

In The GALLERY

By Joan Baum

"Six East End Artists." Spanierman Gallery at East Hampton, 68 Newtown Lane.

Arlene Bujese, who had an eponymous gallery for many years on Newtown Lane, long before Spanierman came on the scene, surprised East Hampton Town last year when she announced she was closing shop to pursue the consultant's life. It is therefore a pleasure to welcome her back as the curator of Spanierman's impressive opening show, "Six East End Artists."

Those familiar with Ms. Bujese's roster will recognize some of the abstract artists featured here, but the main point to note is that she and Helen Spanierman, with her son Gavin Spanierman, an advocate of contemporary art, have mounted a knock-out exhibition of each artist's most recent work that is thoughtfully organized and aesthetically gratifying. And, as always at Spanierman, don't forget the lower level, where some of the featured artists are on display in different media.

The exhibition seems designed to encourage artist recognition by way of an arrangement that avoids strict separate groupings. With Josh Dayton, the connection between sculpture and mixed media paintings and monoprints may be a bit of a stretch, but once you study Dayton's intricate intersecting of curved and angled paper with acrylic, you can better appreciate similar shifts of line and texture in the ceramics.

Of course, you can start the comparison with the sculpture, each piece a complex mass of folded, pressed, painted and hollowed-out forms that sit on carved cylindrical bases, and that from every angle reveal a startlingly different design. As for Stephanie Brody-Lederman, David Geiser, Priscilla Heine and Carol Hunt, there is no mistaking their distinctiveness, though three of the four Alexander Russos downstairs, molten, smear-effect acrylics, show how much he evolved into a painter of more symbolic and intriguing abstracts of the kind seen upstairs, particularly in the complex green, blue and purple cellular permutation, *Biogenesis*.

Ms. Bujese seems to have selected a kind of artist's sampler for the front areas, then grouped together several pieces of each artist's work to emphasize variations in color, composition and technique that nonetheless confirm signature style. Brody-Lederman's witty use of folk-art type lettering (as though painted on cracked wood) clearly identifies her subject matter and style, whatever the mix of oil, acrylic, encaustic and graphite.

Sardonic or teasing linear word scrawls (e.g., *Dancing With Truffaut*), sometimes appearing as vertical designs, contrast with colored ovals that spotlight onto olive and black space, darkening the overall mood and narrative message. Like a palimpsest, these pieces emit faint traces of textured underpainting, as in *Night, Lake, River, Deep*, an acrylic and graphite on paper that also features Brody-Lederman trees and Japanese lanterns (and note that mysterious and just right slip of pink peeking through).

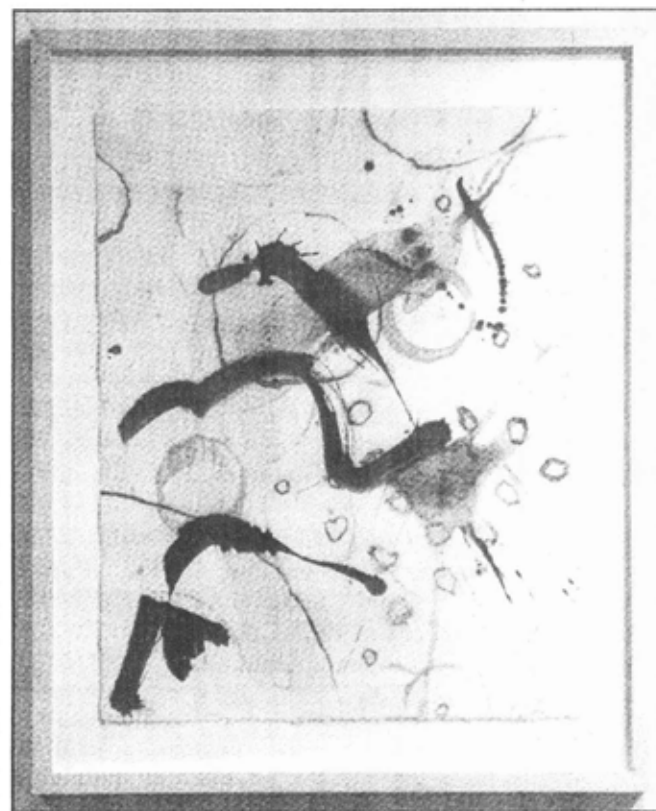
It was a nice move to have this painting share a front-room wall with Priscilla Heine's bold green and blue abstract oil on linen, *Land Me*. Though restricted in color, it unmistakably suggests Heine's other more colorful and larger canvases, joyously "lit from within," as Helen Spa-

nierman instinctively remarks.

Represented mainly by acrylics on canvas and pastels on paper, Carol Hunt provides festive evidence of the constancy of her composing technique, regardless of medium. Confetti strips swirl in *Floating in the Wind*, for example, some gouged out of yellow pigment. These combine with combed and large-swash brushwork to create delightful, harmonious compositions of both bold and subtle hues that suggest Asian influence. The pastels (and the etchings, downstairs) seem even more playful, with their contrasts of black swirl strokes and floating thin-line quadrilateral flecks, suspended in weightless, Miro-like space.

Last but hardly least – in fact, the most striking pieces in the show – are five oil, varnish, pigment, leaf and mixed media-on-board David Geisers – all executed in varying degrees of gold, tar-black, umber, sienna and lava-like erupted creamy white applied to carton forms and canvas. These dazzling earth-toned, circle-centered compositions of coagulated mass, drips, bubbled-up free forms and warm-color glaze take on special significance when understood as images inspired by and referencing eroded limestone sinkholes or partially collapsed Yucatan caves called *cenotes*.

Gold Cenote majestically commands attention through Spanierman's front



Lunar Variations by Carol Hunt (2006).

window, but *Fire Cenote* with its thick slash of red and enigmatic suggestion of a human profile and body ligaments may more readily suggest the awesome splendor of Mayan rituals said to have inspired Geiser. All around, a fine show that will remain on view through May 28.

Openings to note: Tulla Booth in Sag Harbor with a new photography exhibit; Nuala Clarke's Breakup Paintings at Boltax on Shelter Island; Tschachbasov's Intaglio Prints and Works on Paper at Bravura in Southampton. And . . . Longhouse is open, with Hamon ceramics, Dale Chihuly glass works and Dennis Oppenheim's Entrance to a Garden.