

Like Lucas Samaras, another ex-patriate artist from the Mediterranean, Mr. Moufarrege sought a physical redefinition of painting, one that pushed it closer to craft and that respecified its surface in a new, startling way. (Joe Zucker, born in America, is another artist to do this.) It's hard to characterize the combination of decorative intensity, measured calm and generous pictorial wit that Mr. Moufarrege, and the craftspeople who worked with him, wove into his surfaces, but it seems to define some unique midpoint between American and Eastern Mediterranean cultures. The joining of embroidered and unembroidered needlepoint scenes (the latter painted by the artist or printed by producers of "fine art" needlepoint screens) with sundry fabrics is almost always pleasant and provocative. In them one grasps, in purely visual terms, the dual mechanism of popularization, which elevates as it debases and which dilutes images as it makes them more vivid.

There is a special tension between those images that Mr. Moufarrege found already translated into needlepoint screens (by popular demand, one assumes) and those that he deemed appropriate for such translation. The former (images from Renoir, Fragonard and Guido Reni) he tended to leave mostly bare, with titles, copyrights and color charts visible along their borders; the latter (Lichtenstein, Picasso, van Gogh, Spiderman and myriad others) are fully and richly embroidered, their images intensified through brighter colors, metallic threads and, overall, the soft plush of material.

Mr. Moufarrege was especially adept at using well-worn themes to link different cultures and levels of artistic endeavor. The two panels of "Music" of 1985 juxtapose an embroidery screen version of Renoir's "Jeunes Filles au Piano" with a Lichtenstein image of a smiling woman who listens as music notes float in through an open window. The notes, of course, are drifting in from the Renoir next door. Meanwhile, both images are framed in contemporary Egyptian revival: several inches of store-bought fabric that alternate bands of Egyptian decorative motifs with repeating images of Egyptian dancers, musicians and acrobats. Without losing a sense of the work as a painting, we recognize the pictorial variances of textile design in general and understand a series of appropriations and reuses that extends far beyond those perpetrated by Mr. Moufarrege himself.

Mr. Moufarrege also delighted in elaborating upon the unexpected common elements of his sources. In "M-Maybe Gauze," another Lichtenstein blonde runs her hand through her hair and thinks to herself, "M-Maybe he became ill and couldn't leave the studio!" The adjacent panel gives us the most famous "dis-

Frederick Hammersley

Artists Space
223 West Broadway (at White Street)
Through tomorrow

While Artists Space usually concentrates on the young and the unaffiliated, each year it devotes an exhibition, sponsored by the Mark Rothko Foundation, to older artists whom it deems worthy of broader recognition. This year's Rothko Foundation show presents the recent work of two longtime abstract painters, Calvert Coggeshall (born 1907), who exhibited regularly with Betty Parsons but has not shown since 1980, and Frederick Hammersley (born 1919), who is best known on the West Coast.

Mr. Hammersley, the stronger of the two painters, pursues a hard-edged abstraction that is alternately geometric and biomorphic. His work has clear similarities with that of John McLaughlin, another West Coast abstractionist, but his sturdily painted surfaces and bracing contrasts of white and color are much more aggressive. Best are those large geometric works based on an "H" configuration, whose carefully scaled bands and blocks of color are symmetrical and perpendicular to each other — a look that is very fashionable these days. These paintings have a crisp worldly tone, as if Mr. Hammersley were reconsidering late Mondrian by way of Ellsworth Kelly.

In the small, biomorphic paintings on board, Mr. Hammersley eliminates white and avoids primaries, to concentrate on much less predictable colors and shapes. The results, too quaintly framed, are also sometimes too completely resolved. They suggest ironed-out Arthur Doves, but they also improve, the longer and the closer you look at them.

Mr. Coggeshall's dark canvases, most of which date from the last three years, are overly indebted to both Rothko and Barnett Newman, but they are beautifully executed nonetheless. They consist of deep blue or brown monochromes, broken by subtle stripes, pourings and shifts in tone. Especially in their favor is a mysteriously smooth and glowing matte surface that suggests a kind of liquid pastel. One of the strongest works on view is the only white one; in it, Mr. Coggeshall ventures the furthest away from his influences and does them the greatest justice.

Art Blakey

Art Blakey, a drummer, will lead the Jazz Messengers tonight through Sunday at Sweet Basil, 88 Seventh Avenue South, above Bleecker Street (242-1785). Sets are at 10 and 11:45 P.M. and 1:30 A.M.; there is a \$12 cover and a \$6 minimum.

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