



New Technology Versus Old Masters

By Ron Mwangaguhunga

TECHNOLOGY HAS FOREVER ALTERED THE LANDSCAPE OF THE CONTEMPORARY ART WORLD. FROM THE WAY ART IS SOLD, TO THE PLACES WE NOW DISCUSS IT, TO THE SPACES IN WHICH IT IS DISPLAYED—THE PLAYING FIELD HAS CHANGED. TECHNOLOGY HAS ALSO CHANGED THE WAY THAT ART IS MADE.

Beverly Fishman, an influential contemporary artist, uses technology to create art. Reviewing databases as well as books for compelling images, she scans and manipulates them with her computer.

"I have worked through several different media," says Fishman, "the work before this body of work dealt with reproduction, cellularly. My media mimicked that ... I used the color copier and Photoshop to speak about reproduction, mutation, and rejuvenation. The newest body of work is about pharmaceuticals, the culture we live in ... the desire for the quick fix ... and how art promises the same kind of mind and body."

Technology, in Ms. Fishman's case, allows her to express her modern themes. It would seem that a postmodern subject demands a postmodern medium. Although the drive to create art is primordial, the means have evolved. Design has entered into the conversation of art.

Fishman, Head of Painting at Cranbrook Academy of Art, represents the technology and graphic design friendly philosophy of many academies. "At Cranbrook, the student body, as well as the Faculty, use Macs ... it is the top choice for artists, designers, etc. My assistants use Photoshop and Illustrator to develop and design the pill shapes."

"As long as I can remember, I have been an artist. My parents were supportive of my interests, and I had my first set of oil paints at the age of four. My aunt came to visit from NY, and took me to the Philadelphia Art Museum when I was about four. It had a profound effect on me... I can remember a particular Dalí, Duchamp, and Reubens that I thought were real events in my life," reminisces Beverly Fishman, ultimately concluding: "... only to go back to the museum as a teenager and realize these were 'flat' objects!"

"There has been a blurring of boundaries between art and design," speculates Ms. Fishman. "I still think that my artwork will never reach the public domain, the way that design does. I am working on designing products with Peter Stathis, Head of 3-D Design, at Cranbrook Academy of Art. This collaborative effort is bringing artist and designer together. I am interested in this conversation ... and I make distinctions between the intention of these two efforts."

Ms. Fishman has an exhibition titled "Pharmaco-Xanadu" at Post Downtown Gallery in Los Angeles that opens the end of May through the end of August and early Fall. Ms. Fishman has an installation at White Columns, NYC. The working title is Placebo...my continued interest in the complex cultural condition of the medicating of society."