

**January 1989**

**“The Lovers” exhibition of Edith Schloss**

**From Ancient Greece Via New York**

**By Milton Gendel**

With a practiced, felicitous hand, Edith Schloss paints apparently limpid, even lyrical, works on canvas that still require close reading. What is immediately recognizable is the idiom of some of the most notable painting of our-time, and the impact and vibrancy of the school of New York.

Subject matter has been a besetting problem for a generation or two. Abstraction emphasizes the claim of painting to be the subject of itself. But many directions diverge from Malevich's supreme white square, just as godhead for the Greeks and Romans was polymorphous and often perverse.

What exactly is going on in Edith's pink, red and white, sky- and sea-blue cosmos, with its horizontality and lateral developments? The drawing is tense, dashing and elegant in these frieze-like compositions of beings in the act of running, flying, diving, assaulting, maiming, straining and coupling.

There seems to be a progression from left to right, a narrative sequence. According to Bocchi what we are viewing are so many erotic strips. The format and movement may be seen as strips, but why stop at Eros when there are also intimations of lustitia, Connubia, Puerpera, Gratitude and even Thanatos'?

It seems to me that thematically Edith's paintings are a “reduction to narrative shorthand of ritual mime”, as Robert Graves wrote of the Greek myths. The ritual remains unascertainable, though Edith in her Ariadne avatar unwinds some clues to the meanders of the work by giving her quasi-figures names out of Greek mythology.

In her life and her many years as a painter Edith has described a parabola that goes from Europe to America and Europe again, not that this involves any real cultural distinctions. In its oneness, in fact, any signposts referring to ancient Greece are perennially acceptable, whether it comes to naming new gadgets and planets or understanding Freud's terminology.

So here is Leto, by Schloss but surely out of De Kooning, giving birth splay-legged to Apollo and Artemis. Grown up, Apollo runs Daphne to the ground and she takes root. The idyl of Orpheus and Euridice ends in the Maenads bloody banquet off the imprudent musician. Ganymede takes a flier and goes eagling with a cloudy Zeus. Another aerial fling involves the rescue of Butes, beekeeper, herdsman, Argonaut, by the resourceful, enamored Aphrodite. Something amorous also accounts for Arethusa springing up at Siracuse.

But takeoffs on a pair of anonymous couplers noticed by Edith in an Etruscan tomb painting show that more than the literary, mythical references it is the postures of these characters that determine their inclusion in the paintings. Uninhibited, free and easy they go to make up the complexities of these serious paintings that show a cheerful, insouciant face to the world.