary art's most admired and controversial painters, she camouflages coupling couples in coats of cake-icing-thick paint. The treatment delays the viewer's voyeuristic gratification but heightens the sense that she is representing intimate acts. Unlike other artists who produce pornographic imagery wrapped in conceptual packaging, Brown's version of sex is devoid of sappy sentiment, prurience and misanthropy. Instead, her scrappy, vibrant paintings revel in sex as a feral, private, complex and joyful activity, and confirm that even in an art world (and mass culture) saturated with salacious imagery, it is still shocking to see sex depicted with maturity.

In her recent show, Brown presented 12 new oil-on-linen paintings, ranging in size from 43 by 65 inches to 103 by 83 inches, produced during the past year. Though there is still sex in the work, the content in most of these new canvases diverges from her signature subject matter and demonstrates Brown's ability to hide more than the customary thrills within the thick weave of her chunky brushstrokes. In her erotic paintings, her lavish, sensual technique is as arousing as her subject matter, but these more nuanced narratives prove her versatility in articulating energy, arousal and emotion with her brush.

Echoing Poe's accomplishments with language, Brown uses her technique to create genuine disquietude in *Tales from the Vault* (2005), a predominantly gray and

black morass of sinister shadows through which can be discerned a fireplace, a grandfather clock, a plush armchair and a small animal nervously peering out of its cage. While the painting's title recalls "The Cask of Amontillado" or other explicitly violent stories by Poe, the civilized setting evokes his poem "The Raven," a more frightening work because of its sense of mysterious dread. To the same effect, the overflowing rubble in *Maid's Day Off* (2005) creates a portrait of potential madness, as the mess seems to have moved beyond a spoiled occupant's overspill into the realm of real encroaching filth.

The subject matter and superficial mood of *The Picnic* (2006) is cheerier, with its light sunny palette of buttery yellows, lavenders and pinks. Yet there is, again, an unnerving undertone to the image, since here the mashed, ground and chewed-up quality of Brown's painting creates the sense that the idyllic scene was the origin of a memory best left un-recovered. A dead rabbit on a plate and the outline of a figure protectively cradling an infant provide further evidence that something unpleasant is afoot. In this painting, as in her other new work, Brown represents a radiant, frenetically active world that jealously clings to its secrets.

—Ana Finel Honigsm

OXFORD

"Out of Beirut" at Modern Art Oxford

In the mid-1980s on New York's art-friendly Lower East Side, there was a bar called Downtow Beirut, named in hip cynicism (or utter innocence) for a conflict that seemed terminally confusing and, above all, very far away. That the civil war in Lebanon had come to look miserably familiar even before the renewed fighting there was one lesson of "Out of Beirut," a chilling portrait, by roughly 20 artists, of a country still reeling from the earlier war's effects.

Ranging widely in focus and strength, the show opened pedagogically, with a timeline of Lebanon's recent history and a pair of recent works documenting man-on-the-street responses to the political fallout from the 2005 assassination of former prime minister Rafik Hariri. More personal and distinctive works followed, much of the best of it video. In Lamia Joreige's progressively gripping *Here and Perhaps Elsewhere* (2003), residents near the notorious Green Line are que-