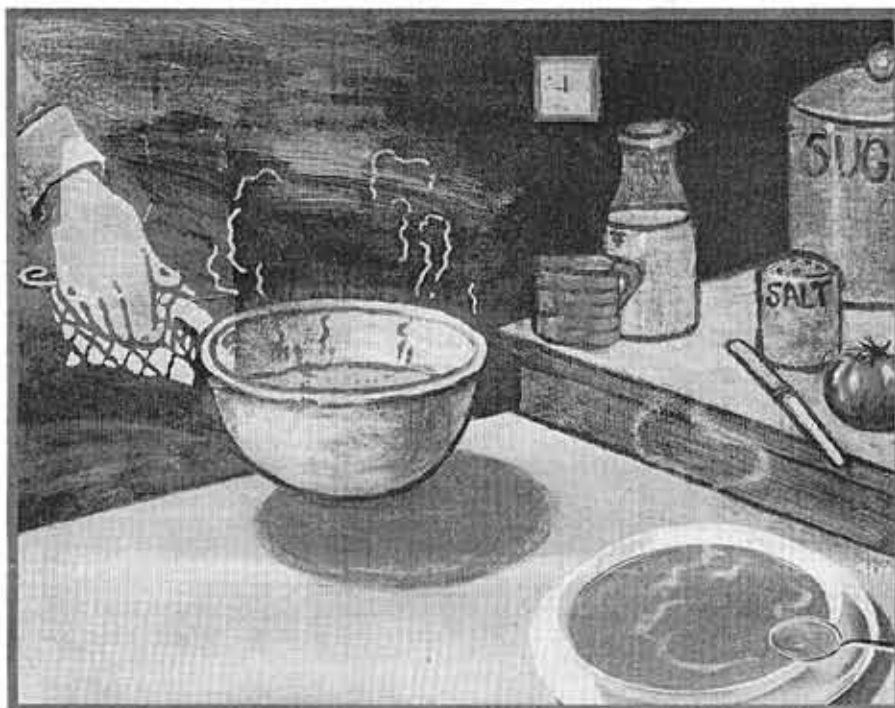


Rhoda London and Edythe Bresnahan at Triangle Gallery and Mary Snowden at Braunstein/Quay Gallery

Artists have found countless seductions in nature, of course: the sensuousness of changing light, the mutability of color, the evocation of mood through the interplay of light on form. Recent paintings by Rhoda London and Edythe Bresnahan, at Triangle Gallery, capture the richness of metaphor inherent in nature's shapes and transmuting, luminous atmosphere. London's voluptuous body/landscapes are vistas of fleshly appreciation and desire. Sensuous surfaces evoke a feeling that the artist has caressed the canvas and the feminine body simultaneously, while being transported in mind to places loved and tenderly remembered, so expressively does the light of nature mirror the moods of carnal pleasure. *Sitka Landscape*, with its breast-like rocks rimmed in light, underscores the artist's facility at merging layers of paint and concept into a profoundly simple vision; the piece transports the viewer beyond admiration for the artist's tactile surface,



Mary Snowden, *Tomato Soup*, 1994, oil and collage on canvas, 24" x 36", at Braunstein/Quay Gallery, San Francisco.

to appreciation for the monumentality of and pride in the female form they express. London also conveys a sense of exposure and discovery with areas of varying hue that appear from beneath the surface, suggesting the fragility of the relationship between the outer skin and what lies beneath it.

A similar tension is central to the paintings from the *Excavation* series. *Excavation/1* is most definitely a pair of rocks, and also, unquestionably, a set of raised knees with the opening to womanhood and sexual exploration at their nucleus. Yet, the sense of a probing force beneath the exterior in this work,

or in a piece like *Excavation/Affinity*, goes beyond physicality to a deeper essence of interior exploration, suggesting an excavation of sensations that emanate from a place that has no words but only feelings, shapes and light-infused tonalities.

