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EXHIBITION REVIEW: Flora Natapoff

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FLORA

Massachusetts

Flora Natapoff: Recent Work  
Harcus Krakow Gallery (Boston)

Flora Natapoff makes small oil paintings and huge collages of transformed, visionary cities. Like Brueghel's Tower of Babel, her cities are ruins of mythical proportions. The collages, made by painting and drawing over countless overlapping levels of torn papers painted in deep and difficult colors, show a world in perpetual motion. The oil paintings show that world at rest, crystallized at the point of its most intense and piercing beauty. The city is stated in simplified, monumental forms, as a pearly orange and white light gleams through the moody, inevitable shapes of endless streets, open windows, and the sky moving down.

In the collages, the layers leave on the surface the shimmer of the work's passion, as in Cezanne's anxious finding of the edge. From a distance, the dense scribblings and jagged edges create powerful configurations of forms. Sequences of circles of light, as in Hiroshige's cities, and massive, classicizing divisions emerge from the anfractuositities of the surface to order the whole.

The Glasgow Station is divided into realms of light and darkness. Gauzy white windows between attenuated columns open onto an airy skylight; gloomy, brooding shapes glower below. Above the

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inchoate underworld, the arches propose a classical order, as in van Eyck's Ghent Altarpiece. Dark reflections magnify the light.

In Arch, an arch rises up out of a dissonant, fragmented city to tear a hole in the fabric of its immensity. Slashed by a blinding flash of white -- the thin strip of an unpainted edge of torn paper -- the blue of sky beyond the arch is an infinite, dreamy, azure consolation. -- Rebecca M.K. Nemser

Photo:

The Glasgow Station 1981

Collage 24" x 36"

Flora Natapoff

Photo credit: David Caras