

GROUP SHOW (Art Galaxy): Under the rubric of *Arabia Felix*, meaning happy Arabia, this small and altogether agreeable exhibition was quite like an oasis in the desert. Curated by the art critic William Zimmer, the show brought together a disparate sampling of work loosely unified in the shared inspiration of Moroccan fantasies. At least that was the original idea. The theme was stretched a bit, but, as Zimmer pointed out in his introduction to the show, "Morocco grew into a chain of places, or no place outside of the artist's imagination." Still, more often than not, it was the allure of far-off lands that tempted these young artists.

Two particularly noteworthy examples were works by John Schultz and Sydney McElhenney. It is a red-robed Salome that enters the turbulent space of Schultz's painting. Amidst the tumbling leaves and acorns that fill the background, there appears the head of St. John the Baptist—the much cherished prize sought by the persuasive Salome. Schultz's biblical subject, his naively rendered imagery, bold colors and broad application of paint all reveal the fruitful influence of new-wave Italians such as Enzo Cucchi.

It is St. John, before his ill-fated meeting with Salome, who is the primary subject of McElhenney's large canvas. The saint's attributes, the sinuous path of a river and waving palm frond, isolated in a dense, aquatic ground of blue/green, set the stage for a baptism. A patterned and torn linoleum tile, embedded into the painting's surface, further denotes the motion of water and swaying palms. McElhenney was recently included in another group show at Artists' Space. With their more pagan themes, those paintings recalled Pompeiian frescoes. It was a pleasure to encounter once again this young artist's enticing fragments of ancient history.

Other works in keeping with Zimmer's criteria of enchantment included: Kathleen Ferguson's far-out, purple and green, chenille-studded knot, entitled *Intergalactic*; Bob Yucikas' eerie painting *Moon Cliffs* and Frank Faulkner's *Atlantis II*, in which pearly drops of paint weave a textured pattern of pyramids. Although not particularly exotic, Ted Stamm's spare wall installation, *Royal Air Maroc*, with its printed message, "No Concorde, No Airline, No Influence," is certainly topical.

Altogether, the works in this exhibition offered a friendly invitation to reverie and a welcome escape from the Sahara of hot city streets.

—Deborah C. Phillips