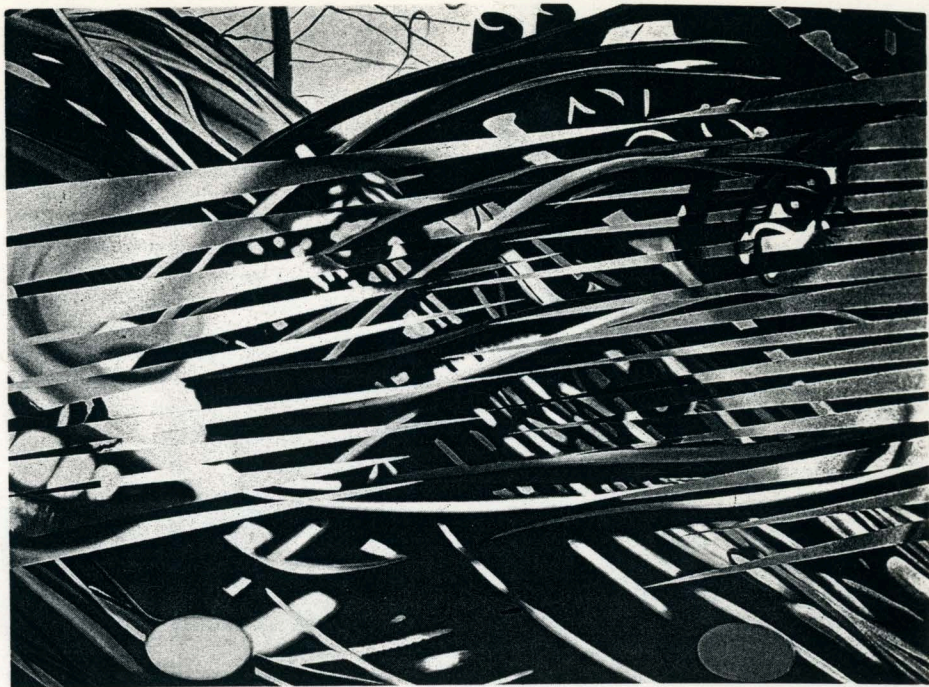


knowledge of painting?" To Rosenquist's defender Hollis Frampton, what Andre failed to recognize was the way he was allowing Rosenquist's iconography (and the way style was an element in this iconography) to obscure his view of the paintings themselves: "An attack on Marilyn Monroe or Ford automobiles is not an attack on James Rosenquist."

The present Rosenquist retrospective, which originated at the Denver Art Museum, suggests that, at the time the Andre-Frampton debate occurred, Frampton was more acute in his understanding of Rosenquist's work up to that point – and yet Andre, the superior artist, perhaps saw more deeply into the potential of Rosenquist's work, in that he saw the problem that was about to arise, perhaps inevitably, and would weaken Rosenquist's work for the next twenty years. In the best of his early paintings, such as *The Light That Won't Fail I*, 1961, or *Morning Sun*, 1963, Rosenquist engineers a genuinely poetic dislocation out of his appropriation and reframing of billboard painting styles. What might have looked direct and hard-edged at billboard distance shows itself as ambiguous and elusive at close hand. The section-by-section monochromy within these paintings goes a long way towards undermining the definition of the depicted objects and subsuming them to an emotional tonality, as well as helping to shape the overall, "abstract" construction of the canvas in terms of a surprisingly Hoffmannesque push-and-pull. The curious restraint of these paintings, apparent not only in this monochromy but also in their ellipticality, gives them an after-effect much hotter than the flip coolness they manifest at first glance.

Beginning in the mid-sixties, however – the gargantuan *F-111*, 1965, may be the landmark here – the look of the work starts heating up, but its emotional and perceptual charge starts cooling down. Rosenquist begins to *present* the objects he depicts, to offer them up like icons, rather than nervously cutting away from them as he used to. The paintings become more obviously yet less firmly composed; where the separateness of the images had been paramount, they now begin to blend and overlap, like the dissolving and reappearing airplane of *F-111*. Or facile visual rhymes take over, like that between the hanging strips of bacon on the left of *Industrial Cottage*, 1977, and the drill bits on its right, an effect at once arbitrary and academic. Especially later in the seventies and into the early eighties, the spatial aggressiveness of the paintings increases drastically, as with the protruding lipsticks of *House of Fire II*, 1982. This can be thrilling in a cinematic sort of way; these are wide-screen extravaganzas. But it is in these paintings, and not in those of the early sixties, that Rosenquist's inventory of images can feel obvious and none too revelatory.

It is all the more heartening, then, that the



James Rosenquist *Untitled 1984*

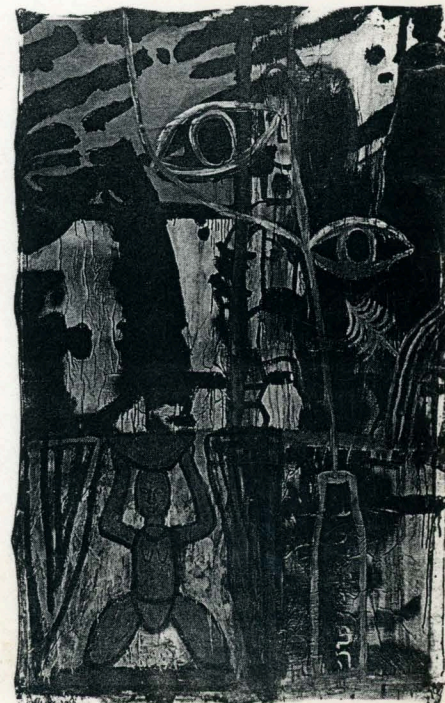
last few years have seen a remarkable return of strength to Rosenquist's production, partly through his use of a device he apparently first employed in part of the huge, pompous mural *Star Thief*, 1980, but which he began to use in a truly thoroughgoing way around the time of the *Flowers, Fish, and Females* mural he executed in 1984 for the Four Seasons restaurant. In these paintings, instead of juxtaposing images as he first did, or overlapping or dissolving them into one another as he later did, he shatters them into slivers which then criss-cross in ways that are complex and difficult for the eye to disentangle. He thereby restores the ellipticality of the images, abstracting them into vectored forces that play a dazzling game of hide-and-seek with each other. These paintings remind us forcefully that Rosenquist has always been at his best as a painter of sensations, and that these are as bodiless as they are libidinal. Rosenquist is once again capable of surprising us, of showing us things we didn't think we knew.

