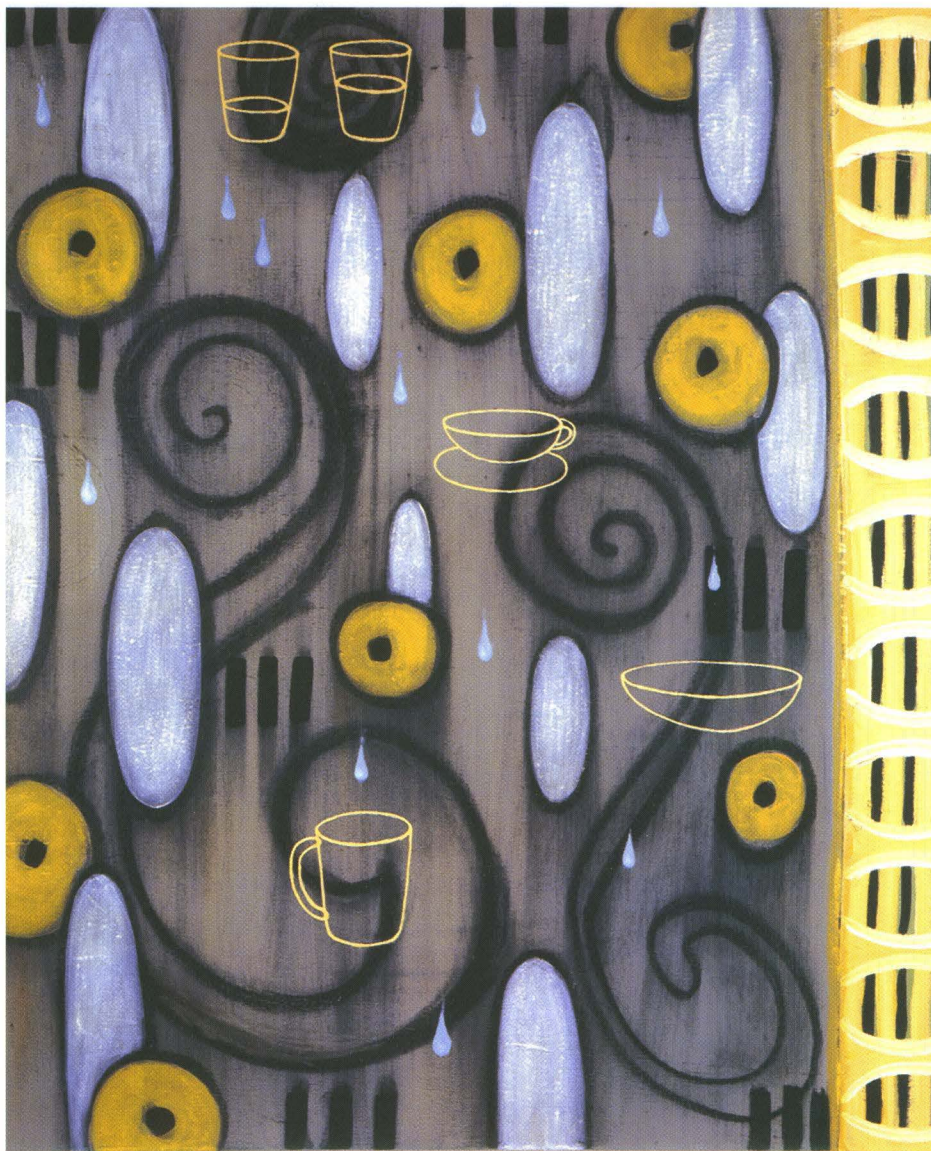


NAOMI SCHLINKE



WOMEN & THEIR WORK

OCTOBER 2 - NOVEMBER 8, 1997
AUSTIN, TEXAS

Choreographing the Canvas

In Naomi Schlinke's career as a painter, two currents flow simultaneously. Sometimes these streams coexist within a single canvas; at other times, a series of works appears to juxtapose competing forces. This duality informs all her art, suggestive of the universal yin/yang, or dark and light qualities that shape all our lives.

