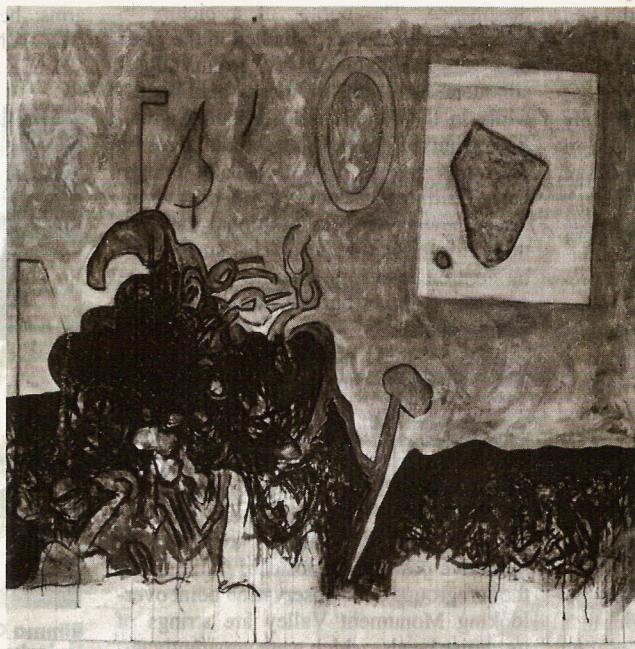


STEPHANIE ROSE

fiction/nonfiction

Stephanie Rose's paintings look like dream versions of postmodern art history in which periods and styles flow together and everything looks familiar, but isn't quite identifiable. The multiple references to past works and the juxtaposition of styles—Cubism, calligraphic Abstract Expressionism, East Village funk, underground cartoon—risk seeming mannered and overintellectualized. But Rose's paintings often generate surprising insights and new syntheses by using the disciplines of one style to harness the energies of another.

As a group, these five paintings create a catalogue of Rose's personal iconography—golden halos, gushing water jars, alchemical symbols, a looming spectral presence, references to David Smith's totemic sculptures, inset rectangles in one painting referring to images in another. Dense, lush, atmospheric backgrounds of worked and reworked brushstrokes blend multiple colors with a luminous virtuosity.



Stephanie Rose, *High Places No. 4*, 1987, mixed media, 60 by 65 inches. fiction/nonfiction.

Conversation No. 2 at first looks like a Cubist still life by Braque or Picasso. But the unpainted edges displace it to modern times, and the cartoony phallic, organic shapes set on the flat plane of a piano, amid references to Cubist guitars and bottles, make Cubist analysis itself seem surprisingly brutal.

The three *High Places* paintings are arranged like still lifes in a landscape. In *High Places No. 2*, the most formal and controlled of the series, a centered chairlike shape, filled with what at first seems to be a bouquet of flowers and then appears to be a glowing pile of entrails, is bracketed by Rose's icons—totems and water jar on the left, shadow figure on the right, halo above. The painting looks like a portrait set in a landscape; the mound on the chair seems chaotic, but a closer look reveals a seething mass carefully composed of controlled linear brushstrokes, all edges visible and defined, chaos held at bay.

No. 3 explodes into lyrical color as the tall shape becomes a powerful figure. Color drains from the convoluted mass on the chair into the rich background of yellows, oranges, pinks, and reds. *No. 4* relaxes into a Philip Guston-like monochrome, primarily in blacks and grays with touches of brown, that is calm and almost meditative.

—Dan Rubey