

artsmagazine

Frank Bowling REVISIONS Part 2 Color and Recent Painting



Joe Fisher, *Thirteenth Hour* (1971-72), 14½' x 7½', a/c. Coll. of the artist.

Joe Fisher and Frances Barth are two young artists. Barth is included in the Whitney Annual but Fisher is not. Barth's work in the Whitney is rather large, 73¼" x 145½", a green picture called *Boudu Saved From Drowning*. In a very physical sort of way the literary title of this work hits one after experiencing this rather splendid effort. It is a picture of green with reds, very mysterious and dynamic in a way only color can serve up. This large work consists of two rectangles within the larger rectangles but the right hand one is physically painted out so as to leave a right angled triangle with the hypotenuse, rather jagged and freely painted, forcing the interest back into the picture. Some palimpsestic tension is set up between this triangle and the paler rectangle, that is just off square, with its right hand corner blunted or rounded and which shows traces of the reds which have now become a delicately balanced grey pink.

Fisher and a host of younger artists who have been spotted and encouraged by perceptive teachers at places like Pratt, Cooper and various out of town schools, are often amazed at their transition, through paint color, to Pollock, Rothko—the first generation of New York painters—with a positive pro-life articulation of that paint color. As **Fisher** himself says "Baronik had the most influence on my work in that he was able to recognize and trace my influences which were at that time Francis Bacon and Gorky . . . Magritte".

They are actually tackling pictorial problems of such magnitude that one wonders who it was or how it presumably came to have been that very concerned and respectable people could announce the death of a highly complex activity which is so vigorous. It is true that someone like **Fisher**, who vacillates between tinting and shading, betrays some of the current indecisions but the evocation of common pictorial ideas challenged is of such potentially high quality from the visible marks made that, as opposed to hope (since the thing exists), one must express total concern at the fact that the people are afraid of well painted modern pictures, if not of the people who make them, to the extent that they won't look at them.