

## ART

## Lannon: Emerging U.K./American Talent Find a Home on West 22nd

BY N.F. KARLINS

A place where mechanics and art mix, Chelsea's newest gallery, the Lannon Gallery on far West 22nd Street, opens with "The Bridge Show," an exhibition of paintings by 24 contemporary British and American artists.

The gallery, dedicated to bringing the best of the British Isles here and uncovering fresh American talent, is run by Marilu Lannon, a veteran of galleries in Boston and Chicago.

The 5,000 square feet of white-walled space near the DIA Center for the Arts stands above a taxi garage owned by Guy and Ann Roberts, art lovers and financial partners in the gallery. Walking upstairs, visitors may sniff a little motor oil or, once in the space, inhale the odd exhaust fume, but the climb is definitely worth the effort.

"The Bridge Show" jump-starts with a strong figurative piece by the Englishman Nicholas Jolly, "King of Junk" (1994). Standing atop a container of garbage, a male figure adopts a messianic pose with a squeegee mop for a staff. His

upper body is silhouetted against the sky and dramatically foreshortened, pushing out of the picture plane toward the viewer. He is surrounded by "his subjects," all with passive faces, making his face seem more otherworldly.

## Absent Middle Ground

The distant background, reduced or absent middle ground, and the compressed-to-popping foreground are traits typical of many contemporary Scottish and English paintings. These devices, now widely used and quite hot, have been enshrined in the Met's 20th-century area.

Another interesting example of this approach is Englishman Ian Phillips's oil "Dive" (1993). In this painting, bathers gather on a rooftop for an imaginary dip. The right

leg of a nude woman "swimming" on a stool is thrust daringly toward the viewer.

The more successful of Brit Jonathan Green's two paintings is to be found behind the main gallery. The small painting "Saccharine" (1994) consists of a crudely reprised Dutch still life with the inclusion of an alarm clock. Printed in paint over this augmented reproduction are the words "Valium Codeine Mogadon and Some Saccharine." What a wake-up call.

Angela Gill, another member of the British contingent, offers sketched parts of a full-bodied woman and beast-headed male tumbling in peachy, twilight skies in "Formulating, Fading" (1994). This sensual painting is poised deftly between figurative work and abstraction.

## American Content

A very different strategy in "Margin 2" (1992) by American Kurt Eckert strikes the same balance. This small oil is a thickly worked white abstract with two red circles that metamorphoses into a face. Looking at "Margin 2" is a dizzying but thoroughly satisfying experience not to be missed.

Two works by Scottish artists bear special attention. Iain



Englishman Nicholas Jolly's 'King of Junk' (1994).

McCull's "A Soldier's Dream" (1994) is a large charcoal drawing of a rape. The three-dimensionality of the drawing reflects the artist's background as a sculptor. It is a coldly horrifying work of tangled body parts as precisely and dispassionately rendered as automobile fenders.

Fellow-Scot Suzannah Harper, just out of the Glasgow School of Art, has done a remarkable charcoal, all 5 by 12 feet of it, called "In-

timiate Sacrifices." The draftsman-ship is extraordinary. The ironic composition is reminiscent of Max Beckmann. "Sacrifices" marks Harper as an artist to watch.

(Local artists should note that Marilu Lannon is on the lookout for new talent for future shows and welcomes receiving slides.)

Through November. "The Bridge Show." Lannon Gallery, 530 W. 22nd St. Hours: Wed.-Sun. 11-6. ☞