



Vanessa Prager, "Never There," 2012, ballpoint pen on music paper, 23 x 17", is currently on view at Richard Heller.

Ranging in size from medium to large (up to 7 feet tall), these paintings show her experimenting with color, composition, and texture. In "Portrait of Two Popcorn," she features two popped kernels on a black background, and adeptly puts in a bit of ghostly reflection on the surface upon which they are sitting. In "Popping" dozens of kernels are caught suspended in midair, again with a black background, as if they were flying through deep space. "Big Pop" depicts popcorn as if you were looking into a bowl of the stuff, successfully creating a sense of depth and three-dimensionality through composition and color values, and the saucy addition of blues and purples.

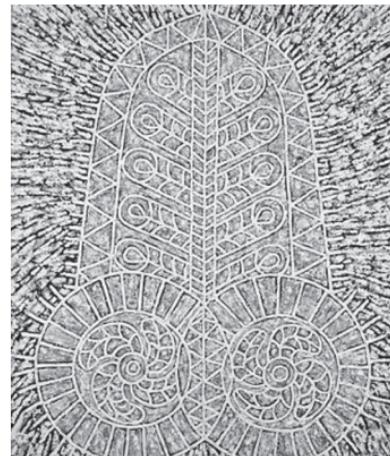
Sager instinctively knows how our cravings get triggered - we love the promise of sweet, gooey things with contrasting textures and golden colors. "Global Warming" is a close-up of a ball of vanilla ice cream sitting on a thick cookie and covered with gooey, dripping-down hot fudge. There are bumps of peanuts underneath that chocolate coating. As you take a bite (in your mind) you can savor the warm and cool. Another spellbinder is "Drippy" with its layers of crunchy peanut butter, grapey red jelly, and biscuits. On the right, one giant drip of jelly is cascading down the side, and the crumbs in the biscuit are so beautifully painted, you can feel them rolling around on your tongue (William Turner Gallery, Santa Monica).

Scarlet Cheng

These erotic cathedrals play right into the popular notion that art is religion for atheists. The lines and white light that emanate from **Helen Rebekah Garber's** series of gargantuan phalluses are full of virtual stained glass, the robust and then repressed colors of her underpainting glowing around the seemingly billions of carefully applied white lines and marks like sunlight. If the results do not consistently sustain the lift of the initial powerful impression, this is eros aimed directly at our spiritual gland, whatever that is and wherever that may be. I have no doubt that many viewers will be rendered positively weak in the knees. If you arrive a skeptic, you'll leave with at least second thoughts. A series of faces downstairs never make it much past their indebtedness to Alexej Jawlensky, though they do not fail to keep the pedal to the metal (Charlie James Gallery, Chinatown).

Bill Lasarow

Not since the 2008 restoration of the Beaux-Arts mansion that Henry and Arabella Huntington called home, when decorators erected a cheeky cardboard stand-in to serve as the place saver for an elegant grandfather clock, has there been such an unprecedented tweak to the historic permanent collection housed in the Huntington Art Gallery. The current eye opening assault, in the form of an inspiring collection of contemporary bronze sculptures and abstract oil paintings by **Ricky Swallow** and **Lesley Vance**, commands an upstairs gallery that formerly housed



Helen Rebekah Garber, "Tower 1," 2012, oil on canvas, 84 x 60", is currently on view at Charlie James.