

Critics' Forum

Visual Arts

Doors to Perception: An Exhibition of Seta Injeyan's Work

By Adriana Tchalian

Seta Injeyan is a prolific Armenian visual artist working in Southern California. Her latest exhibition, entitled *Doors to Dimensions*, at Harvest Gallery in Glendale, California explores the notion of perception. Interestingly, the exhibition bears an affinity to another one across town, at the Los Angeles Museum of Contemporary Art, entitled *Ecstasy: In and about Altered States*, which investigates consciousness and alternative modes of perception.

Injeyan is among a small group of Armenian female visual artists who are exploring issues concerning post-modern identity. Her digital portraits combine photography with traditional media, such as oil or acrylic on canvas. She describes this process as “alchemical” because, as she puts it, “my impressions and intuition enter into this process of portraiture.”

As the Harvest exhibition's title suggests, this particular collection of Injeyan's work is organized around the notion of doors to perception and new ways of seeing. The notion itself is not new. It was popularized by the band The Doors, who sang, “Break on through to the other side....” Even earlier, the Romantic poet William Blake suggested that, “If the doors of perception were cleansed, everything would appear to man as it is, infinite.” For centuries, in fact, the mind has been regarded as a portal to another or a greater consciousness. Injeyan's work makes interesting references to this entire tradition, translating it into modern terms and for a modern audience.

The painting on the front of the postcard for the exhibition also bears affinities to another tradition of seeing and perception—French works in the *trompe l'oeil* (literally, “trick the eye”) style, in which paintings were made to look like three-dimensional objects, including doors and windows.

Injeyan's painting shows a woman's image reflected in a half-open door, her image and that of the door distorting the idyllic scene visible behind it. This exercise in multiple levels of seeing and deception bring the viewer into the painting and focus attention on the act of perception and consciousness. How closely does our perception shape what we see? How much of what we see is in fact of our own making?

Injeyan herself draws inspiration from many sources. In her words: “Realism and Surrealism, Expressionism and Impressionism, Abstract and Photo-Realism are the energy sources in my work,” recasting those traditions in our own modes and habits of perception.

In certain cases, Injeyan's paintings, most of them executed by painting over digital images, could benefit from additional fine-tuning. But overall, the exhibition provides an interesting commentary on art, perception, and the act of creating both.

Doors to Dimensions is due to run until November 27, 2005.

All Rights Reserved: Critics Forum, 2005

Adriana Tchalian holds a Masters degree in Art History and has managed several art galleries in Los Angeles.

You can reach her or any of the other contributors to Critics' Forum at comments@criticsforum.org. This and all other articles published in this series are available online at www.criticsforum.org. To sign up for a weekly electronic version of new articles, go to www.criticsforum.org/join. Critics' Forum is a group created to discuss issues relating to Armenian art and culture in the Diaspora.