Don Eddy at Nancy Hoffman Gallery

October 27-December 3, 2011

The next exhibition at Nancy Hoffman Gallery is recent work by Don Eddy, opening on October 27th and continuing through December 3rd, 2011. Among the first generation of realist painters, Eddy is one of the few who have taken his vision and unique painting process into new subject matter and a new visual arena. In the '70s Eddy painted the urban landscape, the California urban landscape, focusing on cars, reflections on the sides of cars, bumpers, headlights. For the past several years he has returned to the imagery of the urban landscape, this time using New York as his prime subject.

Painted in 20-30 layers of transparent acrylic over an under-painting of three colors, (the first being tiny circles about a 20th of an inch in diameter of phthalocyanine green) Eddy’s new multi-panel works are “saturated” in palette and in subject. More complex and more concentrated than his earlier works, the recent paintings offer the viewer much to experience and savor slowly.

New York, or “the City” figures as the locus around which all revolves in several paintings. In “Evening Calls Sad Anteros,” New York is viewed from a-high, the cityscape becomes rooftops, water towers, building finials, Central Park treetops; a stormy, almost apocalyptic sky looms overhead, creating an elegiac air. Underneath the main panel is a predella of three images. Left and right are sculptural details from a Greek sarcophagus of gods and angels, and in the center blossoming magnolias. As evening falls in the city, the sexual/social hunt begins. It is often predatory and Anteros laments the absence of love in the evening hunt, or in the broader sense could this be the artist’s post 9/11 statement, that New York will flower again and anew, a city of thousands of sparkling windows.

In “Seasonal City II,” a four panel magnum opus, on which the artist worked for a year, Eddy celebrates each season: both autumn and spring are images on different sides of 59th Street, the “bottom” of Central Park, winter is Washington Square Park and summer a vista of the ferry terminals in Battery Park. Cascading through all four panels are branches, golden in autumn, bare in winter, blossoming in spring, and refulgent green in summer. The branches become a leitmotif that creates a rhythmic dance across the surface. Light is as important to Eddy as is the subject matter itself. How light sparkles on the river, how it bounces off building windows, how it casts shadows in the snow. Eddy has “upped the ante” in his depiction of light in this painting, as well as in the other works in the show, which range from daylight radiance to nighttime glow.

In his most recent tri-partite painting, “Mono No Aware,” titled after a Japanese term of esthetics, which means among other things, an awareness of impermanence, and a “wistful sadness at the passing of things,” Eddy bathes each image in sparkling light, cherry blossoms bloom and drop from the tree, fountain waters bubble and are gone, a chimney remains from the joinery building at Jefferson’s Monticello, the only remnant of an historical building. “Things” fade and disappear, light endures.

Over the past several years the artist’s explorations into the mysteries of nature, perception, and the world around him have deepened. He juxtaposes images in poetic relationship to one another, “echo structures,” as the artist calls these connections. In Donald Kuspit’s book, Don Eddy, The Art of Paradox, the author writes: “an Eddy picture is a kind of Chinese box in which each stage of consciousness folds into the other, creating an all-in-one effect, giving the picture a magical density and grandeur.” Like magnetic shavings that coalesce through attraction, the images Eddy juxtaposes coalesce through what one might call “attraction,” echo structures of life. When asked about his new work, the artist wrote:
“These works grow out of what I call ‘lived experience’ as opposed to ‘cognitive experience’. The work is not an illustration of an idea, but a manifestation of an existential condition.

“Recently I was reading a novel titled The Historian and came across a passage that helps me write about these paintings. The central male character in the novel talks about taking a train from Istanbul to Budapest in the early 1900s. He reflects on how the landscape and culture change as the train moves north. He marvels that ‘the landscape itself seemed saturated in history’. I was struck by that observation and mesmerized by the word ‘saturated’. It occurred to me that these few sentences in the novel got at a small piece of a larger experience: it is not just that ‘the landscape is saturated with history’ but more globally every place is saturated with every other place, every time saturated with every other time. Further, one can sense place infused not with just one moment in time and history, but saturated with Time itself. Place and Time become living, dynamic entities of which any place and time is only a localized instance.

“Something like this is at the heart of these paintings. My experience is that every place seems to echo the heartbeat (even the heartbreak) of another place. Every place summons up the ghosts of each and every instance of history in that and other places. The world abounds in an echo structure, never issuing one sound, but a wealth of echoes through time. And any moment in time seems like a small and contained room in which the floor and ceiling drop away revealing all Time: Past, Present, and Future.”

Also in the exhibition are several colored pencil drawings; each rich, dense and built up over months in layers of pigment. In the works on paper, Eddy zeroes in on aspects of nature, each a poetic evocation. “Night and Day” is a small diptych of night: an equinox moon framed by autumn leaves; day is the reflection of autumn leaves in a rippling river, the duet a tone poem for a season. The most abstract work in the exhibition, entitled “Beatrice,” is the inside of a pale peach-colored rose, the petals unfurled in the fullness of summer bloom. The rose stretches top and bottom, right and left, the outside petals not revealed to the viewer, an ode to life. Unlike the intensity of the other drawings, “Beatrice” seems to whisper the artist’s message of universal spirituality.

