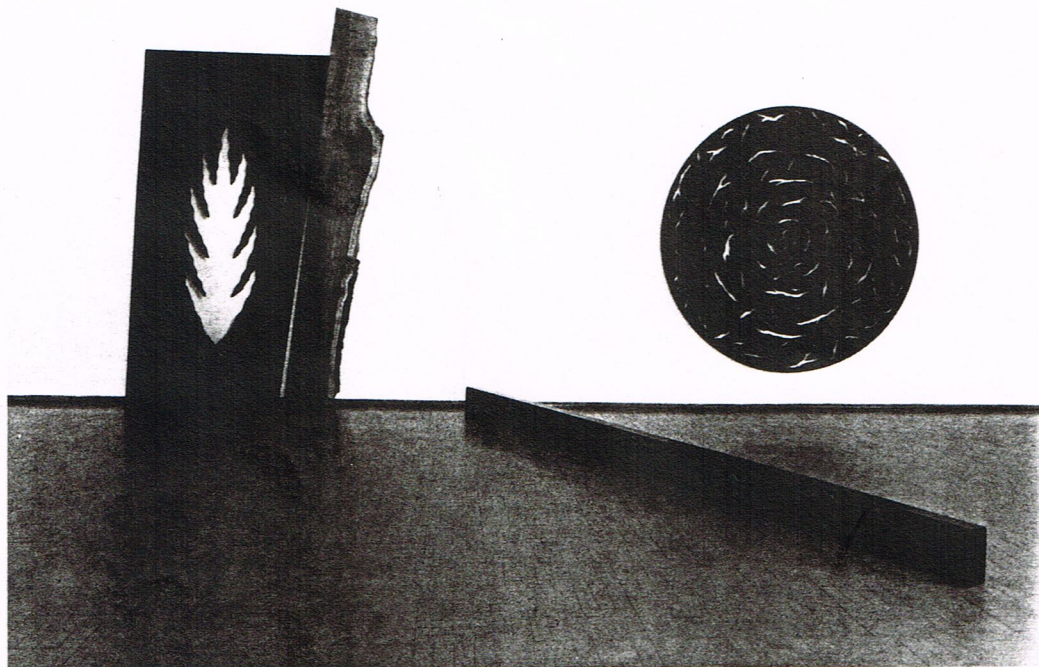


REVIEWS



JUDITH SCHWARZ, *PARALLEL LANGUAGE* (1987), OAK AND STEEL, 300 x 632 x 419cm (118" x 249" x 165"). COLLECTION: ART GALLERY OF WINDSOR. COURTESY: S.L. SIMPSON GALLERY. PHOTO BY ISAAC APPELBAUM

ROBERT SCOTT

NOVEMBER 14-DECEMBER 12

Gallery Moos, New York

In May, 1987, Robert Scott was one of 40 painters and sculptors invited by the city of Barcelona, Spain to take part in a three-week international artists' workshop. It was an intense, pressured session. The "foreign" artists, in particular, felt very much on show. Scott chose to use the time to take risks, in an effort to extend the limits of his art, rather than to make the kinds of pictures he was painting before he went to Barcelona. It was a brave thing to do, a gamble, and it paid off, as Scott's Gallery Moos exhibition abundantly proved.

The show brought together paintings made in Barcelona with those made before the workshop. The level was remarkably consistent, the family resemblance clear, but what was striking was the evidence of how Scott's range has expanded. Over the past few years, he had become known for dramatic canvases on which he literally ploughed thick paint with his fingers to reveal underlying layers. The brilliant, escaping color of these buried layers was often tempered and enriched by subsequent sprayings with intermediate or darker hues. The best of these pictures were passionate and arresting, physically very present and extremely intense, yet

despite their material density, their restless all-over drawing and fluctuating color made them visually elusive.

The Gallery Moos exhibition included several very good pictures of this type, glowing like banked fires. At the Barcelona workshop, however, Scott made a conscious decision to use colors less familiar to him, in new relationships, and at the same time to invent new ways of moving paint across the surface of the canvas without forfeiting the immediacy and intimacy of touch of the ploughed paintings. In the process, he found that he no longer wanted to rely solely on fingermarks to animate surfaces.

He painted a great many different kinds of pictures in Barcelona, all immediately recognizable as Scotts, but each testing territory he had not yet explored to his satisfaction. The Barcelona canvases in his New York show reflected the ambition of these investigations. They ranged from an austere, almost monochromatic, dark picture with powerful looped drawing — a sublimated response, perhaps, to daily encounters with Barcelona's flamboyant *modernismo* architecture — to a staccato black-grey painting punctuated with spiky orange drawing. All of the Barcelona pictures were characterized by a new type of drawing: looser, less insistent and frequently even more inventive than the drawing in the ploughed paintings, good as they are.

The most exciting pictures in the show were those in which Scott seemed to have found ways of inflecting the painted surface that are new to his work and wholly original. In the best of these paintings, process is less evident and we are less aware of the sequence of the picture's making. The mark of Scott's hand survives as a memory that establishes the painting's pulse but is subsumed by the whole. Scott's pictures are more subtle than ever, and often better. Their emotional range seems as expanded as their range of color and drawing. Scott has not given up any of the ferocity of his earlier works in his quest for a more surprising palette and a greater variety of touch, but there's a new lyricism as well.

Scott's work has been worth attention for a considerable time. It's good to see him grow and see his work reach a wider audience. He deserves to be better known. *Karen Wilkin*

JUDITH SCHWARZ

JANUARY 8-FEBRUARY 3

S.L. Simpson Gallery, Toronto

Judith Schwarz is careful to the point of self-consciousness to bring together, in her new pieces, sculptural elements