

KATHERINE CARTER Hal Bromm/West Broadway  
CLAIRE LIEBERMAN Jayne H. Baum  
CHRIS MacDONALD/  
EDWARD ALLINGTON Diane Brown  
CAROLINE HALLAS 14 Sculptors  
RUSSELL SHARON Hal Bromm/Avenue A

By ROBERT MAHONEY

## RUSSELL SHARON

The "new" in art, responds to a greater consolidation in culture and society. When American culture had only painting to see it's virgin landscape with, landscape painting was our cinema. Crowds paid hard coin to come see Church's "picture windows" on *Niagara Falls*. Generations later, the machine eyes of culture have stripped painting of the picture window function. The "new landscape" is a meditation on the memory of landscape in a cooped-

up city room: the creation of an evocative art object of high "art tech" quality, where the landscape comes up as a mirage of side-effect—is most important now. Where landscape painters used to hew down gilded elm trees to frame their vision of the land; the cultural arbor—more complex than urban plumbing, yields up a ration of sticks for each to fashion a fetish of the lost Eden.

Russell Sharon is definitely of the "new landscape" school: his work is the product of a highly discrete, complex, implosive culture; where broad fields have been cut to ribbons by the dense interest of every market for every other. His work, in its purest form, is also typical of the "new landscape" in being more concerned with the frame-and-picture object, more than any illustration of subject matter. Just over the entrance to the Bromm gallery is, in many ways, the most successful work in the show; a running series of small panels that give the space an architectural molding. All "scenery" is compressed into the wooden ribbon. It then surprises and delights us that the artist saw a mirage of his home land in the urban mold, and painted it there.

On the opposite end of the spectrum, Sharon's large installations have the tension of a caged animal, and create a sophisticated effect.

But, in between, when Sharon plays "painter," he comes too close to the format of the picture window. Some smaller works still have the trapped tension. In one series, the wood frame becomes a kind of cage, when red painted sticks condemn the unobstructed view, and end up as redwoods of memory, staged like puppets in front of a naively colored backdrop (the painting). These tense tableaux succeed. The ensemble effect, seen from the side, when the "trees" close ranks to venetian-blind the landscape, all capture our citified inability to see the forest through the trees.

But in some large works, when canvas size swells, and tries to put on a straight face, transplanting the stick or urbanity into an actual landscape painting; Sharon's color, technique, and composition, lose the edge. The tricks of the urban undead shrivel up in the bright sun. Blinded by the same color, the predictable scenery—one rushes back to one's apartment to savor a keepsake and the eccentric memory of the day. (Hal Bromm/Avenue A, *May 1-June 1*)

# HAL BROMM

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