Don Eddy was born in Long Beach, California in 1944. He received a B.F.A. in 1967 and an M.F.A. in 1969 from the University of Hawaii. The artist attended the University of California, Santa Barbara, 1969-70, for post-graduate study.

Don Eddy’s work has been widely shown throughout this country at the Arkansas Arts Center, Little Rock; Bergstrom-Mahler Museum, Neenah, Wisconsin; Boca Raton Museum of Art, Florida; Boise Art Museum, Idaho; The Brooklyn Museum, New York; The Butler Institute of American Art, Youngstown, Ohio; Carnegie Institute, Pittsburgh; The Cathedral Church of Saint John the Divine; New York; Center for the Arts, Vero Beach, Florida; The Cleveland Museum of Art, Ohio; Columbus Museum of Art, Ohio; Contemporary Arts Center, New Orleans; The Contemporary Museum, Honolulu; Danforth Museum of Art, Framingham, Massachusetts, Duke University Museum of Art, Durham, North Carolina; Flint Institute of Arts, Michigan; Greenville County Museum of Art, South Carolina; Heckscher Museum, Huntington, New York; The Huntington Museum of Art, West Virginia; Indianapolis Museum of Art, Indiana; Mana Art Center, Jersey City, New Jersey; Museum of Art, Fort Lauderdale; The Museum of Modern Art, New York; Nassau County Museum of Art, Roslyn Harbor, New York; The Oakland Museum, California; Oklahoma Art Center, Oklahoma City; Orlando Museum of Art, Florida; Pennsylvania Academy of the Fine Arts, Philadelphia; The Philbrook Museum of Art, Tulsa, Oklahoma; Polk Museum of Art, Lakeland, Florida; San Antonio Museum of Art, Texas; San Francisco Museum of Modern Art, California; Tampa Museum of Art, Florida; Tucson Museum of Art, Arizona; Virginia Beach Center for the Arts, Virginia; Virginia Museum of Fine Arts, Richmond; Whitney Museum of America Art, New York; Wichita Art Museum, Kansas; Jane Voorhees Zimmerli Art Museum at Rutgers, University, New Brunswick, New Jersey; among others, and abroad at Aarhus Kunst Museum, Denmark; Australia National Gallery, Canberra; Gl. Holtegaards, Copenhagen; Centro Mostre, Rome; Deutsche Guggenheim, Berlin; The Gulbenkian Museum, Lisbon; in Japan at City Museum of Iwaki; Hokodate Museum of Art, Hokkaido; Kumamoto Prefectural Museum of Art;
and Prefectural Museum of Iwate; Kunstverein, Hannover; Kunsthalle, Nuremberg; Musee de Strasbourg; Musee d’Art Moderne et Contemporain, Strasbourg, France; National Museum in Gdansk, Poland; and Salas de Exposiciones de Bellas Artes, Madrid.

The artist’s work is represented in the collections of Akron Art Museum, Ohio; Boise Art Museum, Idaho; The Butler Institute of American Art, Youngstown, Ohio; The Cleveland Museum of Art, Ohio; The Contemporary Museum, Honolulu; Danforth Museum of Art, Framingham, Massachusetts; Evansville Museum of Arts, History & Science, Indiana; Flint Institute of Arts, Michigan; Fogg Art Museum, Harvard University, Massachusetts; Fort Wayne Museum of Art, Indiana; Hofstra University Museum, Hempstead, New York; Honolulu Academy of Arts, Hawaii; The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York; Mississippi Museum of Art, Jackson; The Museum of Modern Art, New York; Oklahoma City Museum of Art, Oklahoma; Haggin Museum, California; Rhode Island School of Design Museum of Art, Providence; Saint Louis Art Museum, Missouri; San Antonio Museum of Art, Texas; Santa Barbara Museum of Art, California; Sheldon Museum of Art, University of Nebraska, Lincoln; Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum, New York; Speed Art Museum, Louisville, Kentucky; Springfield Art Museum, Missouri; Storm King Art Center, Mountainville, New York; The Toledo Museum of Art, Ohio; University Museum of Contemporary Art, University of Massachusetts, Amherst; Whitney Museum of American Art, New York; among others, and in collections abroad: Israel Museum; Jerusalem; Musee D’Art Moderne de Saint-Etienne Metropole, St. Etienne, France, Museo de Arte Moderno, Bogota; Neue Galerie, Aachen, Germany; Utrecht Museum, The Netherlands.

The book Don Eddy, The Art of Paradox, written by Donald Kuspit and published by Hudson Hills Press, New York, is available through the gallery.

Don Eddy resides in New York.

For further information and/or photographs please call 212-966-6676 or e-mail Nancy Hoffman Gallery at info@nancyhoffmangallery.com.

Yours sincerely,

Nancy Hoffman

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