

(AN APPROPRIATE DISTANCE) FROM THE MAYOR'S DOORSTEP
4 DEFINITE PLUSSES

By Piri Halasz
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Susan Roth (b. 1950). Sun Kissed, 1983. Acrylic on handmade paper, 22 x 30 inches. Courtesy of David Mirvish. Photo courtesy of Freedman Art.

“PAINTERLY PASTED PICTURES”

A very different but equally enjoyable exhibition currently at **Freedman Art** is **“Painterly Pasted Pictures,”** a show of 25 mixed-media pictures, mostly small & mostly paper collages, curated by **E. A. Carmean, Jr.** (through May 18). Accompanied by a pretty little catalogue, in which Carmean traces the history of pasted papers from Braque and Arp to Stella and Kelly, this show focuses primarily on “painterly” collages made in the 1950s and 1960s by first- and second-generation abstract expressionists. Collage, of course, is a versatile medium, and, by employing papers with representational imagery printed on them, can be put to literary purposes, as was so memorably demonstrated by surrealists like Max Ernst in the 1920s and 30s. By contrast, this show is almost entirely abstract, indicating that the artists chose the papers they used, and their other media, for purely visual and tactile qualities.

By “painterly,” Carmean seems to mean collages that eschew hard-edge & usually cut paper for softer-edged & often torn papers. “Painterly” is a term that he

ostensibly borrowed from **Heinrich Wölfflin**, the Swiss-born art historian who introduced the word to art history and used it to characterize the baroque, as opposed to the “linear” or “classical” (i.e. Renaissance). I must say, though, that as Carmean uses the term, it seems to have more to do with **Clement Greenberg’s** borrowing of the term, to apply to the abstract expressionism of the 40s and 50s, and to oppose it to the “post-painterly abstraction” of the 1960s. This is a minor point, though, and I won’t belabor it. Never let it be said that a catalogue kept me from enjoying a show.

True, there’s neither Braque nor Arp in this show, and the work by Stella & Kelly left me cold. I’ve also seen **Robert Motherwell** and **Esteban Vicente** better represented, but there’s a most illuminating brightly-colored **de Kooning** here, an atypically moody **Franz Kline**, **Anne Ryan** at her most exquisite, and a hilariously witty **Helen Frankenthaler**, built around a paper Bingo card. Also notable are the cute little **Joseph Cornell**, incorporating a photograph of a soft, furry pussy cat, and the poetic contribution of **Adja Yunkers**. Standing out in a class by itself, however, is “Sun Kissed” (1983), by **Susan Roth**. The youngest artist in this distinguished company, Roth more than holds her own with her large, folded and artistically ruffled sheets of handmade paper, elegantly tinted in soft yellows and grayish blues.

<http://www.pirihalasz.com/blog.htm?post=907117>