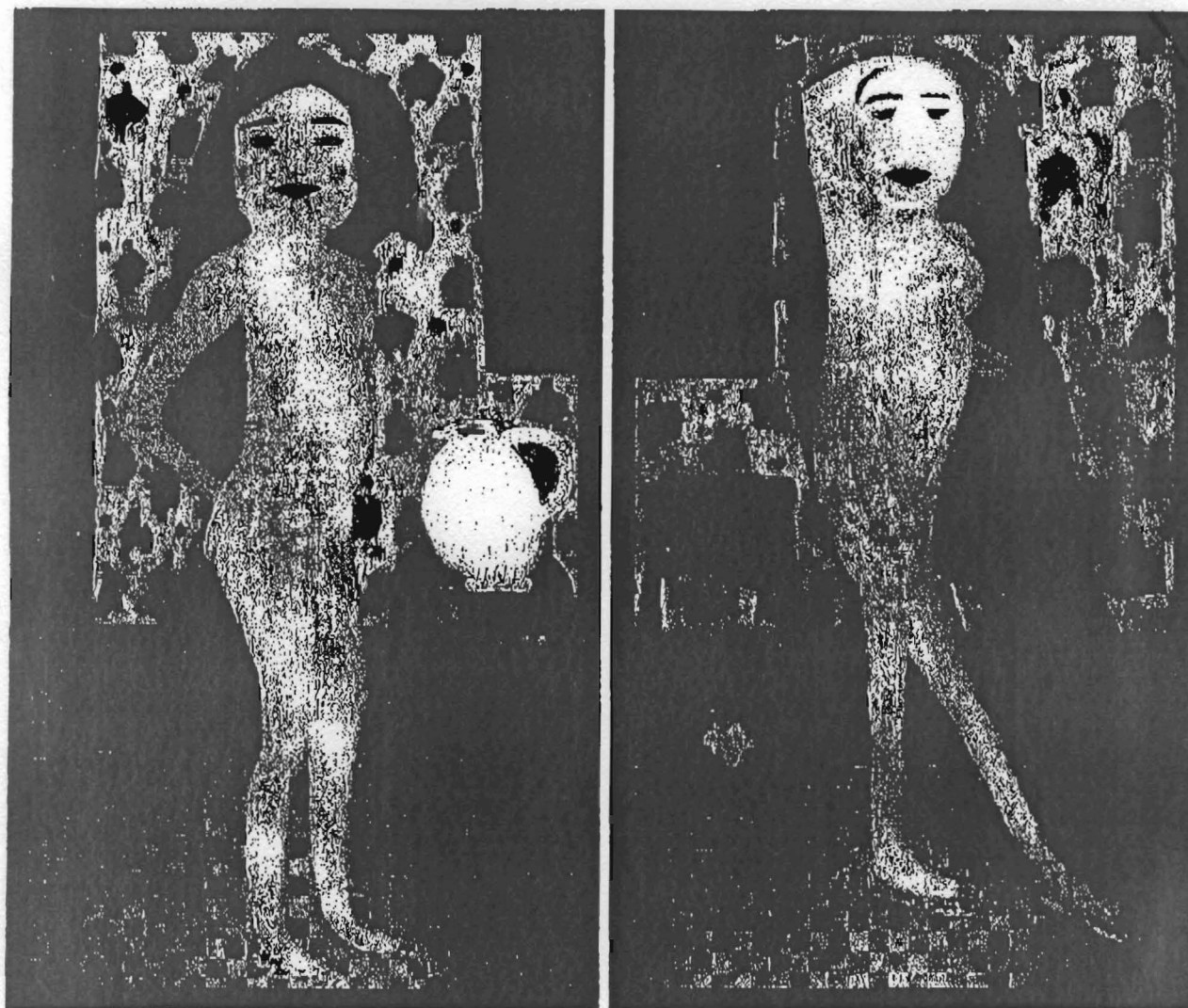


denise regan



Denise Regan, *Cleopatra and Nefertiti*, 1999, oil on linen, 84" x 48" each

July 17 - August 3, 1999

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ART NEWS JULY '99

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In the painting of Denise Regan, life is an adventure and the universe a circus. The players in it are gloriously unencumbered by the limitations of the physical world, and her still lives and landscapes vibrate with energy.

In Regan's world, acrobats balance effortlessly on the backs of crayon-colored horses, streaking across the canvas with outstretched legs, racing headlong into life. Musicians cradle violins in their arms like babies, and caress harps with the tenderness of lovers. Horn players close their eyes in pleasure and tilt back their heads; their instruments spring from their mouths like sound itself. Clouds move quietly through tinted skies.

Regan who earned an MFA from New York University, studying with such luminaries as Chuck Close and Don Eddy, came out painting geometric abstractions: "a rebellion," against the closely observed realism of her teachers." Following graduate school she worked as a printmaker with Arnold Hoffman, Jr. at the Springs Screen Printshop in East Hampton, New York. Her early work of that period is precise and tightly controlled. Evident even then is her mastery of the picture plane and her ability to knit a tight composition through surface tension.

This ability along with the vibrant pallet of her mature work, often earns the artist comparisons to the French Masters. She delights in the visual poetry of complex patterns; drapery and furnishings, garments and landscape, people animals are woven together seamlessly into the tapestry of her making. In her figurative paintings there is an intimacy expressed in the gesture of a hand covering a mouth, or an inclined head of two women in conversation which suggests the artist's close observation of humanity.

One of her recent series, "Five Sisters", was inspired by Regan's grandmother and her siblings. Like all of Regan's characters, the woman appear in many guises; in an impromptu jam session; gathered in clumps of conversation: on horseback (in a tongue-in-cheek rear view); and as classical bathers. While the real sisters inspired the work, it was Regan's lilting imagination and delicious sense of humor that cast them as girl singers with Benny Goodman. It is lovely to imagine them in swing time.

It is an aphorism that art imitates life, but in Regan's world, it is life that begins to imitate art. Scattered around her home and studio are lampshades that take on the rich patterns one finds in her paintings. The artist has created a delight even before food touches a plate. She has painted vases that contain whole worlds; landscapes alive with clouds, boats sailing ruffled seas. These objects which grew from the personal world of her paintings are reinserted into her painting whenever needed. And when the curtain rises on one of Regan's tableaux, one is reminded that to embrace joy, to experience bliss, is a choice one makes despite one's life circumstances. Her paintings construct a world of possibilities.