

JUDITH JAFFE: I'M NOT FINISHED YET!

ArtSpace-Maynard
63 Summer Street
Maynard, Massachusetts

Through July 13

My visit with Judith Jaffe at ArtSpace-Maynard turned out to be a very enlightening experience. Her retrospective exhibit, "I'm Not Finished Yet!," features work from her long career as an artist. It includes everything from etchings and monotypes created during the '60s and '70s to her current work — acrylic and oil painting with collage.



Meditation III, pen with leaves, 8.5" x 6".

First I needed to know if the show was in chronological order. "It tries to be," said Jaffe, as she led me to the corner of the gallery. There were a few exceptions because of the size of some of the work.

A particularly notable series, "The Quest," included drawings of African iconic figures. She received these small doll figures from a friend and they have appeared in several works, such as "Capturing Time," in which they are arranged within the drawing like chess pieces on a marble floor. Jaffe's work contains religious figures as well.

She explained how a trip to Italy, after the death of her son, influenced her work. Jaffe was moved by the churches and religious paintings she saw there, and she now references them in her paintings. "Life is Just a Bowl of Cherries" is her variation of Michelangelo's Pietà. "I'm not very religious, but I think about the world and different beliefs," she said. "Banishment"

is painted in oil with egg tempera. It's a colorful landscape where Adam and Eve are standing on an apple held by a giant hand.

Babies also show up in many of her paintings. "I've always been interested in beginnings and endings," Jaffe said. "Babies are a metaphor for the beginning of things. They are powerful. Some of them don't grow up but still have power — and end up being world leaders." She is very in tune with what is going on in the world and prefers to listen to talk radio rather than music. It makes sense to me that her thoughts on civilization would be evident in her work.

Her babies are often in the arms of a mother figure as in "Doorway," a monotype that shows a mother and child occupying a doorway accompanied by a grandmother. "Knitting Calms My Nerves" is a large figure of a woman who is "knitting" babies. The babies appear from the action of her knitting.

Jaffe's most recent works combine elements of older works that are actually collaged into the compositions. "Retrospective" was created before she planned to have this exhibition; there is a lot going

on here. It's quite captivating; a carefully arranged landscape with a gorilla, babies, birds, a self-portrait, religious men. It reminds me a little of the album cover from the Beatles' "Sgt. Peppers Lonely Hearts Club Band."

Since Jaffe has had a long career as an artist, I asked if she had advice for other artists. She said it's important to keep it up. There are little tricks to start again when feeling uninspired. You must keep practicing your skills. She also mentioned the importance of marketing yourself. Also, she absolutely believes in getting out of the house and creating art in a studio atmosphere with other artists around to share energy.

ArtSpace-Maynard was once a school but is now a community of artists. Jaffe said that many came together to help hang the show and to get things organized. "I'm Not Finished Yet!" is a wild departure from traditional landscapes and still lifes. Jaffe's work inspired me to think about the world — the meaning of motherhood, nature, religion and civilization.

| James Dyment



Retrospective, collage and acrylic, 30" x 40".