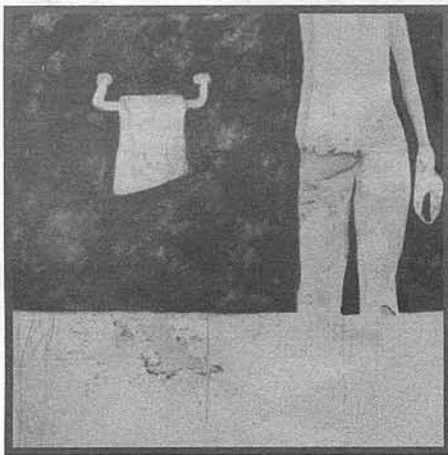


Above: Steven Barich, *A Partially Full Recovery*, 2000, oil on canvas; below: Julia Shirar, *Bath*, 2000, mixed media on canvas, at The Red Door, Oakland.



lation. Below this red area, Steger has used string to lace up the top of the vulva, like a suture. From this perspective, the large black base then becomes a black ominous phallus. The whole sculpture works in surprising formal harmony for such a "loaded" gruesome subject. The tension in this piece lies between the formalized elements of the elegant shapes, their richly textured painted surfaces and the brutal knowledge of what it really represents.

Mutual Fate uses a truncated wing shape as a basic starting point. This shape is pierced by five rectangular compartments, like miniature rooms or windows transverse the wing. In each compartment hangs a light blue bundle, tied with string, like an onion or garlic cluster, each pendant giving definition to its space and place. The overall impression created is of a small boat or of an ideal, de-animalized Noah's ark. Steger succeeds in giving his sculptures that essential timeless quality that accompa-

nies the pleasure and serenity of geometry and form. The textures of his sculptures are so tactile and obsessively rendered that it is nearly impossible not to reach out and stroke them.

—Frank Cebulski

Mixed-media sculpture by Kurt Steger; *Supply: An Installation by Indigo Som*; and Lowell Darling—*CFR-11* closed February 18 at the Sonoma Museum of Visual Art, Santa Rosa.

Frank Cebulski is a contributing editor to *Artweek*.

'Previously Unseen Painting' at The Red Door

Drive down San Leandro past downtown Oakland and turn the corner on 40th. Go to the last door of a largish warehouse that points to Oakland's industrial past, and walk into The Red Door gallery, an artist studio-turned-alternative exhibition space. Unlike many other DIY alternative spaces, The Red Door is successful at presenting itself as a bona fide gallery: a segmented floor plan to divide the viewing areas, a receptionist's desk, glossy announcement cards, press releases and, most importantly, quality art gracing the walls.

Steven Barich's *Good for the Goose* nuances the old adage by tacking on gendered domestic overtones. The ganders become victims of the kitchen; finding themselves in a heated pot, being stirred by a nondescript (read fuzzy) hand, with salt and pepper shakers floating ominously overhead. Barich emphasizes the magical-realism of this role-reversed scene by exaggerating the proportions between the ganders, which are depicted as extremely small, to the gigantic hand and utensils used to trap them in their dire position. This dreamland sense is further heightened by calculated paint-drips throughout the work that make evident the unreality of the social situation.

Jake Hout's two *Sex and Violence* works blend World War II iconography, Vargas bombshell pin-ups, comic

book illustration, and a graffiti sensibility into a montage of pop culture that attempts to burst off of the canvas. The juxtaposition of the prominent, hyper-stylized woman-as-object (the woman on number one is portrayed nude in heels on her back in a not fully developed sketch form, causing the image to lose any sense of its "realness") with fighter planes and pilots competing for attention amid a safety-orange and multicolored backdrop. The Constructivist style lettering on number two seems reminiscent of the Cold War era, while the graffiti lion at center in number one grounds it more deeply in play.

Julia Shirar's *Bath* creates a deceptively mundane scene that deals with the feminine. Using a dripped upon and stained bare canvas for the majority of the piece (the tub, the person, the towel) and a splotchy red for the background, Shirar creates a visually compelling, minimalist bathing scene with the female figure in the midst of disrobing. The figure is cut off from the frame mid-torso leaving the viewer with an incomplete although intimate view of it.

Equally interesting is Shirar's mixed-media *Debutante* which utilizes a paint tray, ribbons, dress patterns, packing slips, lace, caution tape, a dowel and shoes upon a shoe rack to present the narrative of a generic, faceless woman who, while in an intricate gown and holding flowers, is attempting to reach outside of her plush, vibrant green background into an incomplete, brownish void. This transition to an uncertain and potentially bleak post-deb future is underscored by the shoe-rack placed beneath the void, indicating the role that she will eventually have to play. The use of the various materials adds a tactile dimension to the impending change of roles.

The works presented in *Previously Unseen Painting* could easily hang in more established galleries. The fact that The Red Door offers the Oakland area

another well-thought out, well-presented venue for works by emerging artists makes it an interesting and welcome addition to the Bay Area art scene.

—David Horton

Previously Unseen Painting closed February 10 at The Red Door, Oakland.

David Horton is a freelance writer based in Oakland.

'Gender, Genealogy & Counter-Memory' at MACLA

The word "family," like "sex," is heavily loaded with allusions to bonding, expectations and memories both sweet and painful. Our longings for warmth and unity often fall heartbreakingly short of fulfillment when the harsh light of reality meets all-too-fallible individuals. Yet, imperfect as they may be, our families retain a profound influence on how we function in society.

Gender stereotyping, reinforced in so many ways in our culture, often starts with a child's parents. They unconsciously reinforce traits in their little boy, traits which the culture has decided are "masculine," and therefore valuable to him: strength, stoicism and independence. Little girls receive the message that they must pay for their right to express their emotions by accepting a more passive and submissive role.

Individuals who have chosen to reject traditional gender roles may find themselves disenfranchised—rejected not only by the depressingly conservative realm of society at large but in many cases by

their own family or cultural group as well. The recent homophobic reaction by some community members to work by gay and lesbian Latino/a artists in San Francisco's Mission District drove this point home in a disturbing way: a mural commissioned by the Galería de la Raza was defaced with homophobic statements.

A largely upbeat and persuasive model for understanding and sur-

Alma López, *Heaven*, 1999, *Iris/Glicee* on canvas, 14" x 17-1/2", at MACLA, San Jose.

