

es of such magnitude, perhaps it's best that our view of the collection is limited; after all, how much can a pair of eyes take? (Plenty, as it turns out.) There are also ropes of plump, very rare natural sea pearls; Rococo diamond earrings featuring spring-mounted enamel bees; and a stickpin containing an exquisite blue stone believed to have come from the same rock as the Hope Diamond. Even an 18th-century child's emerald-and-ivory rattle has 130 diamonds and a coral teether. Okay, enough.

Still, it's difficult to regard these breathtaking baubles without also suffering an attack of Chekhovian melancholy. The museum calls the 300-year-long Romanov story "a family saga of triumph and tragedy," and it is the tragedy that threatens to overshadow the glitter here. The show gives evidence of the near-total absence (with the exception of the Constructivists) of the decorative arts from Russian culture after 1918, when the last Romanovs were executed. Some of the more extravagant items on display are copies by contemporary craftsmen; the originals were lost or sold off long ago. A few, like the 1970 Rose—a diamond brooch of surpassing delicacy—are painfully beautiful, but their presence only emphasizes the former Soviet Union's crying need to reestablish its cultural identity. At least Russia still has a hoard of precious stones. How many is anyone's guess, but the broad glass case here of uncut corkers hints at untold wealth.

Romanticized portraits of the opulently dressed Romanov rulers surround the jewelry and provide glimpses of what this show might have been, had more treasures been saved. (There's one Fabergé egg here—borrowed from the Forbes Galleries.) The clothing on mannequins in two large vitrines is not the splendid ermine-and-lace garments seen in the pictures; rather, it's a few faded dress uniforms and three ball gowns—one a rose-and-silver creation in somewhat tatty condition from the Parisian House of Worth. I suppose it's a miracle anything survived at all. For that, we can certainly be grateful.

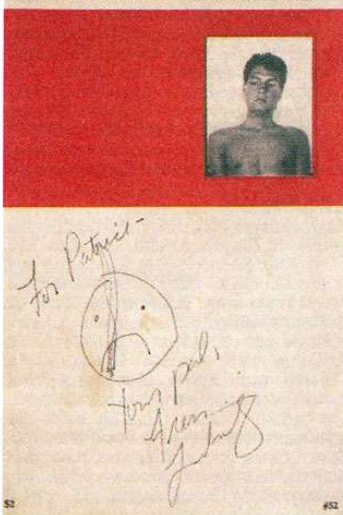
**"Jewels of the Romanovs: Treasures of the Russian Imperial Court" is on view at the Brooklyn Museum of Art through Jul 5 (see Museums).**

**Collier Schorr, "The Sound of One Hand"**

**Apex Art, through Apr 18 (see Soho).**

This show is hopelessly compromised by its organizer's self-interest, covetousness, chutzpah and love—which is what makes it so good. Artist Collier Schorr knows most of the participants personally and owns every piece, though she paid for only one, a Silvia Kolbowski. The rest were given to Schorr or acquired by her through various trades and other methods. As a critic and as American editor of *Frieze* magazine, Schorr has written about nine of these artists (not always positively). She has worked for one of them; two are represented by the same gallery that handles her. She also wrote the essay that accompanies the show. (In fact, I'm a good friend of hers and have written about her work—so the loop of insider trading is complete, I suppose.) If ever there was an exhibition to get all cynical and pissed off about, this is it. Still, the motivations behind this show are as up-front as they can be, and that's where people are always saying they want them.

**STRAIGHT TO HELL**  
THE MANHATTAN REVIEW OF UNNATURAL ACTS



**Fran Lebowitz, doodle on *Straight to Hell* pamphlet, circa 1985.**

So one can admire Schorr's honesty and integrity: She puts her mouth where her money is, so to speak. Indeed, the best thing any group of young artists can do is trade for or buy one another's work. Sometimes, the world will follow; if it doesn't, at least there's a neat collection to be gained.

