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NY CULTURE

Visceral Magic, Musical Missteps

London Landscapes, Music-Inspired Works and Jell-O like Sculptures

By PETER PLAGENS

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Leon Kossoff's 'King's Cross Stormy Day no. 2' (2004). *Mitchell-Innes & Nash*

Leon Kossoff: London Landscapes

Mitchell-Innes & Nash

534 W. 26th St., (212) 744-7400

Through Dec. 21

When an 87-year-old artist who has been painting his beloved home city for more than 60 years is enjoying a small, traveling, museum-quality survey of his work, a review of it is bound to be more an "appreciation" than a critique. With Leon Kossoff, who has long labored in the shadows of his flashier fellow London artists Francis Bacon (born in Ireland, but who worked mostly in England) and Lucien Freud (born in Berlin), any review easily, and justly, merges with a paean to his blunt and vigorous painting style.

Mr. Kossoff's London is darkly depicted in a painting such as "View of Hackney With Dark Day"

(1974). This is the postwar city that many of us think of—Carnaby Street in the late 1960s excepted—as a gritty, industrial, unglamorous and pained metropolis. Mr. Kossoff paints clusters of drab buildings with paint that's as thick and stringy as fondue, and draws people with bold, harsh, but psychologically sympathetic strokes of charcoal and pastel. Although his most recent work, whose subject is his childhood neighborhood of Arnold Circus, is brighter and cheerier (airy yellow-greens and pleasantly rusty reds, along with a thinner, breezier line) the dominant tone of this show leans toward the dark.

For all the roughness, there's a good deal of painterly deftness in Mr. Kossoff's pictures that should bring quiet joy to painting fans. He has, for instance, a subtle skill of embedding a realistic detail—the expression on a pedestrian's face, or the angle of a passerby's body in an Underground station—in a viscous semiabstraction. Mr. Kossoff has been working this visceral magic for a very long time; here's hoping a lot more is still to come.

Sandra Cinto: Piece of Silence

Tanya Bonakdar

521 W. 21st St., (212) 414-4144

Through Dec. 21



Sandra Cinto's 'One Day, After the Rain' (2012). *Tanya Bonakdar Gallery, New York*

There's a kind of art in which each ingredient is so calculatedly beautiful in itself that the whole turns out to be not extra beautiful, but a little sweetly off-putting. Sandra Cinto's ground-floor installation (actually just a device for displaying separate works) and her large, multipaneled painting that turns a corner upstairs offer perfect examples of this.

The installation consists of the thin horizontal lines of a music score (one of which also indicates the

invading water level in the gallery during Hurricane Sandy) coursing around the walls, and several stringless white musical instruments ("Violin 1," "Cello 2," etc., all from 2013) embedded sideways here and there, and at the end (if you proceed counterclockwise) the protruding bronze "Flute" (2013). Gorgeous enough right there, but Ms. Cinto (b. 1968) augments the string instruments with delicate, Japanese-print-like line drawings of rocks and waves configured in careful S-curves.

Her 45-foot painting upstairs continues the wave motif, drawn in white on panels that flow from blue to black (left to right, as a storm mounts). It's similarly monumentally pretty.

The problems lie not so much with Ms. Cinto's talent and ambition, which are considerable, but with the inherent difficulty in combining, in the manner of Ann Hamilton or James Turrell, the gigantic and the intimate without having one cancel out the other. The slightest irregularity in the details—for instance, little wiggles in the drawings on a violin—and it becomes cartoonish. Once such tiny missteps interrupt the mood of hushed stoppages of time in the music, it's hard to get it back.

Roni Horn: "Everything was sleeping as if the universe were a mistake"

Hauser & Wirth

511 W. 18th St., (212) 790-3900

Through Jan. 11

One might easily roll one's eyes at Roni Horn's latest, lugubriously titled exhibition. The big cast-glass footstool forms (10 to a room in two capacious galleries), with their gradations of pale blue-violet and fruity yellow-greens, are foolproof delicious.

Her dauntingly large—7 and 8 feet on a side—and grindingly austere, diagrammatic drawings are enigmatic with a capital "E." One of the drawings, nominally "Untitled" (2013), contends for the world's longest subtitle with its 88-word passage from the Shirley Jackson novel "We Have Always Lived in the Castle." All right, one thinks, so she reads.

For all her literary mannerisms, however, Ms. Horn (b. 1955) is an adroitly profound artist. She combines an astute, even delicate, visual sensibility (for example, the inviting Jell-O-like clear tops of the glass sculptures set against the rough sides which bear an imprint of the casting molds) with a conceptual density (a fugue of three- and four-letter words hemmed in by intriguing X-Acto knife slices in the drawings).

For anybody who thinks that 50 years down the road Minimalism has nothing more to offer, or that Conceptual art is inevitably as dry as dust, Ms. Horn's show is a lovely refutation.

—Mr. Plagens is an artist and writer in New York.

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