
Judith Schaechter

'Extra Virgin'

Claire Oliver Fine Art
529 West 20th Street
Chelsea
Through March 15

One of the brighter spots in last year's Whitney Biennial was the stained-glass work of Judith Schaechter. Mounted on lightboxes, her idiosyncratic storytelling windows didn't win the hearts and minds of all critics, but they glowed nevertheless. This show of new work affords a welcome opportunity for undistracted study.

Much of the appeal of Ms. Schaechter's art is in the resonant meeting of the old and the new. Technically faithful to a centuries-old craft tradition, Ms. Schaechter's layered and puzzled-together glassworks have almost excessively rich colors and patterns, along with iconic compositions that evoke associations from medieval Christianity to the Pre-Raphaelite movement. Narrative imagery revolving around pretty big-eyed girls also has a quality recalling 19th-century fairy-tale illustration.

At the same time her Pop-Surrealist style calls to mind contemporaries like Jim Nutt and Lari Pittman. And visions of abandoned children, martyred nudes, hand grenades, snakes and dismembered puppets read as psychoanalytic allegories of a modern woman's teeming subconscious.

KEN JOHNSON
