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"Bill Jensen: Duo Duo and Drunken Brush Drawings" at Danese until March 13 (41 East 57th Street, between Park and Madison Avenues, 212-223-2227). Prices: The gallery declined to disclose its prices.

"Ying Li" at the Painting Center until February 28 (52 Greene Street, 2nd Floor, between Broome and Grand Streets, 212-343-1060). Prices: \$1,800-\$4,000.

"Marc Quinn" at Mary Boone Gallery until February 28 (541 West 24th Street, between Tenth and Eleventh Avenues, 212-752-2929). Prices: \$125,000-\$140,000.

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Bill Jensen **Duo Duo #51** 2003
egg and oil tempera on paper, 20-1/4 x 14-1/2 inches
Courtesy Danese, New York

Jackson Pollock famously answered an inquiry about his influences with a belligerently short shortlist: Picasso and Albert Pinkham Ryder. A valid description of Bill Jensen - who is himself an eloquent and impassioned supporter of the maverick American romantic - would be a synthesis of Pollock and Ryder.

Like Pollock, Mr. Jensen is blessed with lyricism of line, a kind of suprapersonal calligraphy that is nonetheless intensely his own. But his brush is always tempered, questioned, energized by awkwardness: He is like the young Pollock in temper, mature Pollock in fluency.

Which is where Ryder, with his oxymoronically dark luminosity,

comes in. Although Mr. Jensen's palette is nothing like Ryder's--the American master was a reckless experimenter with bitumen-- it has something of his spiritual weight. Mr. Jensen's more recent work - some of which is hanging at Danese Gallery - reveals newfound chromatic boldness. This show brings together two series of works, both from last year: a densely colored and textured set, "Duo Duo," worked in egg-and-oil tempera, and "Drunken Brush," a predominantly black-and-white set whose appropriately Zen-like title signals a close affinity with Oriental calligraphy.

A "salt of the earth" quality to Mr. Jensen's color still reinforces the sense of his rootedness in nature, however. He seems at times to be willing himself to become an agent of nature, refusing to settle for being a mere transcriber of its surfaces. He replaces some of the intellectual ambition to be found in Terry Winters (an artist he sometimes resembles) or in Thomas Nozkowski, with an innocence not to be found in these more canny practitioners. His achievement, however, is to embrace the spiritual without going gooey.

In eloquent denial of William James's distinction between tough- and tender-mindedness, his forms and touch reveal traces of both. [no break] In similar vein, he collapses the dichotomy of fast and slow: The movements he describes and embodies seem, like geological forces, at once wayward and inevitable. They evolve at a mind-numbingly gradual pace yet suddenly jerk forward cataclysmically.

To my eye, Danese has overhung Mr. Jensen's dense, tense, and exhaustive paintings by around 30%, which will mislead cursory visitors with an impression of repetition and sameness. To the converted, however, this testing hang is an added incentive for repeat visits.



Ying Li **Vermont, Deep Fall** 2003
oil on canvas, 22 x 28 inches

For a more traditional but no less spirited pursuit of the lyrical in landscape, be sure to catch Ying Li's show at SoHo's Painting Center before it closes this weekend. Eighteen works reveal bewildering diversity both of influence and of pictorial ambition.

She has a touch to die for in terms of bravura painthandling and innate good taste. In her best works, she manages to endow brushstroke with the power of metaphor. Different brushes and their tips sometimes converge in a single canvas in a Dionysian orgy of painterliness.

Often, in works that look to Turner or Boudin or to more contemporary examples like Louis Finkelstein or Stuart Shils, Ms. Li is inspired to gorgeous but familiar effects, to a comfortable expression of the pleasures of landscape. In other works, she pushes further towards abstraction, almost offering a pastiche de Kooning, for instance, in "Riverstroke #1" (2003), but with no less tasteful a result.

Only in two or three works, however, does a restlessness reveals itself, an indication that jouissance is not enough. "Vermont, Deep Fall" (2003), for instance, shares the frenzied logic of Soutine to suggest that expressiveness and a sense of structure need not be mutually exclusive. Ms. Li's best paintings pulsate with emotional and pictorial complexity.



Marc Quinn **Tom Yendell** 2000
marble, 68 x 26 x 5 inches

Marc Quinn has always been one of the more thoughtful of the "YBAs," the notorious band of young Brits collected in the 1990s by Charles Saatchi. True, Mr. Quinn went for the jugular with "Self" (1991), a self-portrait head made of 8 frozen pints of his own blood, but his work is usually richer and more historically layered than that of his shamelessly shallow and opportunistic peers.

His current show at Mary Boone finely balances the poignant and the prurient. He has had 11 carvings made of people with missing or deformed limbs, victims of birth defects or misadventures. These enervatingly literal carvings have the deathly dullness of the neo-classical Bertel Thorvaldsen. But by finding models of a certain readymade modernity, Mr. Quinn can be said to have married the academicism of that dreary Dane with the biomorphic oddity of Henry Moore or Arp - a fusion typical of Britain's young neo-conceptualists.

Mr. Quinn was shortlisted for a competition staged at London's National Gallery recently for a work for the empty pedestal in Trafalgar Square. He chose to depict Alison Lapper, a thalidomide child, now grown and in an advanced state of pregnancy. He argued that it complemented Horatio Nelson atop his column on two counts: overcoming handicap is as heroic as fighting for one's nation, while the admiral is famously missing a limb and an organ.

Seen alone, Ms. Lapper was indeed heroic. But amassed in a whole Valhalla of the deformed and the maimed, Mr. Quinn's

project begins to seem a little sick. That said, the figures are of handsome, strong, and athletic men and women, dignified in the titles with their real names. If they inspire some viewers to confront their own squeamishness and preconceptions about beauty and wholeness, they will have achieved something.