New York born, Dallas raised, Schlinke can best be understood as an artist with two careers—performing and visual. The visual art aspect is the second phase of a rare talent that manifested itself first in dance and choreography. Following her graduation from the University of Wisconsin in 1975 with a Master's Degree in Dance, she choreographed and danced professionally in her adopted city of San Francisco. Retiring in 1985 from the performance stage, Schlinke began exhibiting her work a year later, bringing to light a previously private interest in the visual arts. During a recent studio visit, Schlinke noted that the central difference between the two art forms is one of approach.

"Dance is executed as a collaborative project in public, while painting is done solo, and usually in seclusion." However, in her written artist statement, Schlinke continues to employ dance metaphors in describing her painting process. She writes, "My paintings are created through a process that emulates the dance of the mind...the structure of these clusters is a kind of choreography."

In late 1994, Schlinke and her architect husband, Britton Schlinke, relocated to Austin. Within a short period of time, this move generated several new bodies of work. Perhaps the most dramatic change was one of scale, beginning with her 1995 series entitled *Little Heroes*, composed of a grid of nine paintings each measuring 8" x 6". Observing that "working small is a risky thing to do," Schlinke also produced a

related body of work, the subsequent *Short Stories*.

Internalized and intensely private, both series incorporate fragments of the environment, offering "tangential references to a narrative through association" rather than the overt story telling that characterizes much representational painting. Appearing to be static, almost frozen in time, the small canvases within the larger paintings ultimately become objects of devotion. Iconic in aspect, they represent the final distillation of a theme the artist began nearly ten years ago with her creation of a pen and ink deck of Tarot-like "cards."



Perfect Lovers 1907 48" x 36" acrylic on canvas
collection of the artist

With her interest in the hermetic archetypes of the Tarot (Schlinke keeps several lavishly illustrated decks in her studio), the painter mines deep into the Jungian subconscious. In particular, *Little Heroes* mimics the Tarot card spread with its regulated and ordered tiers of three paintings each. Significantly, Schlinke has preserved a gap between and among these small paintings, which has been "left so you can weave them together." For Schlinke, the arrangement of these paintings is never up to chance. She states implicitly that "these works are abstracted versions of the Tarot." Each section, whether it bears a found object or one of the artist's signature stamps, has a

meaning based largely on its arrangement within the larger grid as well as its proximity to the other small paintings. Schlinke's collectors have often asked "Can we rearrange the paintings in *Little Heroes*?" only to discover that it is difficult to deviate from the artist's original placement of the small painted rectangles.

Little Heroes VII exemplifies the mysterious alchemy Schlinke practices with her painted "deck." Balancing talismans from nature with those of human manufacture, the painter recreates a mysterious microcosm that revolves around the central panel. This nexus painting, executed in a faded creamy yellow, bears a charred fragment placed over a palimpsest of newsprint. Neighboring canvases in the second and third tier suggest the surrealists' automatic writing as well as Chinese brush painting. "I love the idea of converting objects into something else," Schlinke emphasizes. "I am fascinated with how a ceremonial object becomes invested with meaning."

As in *Little Heroes*, the subsequent *Short Stories* series highlights Schlinke's complex and mysterious amalgam of archetypal symbols, found objects, and textured canvas surfaces. However, with *Short Stories*, the artist fuses seven variously sized canvases into a single aggregate, 28" x 20." The pervading feeling becomes more one of unity, and less of individual interactions. Schlinke refers to this group as reflecting her experiences of "living in Victorian San Francisco." Indeed, this series is nostalgic in tone, evoking a faded grandeur. The viewer senses layers of memory and time's march. Other artists often approach this subject, but Schlinke's contributions appear both less overt and ultimately more powerful. She conveys her theme of loss and decay through shape, color, line, and texture, rather than the more common tool of the collage. Thus, *Short Stories* are more direct and original. They are freed from the predictable assemblage of faded photos or aged artifacts to become poetic in the tradition of Thomas Wolfe. Ultimately,

these canvases reflect the universal mysteries of time, night, and death.

