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Yvonne Jacquette, Sylvia Mangold, Susan Shatter, John Moore
FISCHBACH GALLERY

The four artists at Fischbach are concerned with very humanistic notions, and they are making straight, serious, and ungimmicked approaches to their various subjects. Yvonne Jacquette's painting approach is probably the most abstract of the four. Her upwardly angled views into the underbellies of movie marquees and the blue sky beyond have a compositional stringency that is reminiscent of a classic Mondrian painting. The marquee whether unlighted or partially lit at dusk, reads as a large flat squarish form filling the upper left. It is balanced by incident at the right and bottom of the field and, thus, the picture plane's flatness is guaranteed. It is traditional, but effective. Her color is bright and she manages to catch the fleeting changes of daylight to dusk light with poignant subtlety.

Though almost conceptual in its relationship to works like Victor Burgin's floor photograph series, Sylvia Mangold's interiors have a quality that is even closer to German romantic painting. Her peopleless, sunlit rooms have a compelling sense of emptiness, like that feeling present in a Shaker house, and the same kind of emphasis on clean, wood-grained floors. The light is what conveys these impressions; her compositions are starkly abstract, like those of Jacquette.

Susan Shatter paints elongated horizontal renditions of color-postcard-type, wide-angle, photographic images. The view uptown from the Empire State Building seemed less effective than her more austere Boston river scene. At optimal viewing distance this painting began to look like a Marquet harbor scene. But her gouache on paper technique renders what should have the limpid clarity of a watercolor much too opaque.

John Moore is the most academically oriented artist of the group. His interiors and still lifes are tours de force of traditional art school painting. They are also encyclopedias of art historical iconography. What is most interesting about them, especially Oak Lane, is that he has managed to blend the figure so effectively into its symmetrical, stagelike setting that a vile banality like a yellow-cushioned chrome kitchen chair takes on the presence of a religious icon. Given the fact of the generally unsurpassed power of a human face to overwhelm any other object in a painting to gain your attention, this is quite a feat. This painting gives a clue to a problem presented by new Realistic painting as a whole. That problem is that it is extremely difficult to see the works, in spite of, or possibly because of, their "sharp focus." One's eye has seen it all before and so it passes on. The banality of most of the imagery is only part of the reason for this effect. Philip Pearlstein is a master of the movement because he uses shocking figure truncations and distortions to catch your glance and draw you into the picture. Without such a device—or a ghastly yellow chair—no element dominates most new Realist painting sufficiently to keep our eye from traveling on in search of incident elsewhere.

One of the salient qualities of post-Minimal sculpture is its emphasis on truth to materials. Recent sculpture has introduced a bewildering variety of new media to its formal vocabulary. It has concurrently stressed the naturalness of these materials, letting them hang, lean, scatter, decay, spill or do whatever else comes characteristically to them. Robert Morris and Claes Oldenburg are probably the two artists most responsible for the new freedom and expressivity of

current sculpture. Superman Morris, able to range over the whole realm of modern sculpture and pick his medium of the moment, has freed sculpture from any definite attachment to a given mode of expression. Instead, there is only the artist's sensibility, its strength, and its longevity to bind his body of work together into a cohesive whole. Oldenburg, much more of an old-fashioned sensualist in his approach, has freed sculpture from enslavement to traditionally hard materials—stone, wood, and metal—and opened up a chasm of endless, soft-medium possibilities for young sculptors (into which many, unfortunately, have fallen).

—April Kingsley