

STEPHEN WIRTZ GALLERY

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OPHRAH SHEMESH

Paintings

KATHRYN SPENCE

New Work

April 3-April 26, 2003

Opening reception: Thursday, April 3 from 5:30-7:30 pm

The Stephen Wirtz Gallery is pleased to announce the exhibitions of new paintings by New York-based artist Ophrah Shemesh, and new sculptural work by Kathryn Spence.

This exhibition is the San Francisco debut for OPHRAH SHEMESH, an Israeli-born, New York-based artist. This current series of diminutive paintings, her first done with egg tempera, are psychological studies depicting women and trees in undefined space. Working from live models, Shemesh considers the nakedness of the trees and the women to be “mirrored” from life but appearing as fantasy. By choosing to use egg tempera rather than oil as her medium, Shemesh sacrifices lushness and immediacy in order to achieve intensely worked surfaces which focus on line and pentimento with suggestions of color.

“The frankness of the outward gazes of their protagonists and the frankness of their sexual poses are so arresting that they offer explicit lessons in the relations between looking and desire”-David Freedberg, March 2002.

OPHRAH SHEMESH (b.1952, Haifa, Israel) received her B.F.A. from the Bezalel Academy of Art and Design in Jerusalem and continued her studies at the New York Studio School of Drawing, Painting, and Sculpture. She has been the Painting, Watercolor and Drawing Instructor at the New York Studio School since 1988. Shemesh has had previous solo exhibitions in New York, Boston, Milan, Rome, and Jerusalem.

KATHRYN SPENCE’s installations and individual pieces involve piling, layering, and the transformation of previously used and cast off materials, such as mud, street trash, and string. “How dirty is too dirty and how does dirt make us feel?...I hope to call attention to the inseparable connection between the physical and psychological in everyday life.”-Kathryn Spence (taken from the essay in the Kemper Museum of Contemporary Art’s catalogue).

In recent past exhibitions, Spence made mud animals that were literally coated with layers of dirt from her garden and appeared dejected and leaden. In this exhibition, the mud animals have evolved into large abstract spherical forms with areas of exposed material breaking through the surface revealing what lies underneath. Other objects that Spence has made for this exhibition include paper towel rolls with stitched patterns, coins and buttons made from tape and cardboard, and colored thread piles.

KATHRYN SPENCE (b.1963, Stuttgart, Germany) received her M.F.A. from Mills College in 1993. She has had solo exhibitions at the Herbert F. Johnson Museum of Art at Cornell University and at the Kemper Museum of Contemporary Art. She has participated in numerous group exhibitions such as *Skin-Deep: Surface and Appearance in Contemporary Art*, at The Israel Museum in Jerusalem, *wonderland*, at the Massachusetts College of Art, *The 1999 Biennial Exhibition* at the Orange County Museum of Art, and *Present Tense: Nine Artists in the Nineties* at the San Francisco Museum of Modern Art.

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