

DEREK ELLER GALLERY

For Immediate Release:

Alyson Shotz

Paradise

April 22 - May 24, 2003

Opening Reception: Thursday, April 24, 6-8 pm

The interface between nature and technology resonates throughout the work of Alyson Shotz as does the confluence between media such as video, sculpture, photography, painting, and drawing. Her subject matter incorporates recurrent natural and synthetic forms that imply both the bucolic and futuristic. In her recent work, Shotz returns to her roots as a painter to create familiar yet otherworldly realms. Recognizable motifs such as mushrooms, lotuses and lily pads are interspersed with ambiguous and alien objects. In what Shotz refers to as 'models of imperfect universes', these odd cosmos consist of central plant-like figures that appear in almost symmetrical patterns split along horizontal and/or bilateral axes. Much like religious painting, where the deity is the central form, the compositions emanate from an essential mass like an expanding universe. The principal shapes are comprised of aggregates of smaller cell-like components often echoed elsewhere in the work. Although the kaleidoscopic images are comprised of recurrent forms, they are neither exactly mirrored nor easily categorized. Much like nature, Shotz' work is both systematic and unpredictable.

The titles include references to magnification and refraction indicating relationships to molecular structure and organic repetition. The compositions themselves have the feel of subatomic landscapes viewed through a microscope. No consistent perspective exists, nor spatial relationships clearly defined. Shotz incorporates digitally manipulated photographs of bonsai trees, cacti and succulents with her painted shapes against a neutral, spatially-ambiguous ground. The result is that the volumetric forms explode out of a type of antimatter. The play between forms and space is further accentuated by the artist's technique of applying clear resin between layers of oil paint. Usually five or six coats are applied in a work, creating depth through transparency, translucence, and shadow.

This emphasis on surface and various levels of penetration are central to Shotz's work. In the sculpture shown here entitled *Still Life in Frozen Time* (2002), bamboo-like stalks sprout from a pond-shaped mirror, which signifies both the surface of the water as well as the pool below. This type of surface/depth motif is recurrent in Shotz's painting and sculpture. The lily pads and lotuses that appear throughout this body of work are significant in that these plants accentuate the surface of water and imply a sustentative depth below. The nutritive properties of nature are intrinsic to this group of works evidenced through the evocative titles, and the green and pink palette, which suggests flora and fauna. Works such as *Double Oasis* (2003) refer to the existence of plenty in the barren through an abundance of fleshy forms; and *Western Paradise* (2003) depicts ample greenery in a burgeoning utopia. This symbiotic relationship works both ways as nature grows but also has to feed. The uneasy paradigm is manifest through the

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coexistence of appealing and vaguely grotesque forms alluding to healthy and gluttonous appetites.

These works offer a window into a universe that is familiar yet not wholly recognizable. Shotz integrates aspects of our world with those of her own devising to create environments that are reverent, humorous, beautiful, and exotic. Shotz's interest in spheres of all kinds: social, natural, and even supernatural is paramount here. Much like her earlier videos that incorporate engagements with the natural world in new and mysterious ways, these works reflect a continuous examination of evolutionary possibilities and absurdities.

-Tracy L. Adler, Curator, Hunter College Art Galleries

Derek Eller Gallery is located at 526 West 25th Street, 2nd floor. Hours are Tuesday - Saturday from 11am - 6pm. For further information or visuals, please contact the gallery at 212.206.6411 or visit www.derekeller.com.