From the arcane, internalized, and private perspective of *Little Heroes* and *Short Stories*, Schlinke has changed tempo within the last twelve months. Her latest canvases, beginning in 1996 and continuing to the fall of 1997, evidence a dramatic shift in tone. Metaphorically, the current works can be seen as the yang component to her previous yin principled art. Although still incorporating a similar vocabulary of icons and Jungian symbols (such as the pervading vessel forms that float over the surface of *Mamma*), Schlinke's present crop of paintings evidences a new self confidence and aggressive handling of her acrylic media. Most significantly, the larger canvases now burst with humor and joy.

Far from the devotional and iconic 6" x 8" paintings of *Little Heroes*, the artist now paints with canvases as large as 54" x 42" (*Doin' the Hale-Bopp*). In addition to the increased scale, Schlinke also abandons her tight control in such works as *Perfect Lovers*, where the central amoeba forms are actually sketched in with charcoal, drawn aggressively and intuitively while the artist has her eyes closed. Found objects and text still make an appearance, but their role is considerably diminished in terms of the canvas' overall schema. In newer works such as *Perfect Lovers*, Schlinke shatters the central stylization that has shaped her work for so long. The energy of *Perfect Lovers* recalls the expressive freedom of a late deKooning. Bridge works towards this new phase in Schlinke's career can be seen in *Antique Romance* and *Native Tongue*, both of which signal a loosening up of Schlinke's paint handling as well as a newly evidenced sense of humor.

The characteristic palette of the artist is also evolving. Her signature burnt umber/golden-orange hue contrasted with olive green, that characterized her pre-1997 paintings, is now radicalized by the addition of a vibrant, brash red.

The lushly painted cherry reds give such canvases as *Doin' the Hale-Bopp*, *iff/then*, *Cameo*, and *Chemistry* their unmistakable power. Schlinke discusses her take on color prior to 1997, "I decided at a certain point to pull away from saturated color. I didn't want my paintings to race at people since color is often a wild horse."

While her earlier work had featured the cool "rejected green from the 1950s" balanced with a hotter, golden-orange overlaid with purple, black, and other earth tonalities, *Doin' the Hale-Bopp*, *Chemistry*, *Cameo*, and *iff/then*, all from 1997, feature Schlinke's introduction of this new found, dynamic red. All but one of these pieces also manifest a shift in attitude from the reverent to the playful. Schlinke introduces swirling flying saucer-like forms in *Chemistry* and *Doin' the Hale-Bopp*, as well as tongue in cheek references to such art world greats as Magritte's pipe and Guston's car in *iff/then*.

While *Cameo* manifests Schlinke's brighter palette, it lacks the humor of the aforementioned, and harks back to the quiet introspection of Schlinke's previous works such as *Short Stories*. Its inclusion of a Victorian balustrade, utilized as a cornice for the canvas, underscores Schlinke's interest in the remnants of America's 19th century domestic architecture, while *Mamma* continues to reference the artist's focus on Jungian archetypes with its floating vessel imagery overlaid upon a velvety grey background.

With this current exhibition, we are able to view and understand Schlinke at a pivotal stage in her development. Her careful and evocative choreography of often bi-polar opposites informs her work and invests these paintings with their individuality and power. "I give you a trellis...the bones," the painter says, "for you to make the meaning."