Barry Schwabsky

"Art Israel: The 1980s" at Graham Modern

The art season's slow September onset was enlivened this year by "Art Israel: The 1980s," concurrent exhibitions at eighteen galleries and institutions around New York including the work of thirty-seven artists. A large-scale effort such as this is of special interest, not only because the opportunity to view such a broad sampling of current work from any foreign country is all too rare in

New York, but also because of an essential parallel between the situation of Israeli and American artists. Both groups are working out of a European high art tradition, but as non- (or post-) Europeans – not as the "natural" heirs to the tradition but with the peculiar self-consciousness and self-dramatization of possibly illegitimate claimants. That this is the position of the American artist would not have been as clear even ten years ago as it is now, but the



Tsibi Geva Bilady: *Jaffa 1985*



George Waite *Guarded Guardian* 1985

or basketry-like surfaces or project outward as bone-like excrescences. The work in this show, ranging from 1983 to 1986, suggests a development from an emphasis on vessel-like and architectural forms to organic ones, but what is constant is the urge toward metamorphoses between the two, as when tightly-woven strands open out to form a kind of rib cage. Shelter and body are the poles of this work's dialogue with itself. As, in her most recent work, structures become less systematic and repetitive, more unpredictable and even baroque, the dramatic intensity of this dialogue rises to a higher pitch. Nature too, both in itself and in its relation to culture, emerges as a site of contention and struggle.

Barry Schwabsky

CHICAGO

George Waite at Artemisia

George Waite first received recognition during the heyday of Jackson Pollock and Mark Tobey and then sank back into peaceful semi-obscurity, continuing to paint and display his work now and then. All of his paintings in this show, except three, are horizontal, green and analogous to landscapes, or vertical, blue or violet and reminiscent of sky or landscapes. These paintings are formed by thin washes of paint brushed across the canvas with the resulting drippings forming the lower part of the works. Crayon colours squiggle across the top, often slightly disturbed by washes mingling their colours with the down-poured paint. The resulting surfaces are often delicate, calm and soft. Colour is used titilatingly, as in *Guarded Garden*, which is primarily pale mauve with suggestions of red, pink and orange, with a purple stroke peeking through the lower mauve drizzle to keep the eye from slipping off the canvas' lower edge. The stroke brings the eye back into the piece where other balancing tricks are employed to form an homogenized surface. The result is pretty; but there is little beyond that. One or two such paintings demonstrating compositional adroitness would have sufficed, but the effect of five combined with the drawings approaches glibness.

The most successful piece in the show is *Crimson Streak*. It combines authority with subtlety. In fact there is no crimson in it, the horizontal canvas is slashed into two parts by a magenta rounded wedge with a deep blue stalactite shape. The magenta abruptly turns pinker, dribbling down the canvas. White bands hug the vivid colours, followed by thin washed yellow areas growing denser within their spaces and becoming thinner and greener towards the bottom of the canvas. The piece's focal point is the

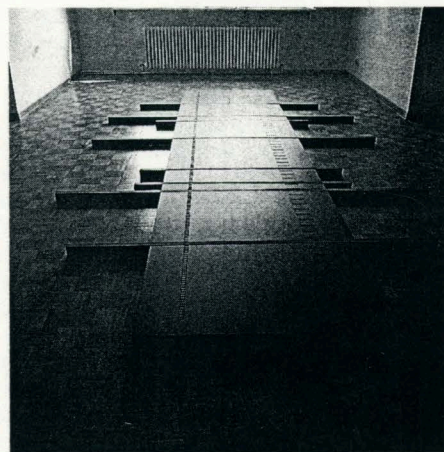
intensely coloured centre, but enough variety of hues and textures is offered in the other areas to keep interest alive throughout. Vague vaginal suggestiveness presented in the aggressive frontal composition creates the piece's jarring power. It is a *tour de force* and an indication of what Waite can do when he goes beyond lush surfaces.

Mary Sherman

BERLIN

Ryszard Wasko at the Neuer Berliner Kunstverein

The works are arranged on the floor. The canvas, on which a drawing in black has been executed, is raised a few centimetres above floor-level. The drawing becomes more or less visible depending on the position of the viewer. What he sees is a series of small differentiated rectangles, running into one another like a strip of cinematograph film. The title of the work points to its content: *Time sculpture of black paint*. At first sight the work of the Pole, Ryszard Wasko, belies its own accessibility. The black surfaces, broken here and there by transverse bars of red, deny the existence of any depth or any echo of a language of gesture. Time exists in these works at three levels. Firstly in the transposition from time



Ryszard Wasko *Time Sculpture of Black Paint* 1986

to space, executed on the surface of the work, the shift being effected by the viewer. What he sees are the squares of film, producing different temporal rhythms by their different sizes and alignment. The bigger they are, the closer they become, thereby conquering space, and with it time. A single chain of rectangles reveals its time structure only as pure image; only when two series are set against one another, or alternatively superimposed, is the visualization of time apparent. In the act of apprehension this effect is partially neutral-

PHOTO: ALEXANDER HONORY