

Editorial: Features

Grisha Bruskin

Meyerovich Gallery, San Francisco, California
Recommendation by DeWitt Cheng



Grisha Bruskin, "Black Angel," 2006, enamel on steel, 26 1/4 x 19 1/4 x 10 1/2".

Is the Age of Theory waning, at last? Picasso's sculptures are garnering raves at MOMA; the next big thing in art, opine certain tastemakers, is figuration; and Robert Hughes' new posthumous book will extol skill and commitment. San Francisco art lovers who have been crying in the wilderness for lo these many years may want to check out the paintings and sculptures of Grisha Bruskin, a Russian artist now living in New York, whose current work deftly combines modernist style with traditional (that is to say timeless) themes. His 2006 series of shattered war monuments, "Archaeologist's Collection," forty-odd bronzes painted white to resemble marble, deconstructing militarism of all stripes, should get wider exposure in our turbulent, terrible times.

If the current small show lacks that moral subtext, it's a good introduction to a versatile and virtuosic artist who deserves wider recognition. Bruskin's invented mythological figures, rendered as painted cut-steel silhouettes, are reminiscent in style of Aubrey Beardsley and 60s-era Peter Max, Milton Glaser, Heinz ("Yellow Submarine") Edelman and Romanian Surrealist Victor Brauner. The winged female "Black Angel" and the all-seeing male figure of "Vision" are memorably scary, amusing and intriguing — and, well, iconic. These and other figures recur in the "Variation" gouaches and "Nota Bene" oil paintings, nestled amid quotations from the Kabbalah (indecipherable to most of us, but perhaps worth some homework), in a format nicely simulating manuscripts for a new religion. Don't miss the two fully modeled sculptures in the gallery office — ancient Etruscan meets mid-century Middle American.