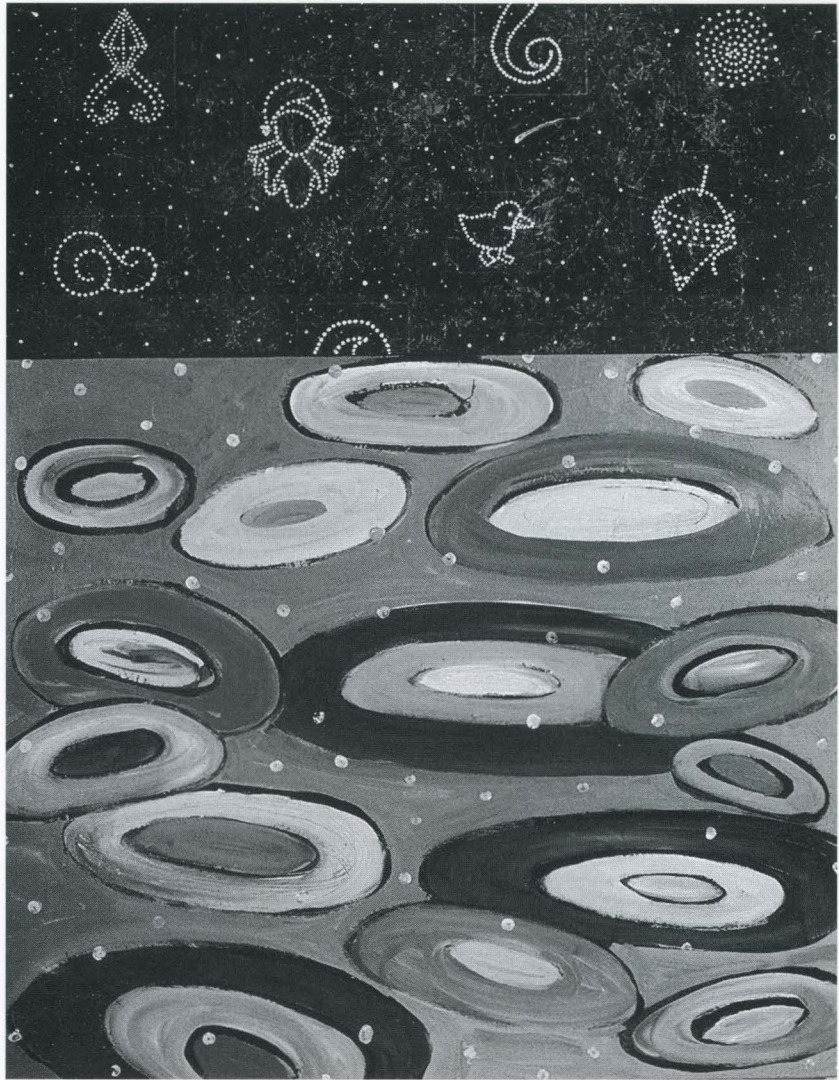
Catherine D. Anspou
September, 1997

NAOMI SCHLINKE

1949 Born in New York, New York
Raised in Dallas, Texas

EXHIBITIONS

- 1997 Solo Show / Women & Their Work /
Austin, Texas
Group Show / Texas A&M
University / *College Station, Texas*
- 1996 Solo Show / Braunstein-Quay
Gallery / *San Francisco, California*
Group Show / Women & Their Work /
Curator: Annette Carozzi,
Huntington Art Gallery /
Austin, Texas
Summer Group Show / Robert
McClain & Company/ *Houston, Texas*
Bucking the Texan Myth / *Austin*
Museum of Art / Curators: Daniel
Stetson, Jill Oleson / *Austin, Texas*
- 1995 500X Gallery / *Dallas, Texas* /
Curator: Don Bacigalupi, San Antonio
Museum of Art
The Red Hot Show / Texas Fine
Arts Association / *Austin, Texas*
- 1993 National Small Painting Exhibition,
Boise State University, *Idaho*
- 1992 Group Show / One Market Plaza /
San Francisco, California
Untitled Gallery /
San Francisco, California
Jurors: Bill Berkson, Katie Crum,
P. Morsberger, Steven Oliver
- 1991 Braunstein-Quay Gallery / Access
Program / *San Francisco, California*
Group Show / SOMAR Gallery / *San*
Francisco / Juror: Phillip Linhares,
Curator Oakland Museum
- 1990 Solo Show / Pricilla Hexter Curator,
Stanford Art Space /
Stanford University, California
Group Show/ Spectrum Gallery /
Curator: Jeff Nathanson /
San Francisco, California
- 1987 Group Show / Gallery Sanchez,
San Francisco, California /
Jurors: Ruth Asawa & Beth Van Hoesen

