

Judith Schaechter: The Life Ecstatic

September 8 - October 15, 2016

In Judith Schaechter's new body of work, *The Life Ecstatic*, the artist explores transcendent joy. Is there the possibility of a moment of true synchronicity with one's surroundings and nature? Ecstasy can mean an emotional or religious frenzy or a trancelike state; one's subjective perception of time, space or self may change or completely disappear.

Schaechter deliberately chooses images that are ambiguous enough to handle multiple viewer interpretations. Interested in the paradoxes of image-making and the tension between illusion and truth, the artist examines the notion that we can never gain the proper perspective necessary to gauge our current "reality" without completely disassociating ourselves through time or space. We can look to representations, i.e. works of art, to temporarily resolve this dilemma.

For Schaechter it is clear that concept cannot be separated from process and material. Although glass is a material often associated with transparency and luminosity, the artist deals with these aspects of the material in a new way, laying layer upon layer of colored glass one over the next to create new colors, depth and texture. Much as a painter mixes pigments on a palette, Schaechter stretches the capabilities of her material beyond what is typically expected from it. As beautiful and provocative as her stained glass panels are at first sight, when one is seduced to linger over them we gain insight and depth of meaning cleverly housed in traditional beauty.

In Schaechter's *Three Tiered Cosmos*, a solitary figure seems marooned on a tropical island, an apt metaphor for a personal cosmos. Using the classic three-tiered model of the cosmos, the underworld, the heavens and the earthly world, the artist has created three surreal tableaux: a garden of earthly delights, a heaven filled with exotic birds in flight, and an ocean brimming with whimsical sea creatures. Schaechter fuels both micro and macrocosm with this work. Take for example Freud's theory justifying complex human behavior: the Id, Ego and Superego which work together (or at odds with each other) to produce a well-balanced psychological energy and mental health.



Anchoress

Flash and traditional stained glass, 2016
35x25x3 inches | 89x64x10 cm



Three Tiered Cosmos (detail)

Flash and traditional stained glass, 2016
12x15x4 inches | 30x38x10 cm

The spectacular work *Anchoress* examines the medieval religious sect known as Anchorites. These solitarians took a vow of "stability of place", and would literally allow themselves to be bricked into a church wall, living their natural life in a small cell with only a slot left in the wall through which food would be passed. Divided into two sections, the lower portion of the work depicts the artist's figure crouched in a defensive position, her eyes closed. The upper portion, a fantasy of Eden like gardens, could be viewed as the subject's own hallucination owing to her sensory deprivation.

Schaechter has left abundant room for the viewer's own analysis; much of the background, ornamentation, and mise en scene in this exhibition's works can be seen as a pictorial extension of the subject's mind, whether it be what she might be thinking, saying or dreaming

Judith Schaechter's works of art are included in the permanent collections of many of the most important museums worldwide including The Metropolitan Museum of Art, NYC, the Smithsonian Institution, Washington, D.C., and the Victoria and Albert Museum, London. She has been included in preeminent Biennales including the Venice Biennale and the Whitney Biennial. Among other prestigious awards, Ms. Schaechter is the recipient of a Guggenheim Fellowship, a USA Artists Fellowship, and two NEA grants.