Bresnahan's small paintings from the *Black Line Series* share similar sensibilities. In their references to landscape, they convey a subterranean luminosity and are populated with gestural lines which the artist uses to create dreamy dialogues between abstract and referential forms. Line is extremely important to this work, for it creates focus within

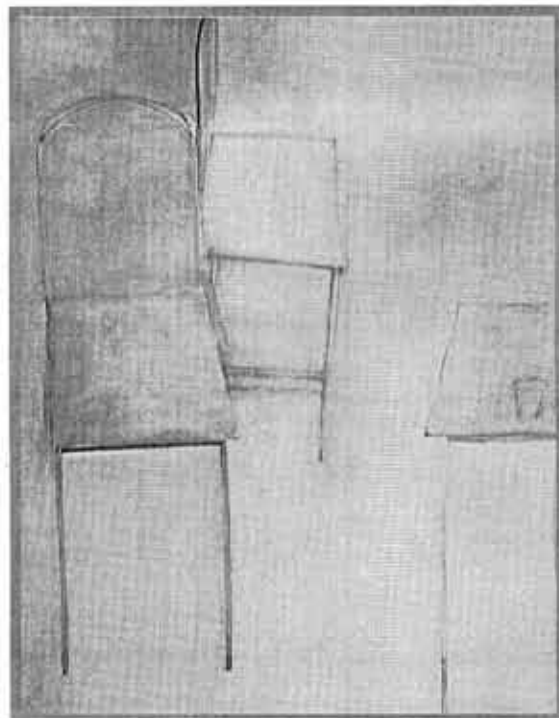
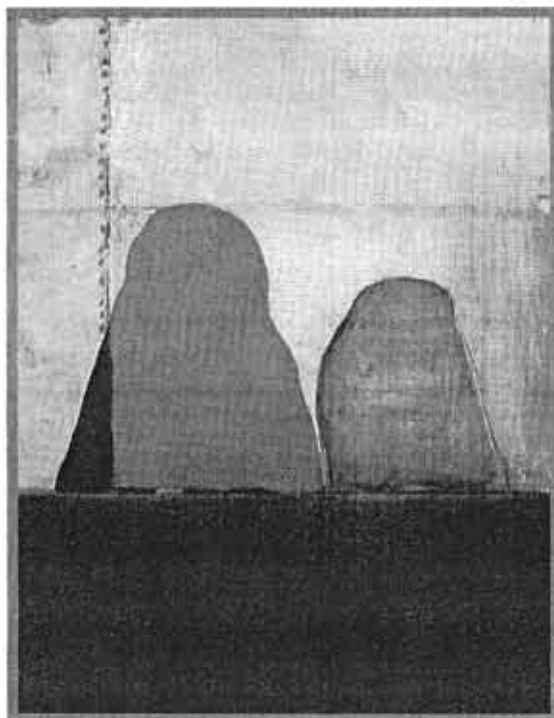
each composition and underscores the artist's particular pleasure in the play of light on form as she alternately veils and uncovers her surfaces. The layering of paint lures the eye and offers rewards for its attention, as in *Black Line Series No. 76*, in which the tension between abstraction and figuration in the surface shapes, in combination with the under-surface diagonal lines, triggers associations while remaining satisfyingly ambiguous.

Bresnahan's earthy tonalities have a warmth and resonance that match the deliciousness of London's palette, and their ethereal glow underscores the understanding that these are explorations of the mind as well as of the world. In Bresnahan's two large *Interiors*, the heat that infuses her pinkish/yellow/brown palette is the most delectable aspect of the canvases and compensates in rich, tactile ways for the more concrete and static renderings of her subject.

Mary Snowden's paintings at Braunstein/Quay Gallery offer a different set of dualities as they explore land/mind/scapes of the home from a specifically female perspective. Snowden's small pieces on wood, with their juxtapositions of isolated domestic elements—a polka dot pitcher held by a spectral hand, or a pot of pencils near an apron-clad woman—suggest the dovetailed relationship between memory and the reality of a woman's wandering mind as she performs household chores. Although Snowden's aesthetic differs from that of London or Bresnahan, and her narratives are purposefully mundane, her surfaces occasionally have an atmospheric quality and a tactility of paint that suggest an unleashing of emotion rather than largely descriptive accounts of her personal excavations.

—Terri Cohn

Left: Rhoda London, (*Excavation*): *Affinity*, 1995, oil, acrylic, wood on canvas, 44" x 36"; right: Edythe Bresnahan, *Interiors* No. 6, 1993, oil on canvas, 80" x 76", at Triangle Gallery, San Francisco.



Paintings by Rhoda London and Edythe Bresnahan closed June 17 at Triangle Gallery, San Francisco. Mary Snowden closed in May at Braunstein/Quay Gallery, San Francisco.

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