

## Reviews: National



Rembrandt, *Open Landscape with Houses and a Windmill*, late 1640s, pen and brown ink with brown wash, 4" x 9 1/2". Milwaukee Art Museum.

his ability to empathize with all his subjects, however socially insignificant they may have been. His spare chalk sketch of an elephant from 1637 possesses a tenderness that suggests a sensitivity to the animal's spirit as well as a fascination with its form. The intense, tiny *Self-Portrait in Beret* (1660) is as introspective as any of his larger painted versions. Even in Rembrandt's treatment of religious themes, such as in *The Raising of Lazarus* (ca. 1632), done in a combination of etching and engraving, the bystanders are granted an expressiveness that conveys the drama of the miracle as fully as the figure of Christ.

Beyond the Rembrandts, the show's most significant works were a pair of painted still lifes by Herman Henstenburgh.

These two small but gorgeous watercolors, both circa 1700, offered densely delicious arrays of tulips, fruit, chestnuts, seashells, birds, and snails that speak of earthy pleasures. —Margaret Hawkins

## Hunt Slonem

Don O'Melveny  
Los Angeles

Birds, blossoms, Buddhas, and butterflies rewarded the search for recognizable figures in the haze of pigment that marks Hunt Slonem's oils. Over the last decade, the artist has recalibrated the relationship between his exotic figurative subjects and the obsessive patterns that fill out his compositions. In this balance he has found the clearest expression of his talent.

The jungle-bright contrasts that en-

livened Slonem's previous work have been replaced by a warm palette. The artist further tempers his earlier tendency toward flash with various technical



Hunt Slonem, *Siddahs*, 2003, oil on canvas, 48" x 48". Don O'Melveny.

so that a crude face or pinwheel-like flower might float atop the repetitious imagery of a flock of macaws.

A giddy sense of excess, frequently enhanced by ornate frames, has always infused Slonem's art. Whereas before the dazzling figures rendered with expressive bravado stood out from distinct backgrounds in simple compositions, these new works, built of nuanced gestures and layers, posed more interesting challenges for the viewer. —Peter Frank

## Marnie Weber

Luckman Fine Arts Complex  
and Rosamund Felsen  
Los Angeles

Marnie Weber's work manages to be wildly surreal and disarmingly familiar at once. By photographing sets and cos-

tumed characters of her own creation and integrating those photos in collages, the artist creates fablelike narratives set in fantastical worlds. These shows brought together collages as well as related videos and sculptures from her four major series thus far.

At Felsen, "Ghost Love, the Spirit Girls" featured Weber's newest body of work, including her most intricate and polished collages to date. Most of these showed young women wearing flowing white dresses in natural settings. In one, a group of them builds a giant treehouse; in another, a pair cares for a bear cub as its mother looks on. Among the sculptures, which often serve as props for the collages and videos, was a bear with a walking stick, wearing a red cape and hat.

"From the Dust Room" at the Luckman Fine Arts Complex at California State University, Los Angeles, encompassed works from the artist's first three collage series. Notable among these was the compelling "Dollhouse" sequence from 2002, which included the large title sculpture as well as collages showing the rooms' ethereal inhabitants. This, Weber's first museum retrospective, gave visitors the chance to see how characters such as the bunny recur from one series to the next.

The highlight was the premiere of *The Spirit Girls, Songs That Never Die* (2005), an operatic performance piece connected with Weber's current work at Felsen. White-masked women performed dances by turns awkward and graceful amid sets of bare, papery trees and an experimental video backdrop. Although no clear story emerged, the performance brought to life the emotion found in Weber's videos and the versatility of her collages. —Annie Buckley



Marnie Weber, *Angel Bunny*, 2005, C-print with collage, 24" x 20". Rosamund Felsen.