

SUE CHENOWETH

February 3 - March 12, 2005

Risk-taking lies at the core of Sue Chenoweth's determination to produce work which is disarmingly honest and personal. The act of painting, drawing, and installation enables the artist to unearth and expunge deep psychological fears – from childhood memories to the challenges posed by representational drawing – through a painstaking process of analysis and self-awareness, in which each mark is deliberately considered.

Drawing enables her to grapple with her inner compulsions outwardly, with purpose and focus. According to exhibition curator Susan Krane, Director of the Scottsdale Museum of Contemporary Art, "Her scratchy, idiosyncratic drawings slip back and forth between abstract meanderings of the hand and representational musings of the mind. Images morph and dissolve at the edges, emerge from and submerge into the ground, as if spun by a surreal vortex."

Chenoweth's painting becomes the terrain she travels and as such, the work on view reflects a compendium of experiences recorded during a residency spent at CUE over the summer. While in New York, the artist found herself bombarded by symbols of the city's excesses and high-end consumption, and was especially taken in by the seductive allure of its high-end retail shops. Gazing at the designer shop windows on fashionable street corners inflamed within her a longing to own such pieces of finery. Equally intriguing were a collection of old prints bought at a library sale entitled *The New Testament: A Pictorial Archive from Nineteenth-Century Sources*¹, and the works of Piranesi housed in the print room of the Metropolitan Museum of Art.



The Rich Man Dies, 2004
Gouache, graphite and leterset
on paper, 9" x 7"

These visual epiphanies remained lodged in her psyche and became catalysts for the series, 'The Rich Man,' in which the artist freely adapts and juxtaposes religious imagery culled from biblical illustrations from the *Book of Luke* with frothy, doodling apparitions of fancy dresses. The selection of paintings and drawings on view evoke Chenoweth's feelings of longing, desire, and entrapment without the aide of direct visual references. Instead, by forging deep within the well of her subconscious in order to find universal meaning to such private anxieties, "the state of wanting" according to Krane, "...takes on a natural organic status. Dresses become glittering jewels, exotic bug-like chrysalises and vaporous spots of seductive color."

Though intricate in appearance, these recent paintings are firmly grounded in Art History, formal practices, and titles containing allegorical references, all of which ply the viewer with certain narrative clues. In works such as *The Rich Man Counts His Money*, *The Rich Man Dies, 2004*, there exists a certain fascination with navigating enclosed spaces, which belies Chenoweth's profound sense of orderly direction. Yet, an inherent artistic dichotomy exists as themes of transgression and redemption also serve as means of offering viewers little glimpses of the grand tale by unlocking the psychological barriers to discovery. At times, the artist will go as far as sanding off portions of her paintings to explore new possibilities within the composition. For Chenoweth, embracing the wonder of what things could be involves such high levels of deconstruction and surrender. Drawing becomes a cathartic experience in her investigations of the ineffable, and the resulting effects are both whimsical and haunting.



The Rich Man Counts His Money, The Rich Man Dies, 2004
Acrylic, graphite, ink, paper, and leterset on panel, 30" x 30"

ARTIST BIO:

Sue Chenoweth was born in Plainview, Texas in 1953. It was in Texas that she began drawing with white rocks on sidewalks around the age of two. After moving to Phoenix, Arizona at the age of four she began feverishly setting up drawing systems which included shorthand formulas for sketching. At age 14 she began to seriously study painting on her own by copying the works of Winslow Homer. From age fourteen to eighteen she worked under the direction of Marlyne Jones, an Arizona artist and teacher who trained Chenoweth to understand the value of drawing on a deep level. "I feel that I learned the important things during that time," she says, "I began using drawing as a way of ordering and relating." Sue went on to receive both her BFA and MFA from Arizona State University and is currently teaching Drawing and Painting at Metropolitan Art Institute, a College Preparatory High School in Phoenix. "I feel like I am on a mission," says Chenoweth, "In teaching, I want to perpetuate the legacy of drawing that was given to me as a youth. I want people to understand the importance of mark-making before that language is lost forever."

ABOUT CUE:

CUE Art Foundation, a non-profit 501(c)(3) organization, provides educational and professional development programs in the visual arts. These include student internships, stipends, exhibitions, public lectures, and an in-gallery studio program, all of which draw from the talents and experience of the diverse community of artists, art critics, and teachers that the Foundation brings together.

CUE's exhibition season gives unknown or under-recognized artists public and professional exposure comparable to that offered by neighboring commercial galleries, without the usual financial restraints. The Advisory Council, an honorary group of artists and leading figures from the arts education, applied arts, art history, and literary communities, has the responsibility of selecting exhibition curators. The curators, in turn, nominate artists to exhibit at CUE, and continue to play a role throughout the exhibition process. Both the Advisory Council and the exhibition curators actively participate in the public lectures and educational programs.

For additional information, please contact Beatrice Wolert-Weese, Gallery Assistant, CUE Art Foundation, (212) 206-3583, or email beatrice.wolert@cueartfoundation.org.

¹ Don Rice, ed. *The New Testament: A Pictorial Archive from Nineteenth-Century Sources* (New York: Dover Publications, Inc.), 1986.