

SEAS OF POSSIBILITIES:

The Paintings of
Olivia Petrides & Sarah Krepp

Olivia Petrides imbues icebergs with a faintly surreal, almost mystical presence. Sarah Krepp creates all-over fields filled with small, irregularly shaped pieces, then superimposes and embeds curvilinear lines and geometric patterns within her richly layered surfaces. When these two artist friends decided to have a two-person show together, they tried to find something that would tie their very different kinds of work together. Side-by-side, there appears to be very little relationship between Petrides' small, quietly dignified works and Krepp's large, boldly colored and dynamically abstract canvases. Nevertheless, they discovered a conceptual connection, which is reflected in the title of their exhibition: "Icy/I See: Metaphors of the Sea." The title refers to both the icy sea ("Icy") in Petrides' Greenland seascapes, as well as the vision charts and Braille dots ("I See") in Krepp's "White Noise" works. This conceptual word play provides a rationale of sorts, but beyond the pun-filled title, there is also a subtle perceptual component that ties the two diverse bodies of work together.

The swirling, curvilinear patterns endemic to Petrides' deeply incised,

fissured and stratified Greenland icebergs — the sculptural creation of wind, water and freezing temperatures that resembles at various times the folds in a curtain, the drifting of desert sands or ripples in water currents — is echoed in the curvilinear lines traversing the surfaces of Krepp's works, such as "White Noise: Silence (Golden)" and "White Noise: Whirlwind." In Krepp's abstract pieces, however, the circuitous lines seem to chart a "sea" of signs, symbols and shard fragments as if it were the path of a ship navigating a course across an ocean of tiny islands. Sometimes they look like a topographical map superimposed with the weather patterns, fronts and atmospheric conditions of a meteorologist's diagram. There even is the hint of a grid underlying Krepp's compositions that seems to evoke the image of latitude and longitude lines.

In one very literal correlation between Petrides' and Krepp's work, the latter artist depicts a realistic (at least when seen from a distance), three-dimensional surface of sea waves in a "panel" running along the bottom one-third of the crimson picture plane of "White Noise: Compass Rose." The remaining

space above the bottom panel is filled with a typical swarm of shattered fragments, curvilinear lines, diagonal stripes like those on railroad crossing gates and an eye chart of alphabet-like signs. The irony here is that Krepp's water and icon images are rendered in a realistic, almost hard-edged manner, whereas Petrides' approach to water, as well as the iconic character of her icebergs, is far more painterly and romantic, profoundly nuanced and almost dream-like. Hence, the appearance of a "real" thing in Krepp's overall abstract composition is, paradoxically, more realistic, while figurative things in Petrides' more classically realistic paintings are depicted in a slightly abstracted, nearly surreal and symbolic way.

In short, what we have here are two different, yet related versions of how the world is shaped by powerful forces. For Petrides, wind, weather conditions and temperature have molded sea, sky and ice. For Krepp, it is the human mind which has created order amid a chaos of symbols, signs and images. In both cases, the artist's hand has given idiosyncratic shape, order and meaning to what was previously a collection of random objects and things. And in their attempts to find a common ground between figuration and abstraction, both within individual paintings and between each other's paintings, the artists suggest a similar dynamic in their respective interpretations of reality.

by Michael Bonesteel

Arts writer and author, *Henry Darger: Art & Selected Writings*, Rizzoli, 2000

OLIVIA PETRIDES / SARAH KREPP
LAS MANOS GALLERY, CHICAGO / FEBRUARY 4 - MARCH 3, 2005

PAINTING PHOTOS: TOM VAN ENDE

Saturday-Sunday, noon-5pm

Gallery hours: Wednesday-Friday, 3pm-7pm

Opening Reception: Friday, February 4, 5pm-8pm

FEBRUARY 4 - MARCH 3, 2005

METAPHORS OF THE SEA

ICY / I SEE

SARAH KREPP

OLIVIA PETRIDES

773.728.8910

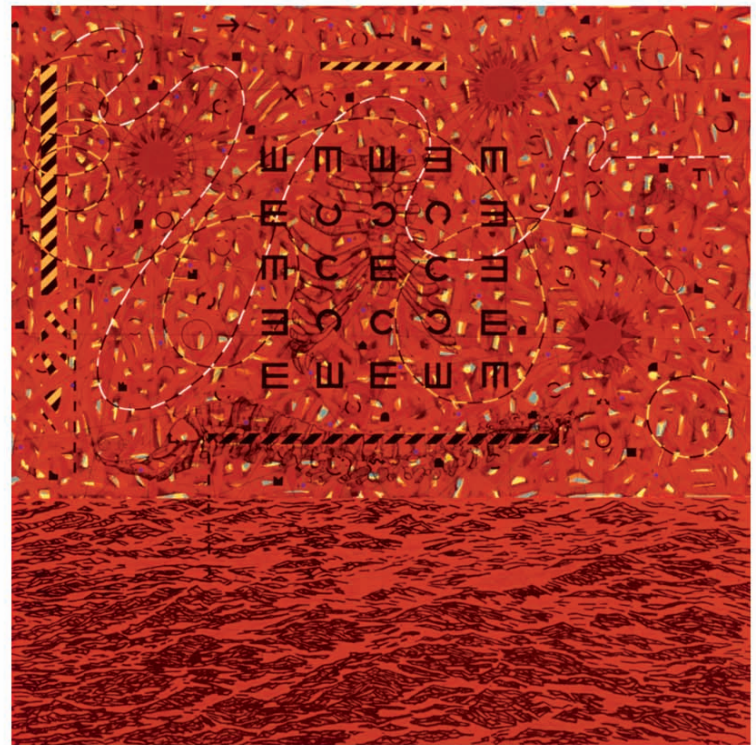
CHICAGO, ILLINOIS 60640

5220 NORTH CLARK ST

LAS MANOS GALLERY



Olivia Petrides, "Greenland Glacier IV (detail)." Oil on panel, 13"x29", 2004



Sarah Krepp, "White Noise: Compass Rose." Oil and mixed media on linen, 72"x72", 2003

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