

Bob Rizzo, Paintings and Sculpture; Katherine Veneman, Paintings; Mike Fitzgerald, Paintings
Full Circle Gallery/Providence
John Pantalone, Art New England, April/May 2000

Katherine Veneman's engaging work combines contrasting elements of both Kandinsky and de Kooning in an abstract expressionism that hides itself at one angle, reveals itself at another. Filled with bright yellow, orange, blue, and red against black and white, sweeping lines, overlapping layers of shapes, and spaces within spaces, these large oils insist that you study them, leave them, then return to reread them like a favorite novel. Second, third, and fourth readings each reveal technical elements and nuances of meaning.

Bold, curving lines that look like architectural details at one point become majestic birds at another; shapes that hide within spaces as you look straight on become distinct when viewed at a forty-five degree angle; and cityscapes emerge behind a mélange of lines and shapes. In *One Point to Another*, a bridgelike highway structure floats near the center amid a rush of swirling lines and flying paint. Where, you wonder, is this bridge going?

The protean Bob Rizzo accompanied his roughly assembled warriors with a series of beautiful color studies-accomplished over the past year or so-offering stark contrast between the wood-based sculptures and the soft, almost lyrical paintings. He patiently adorns his totem-like structures with flotsam, furniture legs, interior architectural remnants, and a wild assortment of odds and ends-from nails and spikes to seashells, feathers, animal skulls, rusted tools, fishing lures, tiny bells and what not. Almost uniformly drab, the sculptures possess a persevering life, which emanates from their status as junk saved from death like old warriors who refuse to die. They also enjoy a crude robotic personality as if they were creating a bridged dialogue from ancient to modern times.

By contrast, his paintings are lovely, colorful bursts of red, orange,

green, brown, black, yellow, and blue. *Cave Dweller* offers a fiery red cauldron that could be either hell or the dawn of a new age. *From the Center* camouflages urban structures while allowing them to peek out through a veil of restful color. *Thru the Keyhole* cleverly clarifies distorted vision, and in *The Tempest* you can clearly discern the bicycle that might have belonged to the Wicked Witch of Dorothy's strange dream, suggesting perhaps that all perception is a strange dream.

Mike Fitzgerald's small oil mood paintings hold their strength as nicely rendered atmospheric scenes that transfer momentary moods to nature through the use of color and light. In a political departure from most of the paintings, he adds charcoal to two expressionist pieces that possess a nervous energy, which helps define a more subtle energy resting beneath the surface of smaller natural scenes.