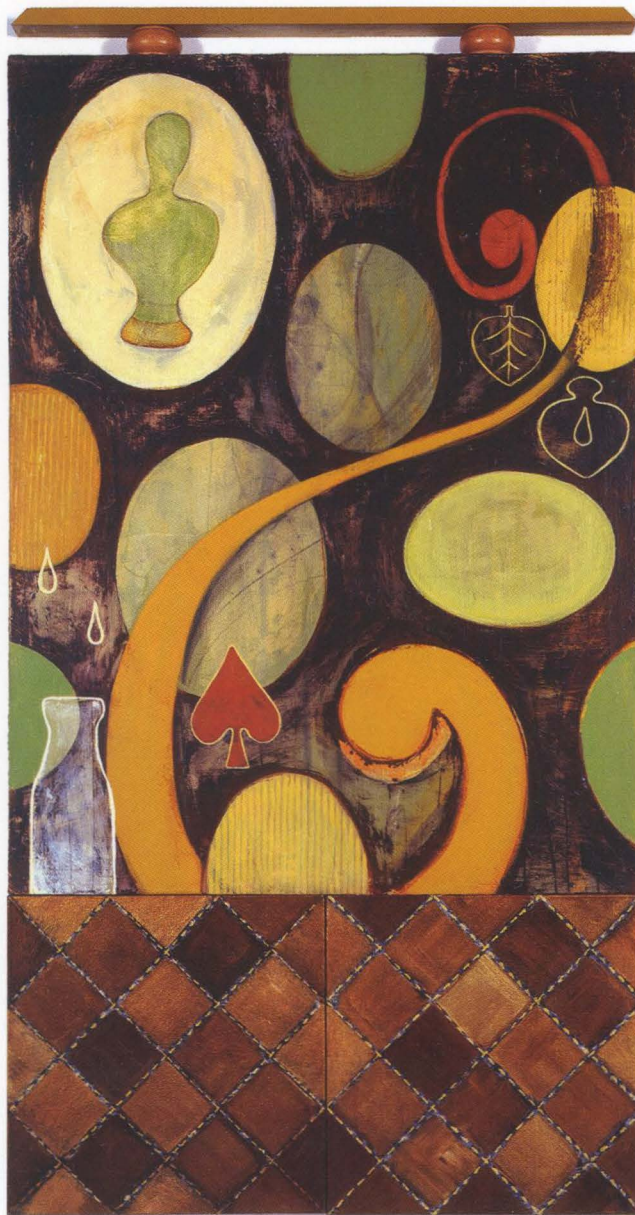


Doin' the Hale-Bopp 1997 54" x 42" acrylic on canvas
courtesy of the artist

- 1986 Group Show/ Riverside Art
Museum, California /
Juror: Suzanne Muchnic,
Los Angeles Times
Group Show/ Colorbox Gallery /
San Francisco, California
- 1975 Master of Arts: Dance,
University of Wisconsin, *Madison*
- 1974 Bachelor of Arts: Dance,
University of Wisconsin, *Madison*

OTHER PROFESSIONAL EXPERIENCE

- 1982-1985 Joe Goode Performance Group,
San Francisco, California
- 1980-1985 Margaret Jenkins Dance Company,
San Francisco, California
- 1977-1980 Independent choreographer
and dance teacher,
San Francisco, California



This Panel: Cameo 1997 46" x 24" acrylic on canvas courtesy Braunstein/Quay Gallery

Cover Panel: Manna 1997 44" x 36" acrylic on canvas courtesy Braunstein/Quay Gallery

Back Panel: Little Heroes VII 1995 8" x 6" each acrylic on canvas courtesy Braunstein/Quay Gallery



W O M E N & T H E I R W O R K

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Now celebrating its 19th anniversary, Women & Their Work presents over 50 events a year in visual art, dance, theater, music, literature, and film. The gallery features on-going exhibitions of Texas women artists and brings artists of national stature to Texas audiences. Since its founding, Women & Their Work has presented 1473 artists in 166 visual art exhibitions, 80 music, dance, and theater events, 19 literary readings, 11 film festivals, and 114 workshops, in programming that reflects the ethnic and cultural diversity of this region. Nationally recognized, Women & Their Work has been featured in Art in America, ArtForum and National Public Radio and was the first organization in Texas to receive a grant in visual art from the National Endowment for the Arts.

Women & Their Work reaches over 5,000 school children and teachers each year through gallery tours, gallery talks with exhibiting artists, participatory workshops, in-school performances, dance master classes, and teacher workshops.



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