



Alan Belcher, "I watched the world spin," 2006, mounted canvas, 12 1/2" diameter x 2 1/2"



Beatriz Milhazes, "The Solignon (2002 grapes)," 2006, mounted artwork, 42 x 60", artist's ed. 25

instead of panoramas, all six paintings creep out the horizon, arriving in on the interface between heaven and earth that occurs where flora stretches up into sky—the sort of view you get causing your head in the transition between earthly preoccupations and gazing off into the void. If such language reads as vaguely spiritual in tone, it's no accident, for one can hardly describe Eli's canvases without dipping into such vocabulary. The ribbons of pink hair (which bear a curious resemblance to Warhol's camouflage paintings as well as to Turner's storm) in *Down* and the deep-purple clouds dancing around a full moon in *Dark* suggest both literally and metaphorically the turbulence of moving from darkness to illumination. Morning measurable delivers such a burst of radiant light that it appears at first as if the painting has been overlit, and the tell-tale rays in *Midday* stream down so evenly from on high that they seem to promise at least some form of transcendence.

It is, however, *Afternoon*—whose seaward curving trees mimic the lines of the long, tall vault of a Gothic nave and whose orange, red, yellow, and green light defines the gaps between tree branches like facets of a stained-glass window—that most astutely betrays the nature-as-cathedral subtext. Eli's paintings recall, in both design and spirit, the paintings of Gothic rains silhouetted against massive trees and luminous skies rendered nearly two centuries ago by Caspar David Friedrich, who expressed the notion that art serves to mediate a nature "too great, too sublime for the multitude to grasp." If Friedrich was in the business of mediating nature, Eli's seems to offer instead a nature

that has been concentrated, distilled, and flavored a subtle punch for the taste of a new generation.

—Christopher Mills

TORONTO
ALAN BELCHER
THE JAPAN FOUNDATION

Alan Belcher's recent show "Private•Language" was a testament to the generative possibilities of hybridity, both cross-cultural and aesthetic. Produced after a residency in Japan last year, much of the work features Belcher's translations of various writings (the sources of which include Darwin, Napoleon, Diana Vreeland, and the artist himself) into his own highly individualized Japanese calligraphic script. Series such as the "Diary flags"—white twill banners (perhaps meant to recall the Edo flag) bearing Japanese glosses of excerpts from Belcher's journal—fuse his personal meditations with forms borrowed from Japanese culture; at times a playful *arte povera* element is thrown into the aesthetic mix, as in "... abdominal muscles," 1998, in which a flag envelops a six-pack of beer. While this isn't the first time Belcher has made explicitly autobiographical work, he has relinquished the aggressive masochism of his earlier self-portrait voodoo dolls (which came complete with hair and nail clippings and swatches of the artist's own pajamas) and the 1997 billboard piece in which he appeared, naked, in various poses, with the words "Kill Me" and his phone number listed underneath.

Three other series on view (all 1998) display their Japanese translations prominently: the "Empire ceramics" consist of off-white plates and bowls bearing quotes from Napoleon's journal; the "Darwin slates" are irregular pieces of slate with chalk inscriptions that quote the father of natural selection; and the "Vreeland lacquers" comprise darkly lacquered pine boards with pithy sayings from the eccentric style doyenne written in gold ink, including such puzzling insights as "the bikini is the biggest thing since the atom bomb." But the show risks being a little too private by not displaying any English translations other than the cryptic excerpts that constitute the works' titles (the piece with the bikini quote is called "... since the atom bomb ...," for example). An accompanying artist's statement indicates that explanations are only available from Belcher himself—a tantalizing strategy intended to liberate the viewer from the demands of "getting it" but that obfuscates some of the most delightful aspects of the work for those outside his personal sphere.

The "Friends" series, a set of plush sculptures named after close acquaintances of the artist, requires no translation. Executed in 1996, prior to the Japan trip, each piece combines odd elements—a volleyball, a replica of a gillbladder, a bunch of bananas—into a form, brightly holed hybrid. Perhaps like the work's human counterparts, there is no missing their quirky charm. The "Friends" privilege the inventive commingling of cultures and aesthetics, as well as the gesture of homage, that characterizes the Japan series. The writing on one Darwin slate

translates as: "Nature causes species to alter. Only those whose mutations are appropriate to their surroundings will prosper." Perhaps Belcher's translational alterations will prove fit in the long run.

—Lisa Gabrielle Mark

RIO DE JANEIRO
BEATRIZ MILHAZES
PAÇO IMPERIAL

This exhibition of prints presented a lesser-known side of Rio de Janeiro-based painter Beatriz Milhazes. Since 1996, the artist has made several visits to DuSable Press, in Passaic, New Jersey, in order to produce screenprints. It was at the invitation of Jean-Paul Russell, one of Andy Warhol's printers, that Milhazes first began to experiment with serigraphy. The result of those efforts, large-format works made between 1997 and 1998, were on show at Paço Imperial.

One of the principal exponents of Brazil's so-called '80s Generation, Milhazes began, in the middle of that decade, working to develop a new method of painting. When she began a work on canvas, Milhazes does not paint on it directly. She first paints motifs, drawings, and prototypes on plastic surfaces, peels them off, and then lets by little applies them to the canvas, superimposing images and colors and trying out new combinations. Her superimposed curves and calligraphies recall dholies and antique embossedness, giving honor to the manual work of women, while other forms suggest hills, waves, precious stones, eyes, suns, even the resaille of baroque art. At the same time, with their flowers and other symbols of peace and love, these canvases also borrow from the vocabulary of '60s psychedelia. Sometimes the even challenges the viewer's perception, choosing narrative titles for the works though no obvious visual link suggests them.

Like her paintings, Milhazes's screenprints play with notions of ornamentation and decoration, offering a multiplicity of meanings. In these works, too, her signature curving forms, superimposed on one another, evoke arabesques, flowers, and the colorful crocheted tablecloths, woven rugs, and gaily printed fabrics of everyday life in Brazil. While Milhazes's paintings typically overflow with color, her palette seems almost parsimonious in the prints. In works such as *Cabeça de Mulher (Head of a woman)*, 1996, *Entre o Mar e Montanhas (Between the ocean and the mountains)*, 1998, *Um Solgaço (Wild grapes)*, 1998, or *O Fato (The swan)*, 1998, she

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