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Roshi Newman's Circular Tropics

By Abby Luby



"Taino Guardian II"

It's the whoosh and pull that makes Roshi Newman's paintings so engaging. Her work is now being shown at The Art Gallery at Paramount East in Peekskill in a one-woman show appropriately entitled "Caribbean Mindscape." The oil paintings are tropical landscapes tumbling into fantasy-scapes redolent of fauvism, intriguingly stretched, curved, twisted, some defying gravity.

Imaginative, colorful, Newman departs from real landscapes keeping the tropics as the key element that invites human form, leaning arched buildings, swirled skies and brimming flora and fauna, all converging in a curious centrifuge.

In "Doorways of Puerto Rico" a deep swirl engulfs street, walls, buildings, leaning structural columns that rock off balance with a decidedly expressionistic bent.

Newman mostly uses a dry brush revealing the texture of the canvas – which, if the composition wasn't so compelling, seeing the grain of the canvas is almost like a barrier to "stepping inside" the imaginary landscape. The sweep of houses and architectural columns bend back and give way to vividly lined foliage in "Luna Sea," where the moon's pull is being observed by two female figures perched in groundless trees.

Subtle figures and figurines in Newman's work are focal but sometimes secondary to plants, trees and sky. In "Sunset for a Tree Nymph," large, almost crudely painted veined leaves dip into abstract expressionism and are part of a colliding landscape anchored by a single female figure. She is precariously seated on a

small branch, dangling her legs, with the angular rush of a dappled pink sunset veering off to one corner.

In "Look Up, Look Up, Ariba" small stick figures dot a circular landscape under a moon-lit sky. Hanging palm trees from the upper corner lead the eye to the deep, plunging, cyclonic abyss - a dark tempestuous whirlpool where the small figures are poised on the precipice, peering up at the distant yellow-white 'eye.'

Two faces in "Moonlight and Memories" meet our gaze, one a dark skinned male and the other a fair haired female, heads touching as they are blessed under an exotic, peach colored lily. This montaged portraiture has all the tropic essentials. Palm trees flange against a rippling blue-black night and the tension of the converging sky, faces, flowers and arched doorway is released by an empty street trailing into infinity.

An expanse of molten orange and curled clouds are reflected in a sea in "Taino Guardian #2," a work that is a more impressionistic than others. The heat of the sky boils over into the water with a sliver of green land jutting out, bisecting water and sky. In the diptych "Dance of the Dolphins," fins and tails briskly navigate choppy surf under the stolid watch of a lighthouse. Distant lands and a small beach are concaved around the close up dolphins, sharing their dance with deftly painted sea spray.

If Newman were a photographer, she would probably always tilt her frame, never shooting straight on, going for the slants and slopes and perhaps the complete up-side-downs. Also, if one follows the interpretative lead brought out by Newman's work the conjecture might be the combinative obsession with nature obliquely alluding to its dominant role, prevailing, if only on canvas, over man's invasive imprint.

"Caribbean Mindscapes" runs to June 30

The Art Gallery at Paramount East

1016 Brown Street, Peekskill, NY

914 734-4232

www.peekskillartgallery.com

Gallery Hours:

Monday-Friday: 10am - 3pm; Saturday and Sunday: 12 Noon to 5:00 pm