Schorr sure has a pretty cool one. Check out Daniel Oates's handmade Telecaster guitar and Karen Kilimnik's new painting of Leonardo DiCaprio. There's Tim Gardner's drawing of two guys hanging out, and a Garry Winogrand photo that Schorr retrieved from a gallery garbage bin. On a more personal level are Sarah Lucas's signed photo of herself, plus the three autographs Schorr wangled out of Fran Lebowitz. Schorr even includes a trading card of Michael Jordan and a photograph taken by her father. Schorr says that her philosophy is "if it's a good deal, it's a good deal for me." For me, "The Sound of One Hand" is a good deal, too.—*Jerry Saltz*



**Ellen Gallagher, *Love Parade*, 1998 (detail).**

**Ellen Gallagher, "New Paintings"**

**Gagosian Gallery, through Sat 11 (see Soho).**

Ellen Gallagher works in the familiar idiom of large-scale Minimalist painting, and on the surface at least, her approach seems cool and apolitical. She throws a curve, however, by adding little doodles and drawings that, on closer inspection, turn out to be pared-down racist caricatures. Sprinkled liberally throughout her paintings are the exaggerated lips and vacant, wide-open eyes of such grotesques as the mammy, the pickaninny and the blackface minstrel. Once you pick up on this visual lexicon, you also begin to realize that her compositional approach is itself predicated on abstracted versions of these same images. *Soma*, for instance, is an arrangement of large oval shapes that suggest huge stylized lips.

Race creeps around the edges and oozes through the cracks of Gallagher's work, though the issue is implied more than it is confronted directly. She's certainly no Kara Walker, whose silhouetted wall murals of lynchings, for example, leave nothing to the imagina-

tion. Gallagher trades in ciphers and coded symbols, weaving them into the very fabric of white-conceived cultural forms. She intends this approach to be ironic, since early Modernism often borrowed heavily from African culture.

Burying pickaninnies in the middle of a highly formalized scheme could be seen as one way of subverting high art. But this tactic also suggests that if artists of color can veil their race just enough, they will be accepted immediately into an overwhelmingly white art world. Indeed, Gallagher's own art-star status has been virtually instantaneous. She bypassed the small galleries and alternative spaces where emerging artists usually debut for solo shows at Mary Boone and now Gagosian—pretty blue-chip stuff for someone who was virtually unknown in New York before last year.

There's something repellent about an artist playing the race card so elegantly while showing at the kinds of galleries that are hardly known for supporting women and African-Americans. Is Gallagher an infiltrator or an opportunist? Standing in front of her paintings, you have to wonder who's playing whom.—*Martha Schwendener*

**Dylan Stone**

**dfn Gallery, through Apr 18 (see Soho).**

The best part of Dylan Stone's first one-person show is a series of pages from *The New York Times* scattered casually across two small tables alongside empty coffee cups, saucers, knives, crumbs and bits of jam. Suggesting the morning ritual of someone who doesn't pick up after him- or herself, this sloppiness is in marked contrast to what Stone has done to the photos on the front of the *Times*: Using them as a kind of pattern, he's gone over each in fine, colorful needlepoint.

The resulting theatrical tableau engages craft, memory, privacy and politics. The images Stone chooses to "re-embroider," like some sort of busywork version of Sherrie Levine, are not as neutral as they seem. Like many of the '80s appropriation artists who used found reproduc-

tions, Stone approaches images as potent conveyors of hidden meaning.

Instead of '80s irony, though, Stone offers evidence of his loving attention to detail. In *Color Section #6 (Funereal)*, he embroiders a pile of flowers that had been placed by neighbors on the lawn of a New Jersey murder victim. In another work, he reproduces an image of President Clinton with his arm around Vice President Gore as they walk away from the camera. Next to it, Stone presents an image of Hillary looking into the lens with her arm around the wife of China's president. The contrasts between facing forward and facing away, between male and female, are here made exquisite.

Stone's work does recall that of Robert Gober, Charles LeDray and his own classmate Sarah Sze. But he is an original. The way he stitches poetry out of the everyday makes him an artist with real promise.—*Jerry Saltz*



**Dylan Stone, *Color Section #6 (Funereal)*, 1998.**

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