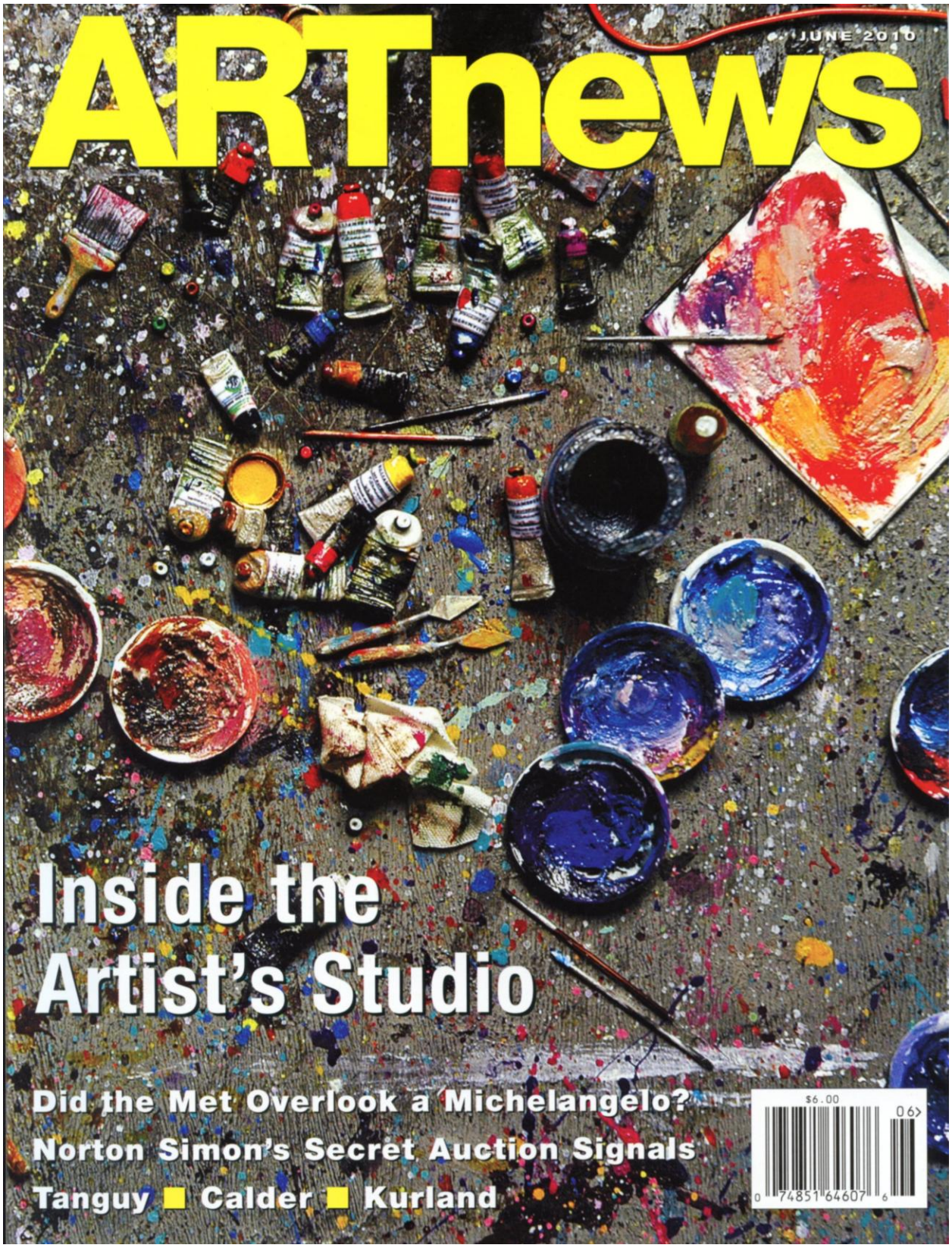
BRIDGETTE **MAYER** GALLERY



709 Walnut Street 1st Floor Philadelphia PA 19106 tel 215 413 8893 fax 215 413 2283
email bmayer@bridgettemayergallery.com www.bridgettemayergallery.com

Nicole Charbonnet, *Kiss (to have to have not)*, 2010, mixed media on canvas, 48" x 48". Ralls Collection.

artist's various techniques merge to create a cohesive sense of dissolution.

—Cara Ober

Neil Anderson

Bridgette Mayer

Philadelphia

Hung close together in this small parlor-floor gallery space, Neil Anderson's new abstract oil paintings, similar in size and composition, offered the impression of looking at a forest in different seasons. The paintings, when viewed individually, were handsome and engaging, pulling the viewer into their depths, but they would have benefited from having more room between them.

Neil Anderson, *Summer of '09*, 2009, oil on linen, 76" x 50". Bridgette Mayer.

Nightlife (2008) and *Summer of '09* (2009), both vertical diptychs, were the standouts of the show. *Nightlife* is composed of pale lavender and dark violet fields interlaced with lines of pale green and gray and slivers of yellow ochre shaped like broken glass. Because of its color scheme, this work was an anomaly in the exhibition, suggestive less of a forest environment than of the dark peripheries of a basement jazz club pierced by the occasional beam of light. *Summer of '09* is reminiscent of a swamp drying up in the heat. You can almost hear the steady hum of insects.

Brice Marden's serpentine lines in space would be the obvious touchstone for these works, but Anderson's style also seems to hark back to that of certain midcentury painters. There are aspects of his paintings that make one think he admires Charles Burchfield—the light that comes through their complex, netlike compositions, for instance. They also share something with Arshile Gorky's blocky landscape paintings from his happy Virginia sojourn, as well as recall the bold geometry and colors of Stuart Davis.

It is easy to imagine an Anderson painting at mural scale, and these works look as though, if given the opportunity, they'd eagerly spread beyond their confines, like nature.

—Edith Newhall

Valerie Hammond

Walker Contemporary

Boston

Valerie Hammond's prints and sculptures are fertile swirls. Outstretched hands trail into tangled vines; forearms are claimed by thick growths of flowers. Hammond combines motifs from Tibetan Buddhism and Christian votive sculpture with elements recalling places and things from her rural California childhood, letting these bits and pieces ferment together in her abundant imagination.

The prints here were light and cerebral. The monochrome *Guirlande* (2007) shows a pair of hands, palms forward, that give way to roots and vines. Laid down in dark indigo on wax-covered paper, the image conjures a specter of growth—unseen but relentless—that threatens to undermine its delicate contours and harmony. In *Glimmer* (2010), the artist blends graphite pencil, thread, and beads on a yellowed-paper surface in a fantastic arabesque that evokes a mythical beast.

Valerie Hammond, *Guirlande*, 2007, relief printed litho on handmade Kozo paper, 72" x 48". Walker Contemporary.

Hammond's sculptures, in wax, silk, and wire, are a bit more visceral, and in some cases alarming. In *Pensée* (2010), a pale pair of cupped human hands is incorporated into a robust rose blossom and displayed, half main course, half specimen, beneath a glass bell jar. It is unclear which life form generates the other. *Transition 2* (2009) shows two life-size human forearms seized in a violent floral outburst. Displayed on the front desk of the gallery, the sculpture almost seemed sprung from the film *Carrie*, or at least from one of the darker corners of Hammond's root cellar.

What distinguished all the works in this show was their surface—a uniform, vaguely opaque stratum of wax that freezes movement like a shutter click. While Hammond draws on myriad sources, her work is neither biology class nor art-history recital. In the end, she captures the vital force that works change on all things, be they animal, mineral, or chimera. *—Ken Shulman*

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