



Joe Sweeney, *Above the Susquehanna #4*, 2011, Oil on linen, 30 x 40 inches

Hold the Hearts and Flowers

by Andrew Mangravite

for **The Broad Street Review**

This new exhibition, consisting of 28 oils, pastels, prints, charcoals and bronzes, asks us to reconsider what it means in 2012 to be a "Romantic"

As with any anthology, you'll find plump, juicy berries here, along with a few hard nuts. Thus Joe Sweeney's two views of the Susquehanna easily recall the grand vistas of the Hudson River School of American artists, as does Paul DuSold's *Laurel Hill*. And if you look at DuSold's *Muse and Poet* or *Poet and Nymph*, you'll say, "This is easy: He's doing modern variations on good old 19th-century French Academic Art."

But then what do you say to the Edgar Jerins charcoals, *Prael and Prey in Rhinebeck* and *Sarah and Brittany in Lawrence, Kansas*? What makes these two large-sized black-and-white images "Romantic"? Technique? It's hyperrealism. Subject matter? It's a hunter with a carcass and two young girls with a cat.

Now it's a bit more difficult, yes? No nymphs or poets here. Do the hunter and his kill and the two young girls serve as muses for the artist? Maybe. And maybe what we're talking about here is less subject matter than approach to the subject matter.

Empty Rooms

Barbara Dixon Drewa takes objects like lace fans and iconic artworks like Manet's boy fifer and combines them into collages with titles like *Defining Moment* and *Power Failure* - a case of a romantic critiquing Romanticism.

Photographer Jeffrey Stockbridge's contributes three color photographs of the interiors of Philadelphia's abandoned Divine Lorraine Hotel, taken in 2007. Like Andrew Wyeth, who was also known to get a certain amount of mileage out of empty rooms, Stockbridge seems to recognize that what's absent can be as important as what's present - the space itself becomes the subject of the piece.

Julia Stratton's three bronzes, on the other hand, reduce the entire world to a stage. *The March*, in which a file of tiny bronze soldiers wind their way through an immense forest looming over them, is a magical work. It's her own version of the movie director Walter Hill's *Southern Comfort* - a film not without its own Romantic Impulse.

Tough to Classify

The Show's remaining pieces require a bit more effort to be reconciled with a textbook concept of Romanticism. Christine Lafuente's three small marine scenes, lovely as they are, fall more into the category of modern-day Impressionism than Romanticism. And Tamara Pauline Cedre's two photographic studies of *David* (not Michelangelo's statue) strike me as more journalistic than Romantic.

The toughest nuts are the five oils and gouaches by Susan Lichtman, which defy any easy categorization. If Lichtman feels these works are romantic in inspiration, then I suppose they are. *Figures Outside the Studio Door*, with the sense of lives only half-glimpsed and partially digested, is certainly a visually intriguing piece.

In any case, this is an enjoyable anthology-type show. I look forward to Part II.

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Gallery Hours: Tuesday - Saturday, 10 - 5