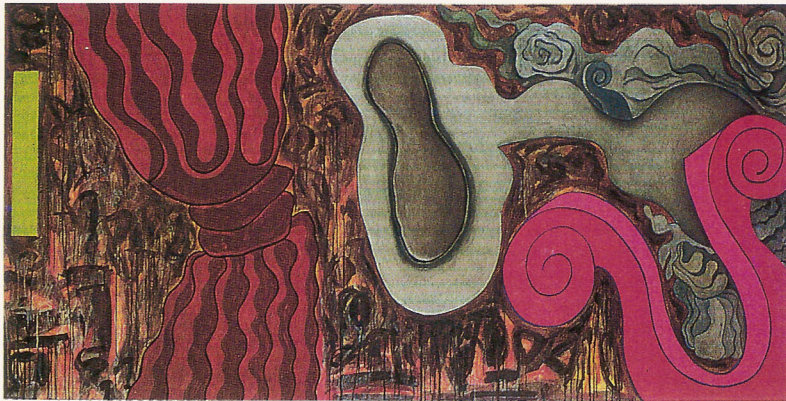


# Art in America

May 1994



Stephanie Rose: *Still Pictures No. 2*, 1993, acrylic and oil on canvas, 48 by 96 inches; at E.M. Donahue.

## Stephanie Rose at E.M. Donahue

In the past, the cacophonous elements of Stephanie Rose's abstract paintings have suggested floating prosceniums, plush red velvet curtains, discombobulated Ionic columns and colossal paint tubes being squeezed. The work had a bumptious and loopy quality, reminiscent of late de Chirico, that I admired. In her new "Still Pictures" series, this arsenal of Neo-Classical allusions is meant to evoke old movie theaters and Rose's love of cinema: hence the wide-angle, laterally stretched format of the canvases and the fact that they were hung high in the gallery to suggest movie screens. The tone is more somber and thoughtful than in her previous work, and a mood of retrospective pathos seems to pervade Rose's usually sunny Orphic vision.

The paintings, a mixture of acrylic and oil on canvas, are heavily worked, with large areas of dripping and glazing intercut by flat, sharply demarcated Day-Glo zones. A hot pink, double-scrolled form hovers in the lower right-hand corner of *Still Pictures No. 2*. The pink form, outlined in electric blue, may suggest a large harp, even as a silvery gray oval form flooding out of it summons up a cartoon vision of a horn being played. To the left of all this is a raveled red volume, Rose's signature device of

the abstracted curtain. A vertical bar of Day-Glo lime green near the left edge of the canvas seems to answer the silver and red shapes, as if it were a pure embodiment of the music being "played."

In other works a heavy, graphic plus-and-minus pattern, reminiscent of '50s textiles, crops up both on a billowing drapery and on a rectangular tablet shape. This latter, hard-edge zone can be read as a rhetorical painting-within-a-painting, at times filled in with a taped grid, at others with loose and lyrical brushwork. We sense a self-conscious return to Rose's early '60s AbEx roots in her use of dripping to designate now ground, now image.

A selection of collages hung Saion-style in the back room made another aspect of Rose's process eminently clear. She stockpiles old black-and-white photographs which she photocopies and then combines with her own painted marks in abstract compositions. *Letterbox Quartet No. 5*, for instance, contains a pirated photographic image of a Beaux-Arts formal garden with freestanding classical columns in it. Here is yet another source for the tumbling Ionic capital forms in Rose's paintings, and yet another clue to the intense animation of her "Still Pictures" series.

—Brooks Adams