

Art or Aesthetics?

APRIL KINGSLEY

Once in a while, when you walk into an art gallery, colored light seems to fill the room, and you almost feel dizzy. Once in a while old familiar subjects—horses, trees, a clapboard farmhouse, women, water, a porch—look so new and fresh you find yourself wondering why no one thought to paint them before. For me those once-in-a-whiles happen when **Stephen Pace** has an exhibition. A. M. Sachs is showing six of Pace's large canvases, one small one, plus a couple of watercolors until March 4th, and each work is a gem. Even in reproduction you can, I think, sense the vitality, the nervous energy, the brio, if you will, of Pace's style.

Forsaking all-over, black and white, calligraphic abstraction in the early Sixties, Pace unleashed his pictorial energies on figuration instead. He took the hint from his friend Milton Avery and began to paint from personal experience, only the familiar quotidian scene around him. Summers in Provincetown and Maine provided

most of his imagery (as they did for Avery) worked up from on-the-spot sketches to watercolors to large-size canvases. Avery's world is quiet and meditative, though, full of gentleness. Pace's is furious with tension. Criss-crossing, interlacing slashes of pure pigment, often straight from the tube, activate every square inch of Pace's

of Rothko floated before his canvases, as though they were vibrating in some placeless space between us and them:

Pace is an ambitious artist. He paints like an abstract expressionist, on a large scale, with brushstrokes that have untrammelled energy. These strokes are units of personal handwriting and, at the same time,



Stephen Pace's "Four Horses"

surfaces. One's eyes are given no quarter. The brilliant, usually high-keyed color is further set in pulsating motion by the interstices of white canvas that flicker between each speeding line. There is an effect like that in watercolors where the white spaces breathe air into the image.

Although one is always aware of Pace's paint as paint deliberately applied to the surface, something happens as a result of the all-over agitation and the white flashes of light that dematerializes the pigment. Pace's colored light almost seems to float like a transparent screen in front of the canvas. This is not the screen of Impressionism which might seem very material in comparison. It shares something with the dazzling colored daubs of Bonnard, but its closest affinity is to the rectangles

highly expressive contours of recognizable things. A few strokes and a cantering horse materializes before your eyes. His subjects are intimately observed, yet universal; they are of no importance and all-important. Eschewing the dark symbolism and mythic content of early Abstract Expressionism for the lighter side of life must have been exhilarating for Pace because his paintings still convey a sense of liberation and joy. It is as though he's spreading quicksilver, not paint, and it's breaking up into myriad charged particles and coalescing back into pictorial imagery while we watch. That's art!

I met Jack Tworikov in Paula Cooper's gallery on Saturday and he commented that he'd been to a number of galleries so far that day

Continued on next page

ation of
by Parks Bernet Inc.
241th Street
York 10028

one available on the premises
ation & Order Bids,
2/472-3583 or 3584

at 10 am

**FURNITURE
PLATE**

PAINTINGS

Christo,
Lorenzo del Pezzo,
Jane Frejlicher,
Rust Grooms,
Zohale Landfield,
John McCracken,
William Pettet,
Neil Stevenson,
Neil Williams

AND RUGS

large
cellars;
factories

Robert B. Mayer
Mayer;
New York;

from 10 to 5
day from 9 to 2

★
ter the date of sale ★
and now of 19th century
lith, toys, art nouveau &
the art, antiquities,
ve arts ★
stant Spring Auction ★
service ... it's PB84 ★
212/472-3577 ★

David Redden • John H. Remer, Jr.

PLATIGNUM ITALIC SET

Contains a fountain pen, five
Italic nibs, and instruction
manual all for only \$5.00...
At art material & pen shops,
college book stores...or send
check to Pentalic Corp., 132
West 22 St., N.Y., N.Y. 10011
Add 50 cents for handling.



ATTENTION ARTISTS!!

The New York Outdoor Art
Fair, Inc., May 15-16, 1976,
Museum Block West 78th
Street between Columbus and

the Museum
nce by
IRTON
TARLEAUX

and he'd seen "a lot of aesthetics but very little art." That set me to thinking about the many examples of jockeying for position I'd seen in the past few hours, and especially about Robert Rauschenberg's new constructions at the Castelli gallery.

They are all made of plain or striped diaphanous cloth attached to, extending out from, or leaning against the wall with the support of wooden sticks. A couple of the pieces have a quasi-jungle-shelter-look that reminded me of some earlier work by Rafael Ferrer and Alan Saret. There is a black piece with a litter, and a white one which caused me to remember Terry Fox's bandage-encased "stretchers" and there are a couple of billowing pieces very like Anne Healy's sheer cloth constructions. The only pieces that seemed Rauschenbergian were the two of the baggy "jock-strap" sort, especially the one holding gallon paint cans. They echo the old, funny, funky Rauschenberg wit. In sum, the show seemed aesthetically eclectic. Though each piece is relatively simple (in fact extremely reduced for Rauschenberg) one's eye tended to drift on to the next piece and the next. This drift is one's usual

experience of a crowded Rauschenberg collage-painting where he has deliberately democratized his images to achieve a non-hierarchical composition. All these new pieces are lovely, but no single piece seemed to generate enough aesthetic pressure to be meaningful as art.