



BETH PHILLIPS

Janet Fish, *Dog Days*, 1993, oil on canvas, 46 by 80 inches. Grace Borgenicht.

Janet Fish

GRACE BORGENICHT

Few could be more generous with color and light than Janet Fish. Her shows are transporting, not to a specific place—although the Vermont hills do figure behind her brilliant, multifaceted, multihued still lifes—but to a place of warmth, vigor, and natural abundance.

Fish is best known for her still lifes, with their glass dishes, bowls, and vases holding fruits and flowers, surrounded by brightly printed cloths or a distant landscape beyond the table where the still life rests. Her uncanny ability to organize color, enabling it to become content, is more evident than ever in this recent show. In one painting of wild, dark-blue grapes on twisted vines strewn around a central yellow glass bowl, for example, the bowl's golden glow mimics the effects of autumn sunlight at harvest time.

In a large panoramic canvas called *Dog Days*, the very big, magnified central subject—a still life of brilliant red and pink phlox and cosmos in a cobalt glass vase—bisects the 46-by-80-inch canvas. To the right is one dog, sitting by himself watching two other dogs play in the distance on the other half of the canvas. There is something poignant in this modest canine drama, painted in cool colors, occurring as a kind of backdrop to the vibrating reds and pinks of the still life, yet it is subtle enough to remain mysterious.

This lushly crowded exhibition—24 paintings in all—was mounted with a very Fish-like verve, as if to make the gallery itself the comucopia of sensation and pleasure that each of the paintings, alone, offers the viewer. —Margaret Moorman

Mark Rothko

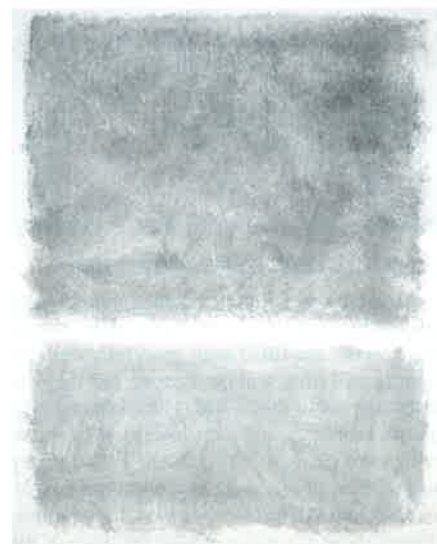
PACE WILDENSTEIN

Toward the end of his life, Mark Rothko made a series of black paintings that were considered, after his suicide in 1970, a brutal announcement of his state of mind and final intentions. These pictures spoke with a formal eloquence that was well known in Rothko's art:

the stacked, billowing rectangles that appear to hang in space; the low, abstracted horizon; the atmosphere that magically seems to capture a range of moods as varied as the weather. Of course, the mood of the black paintings was far more narrow, like the single, harsh sadness of a dirge.

It's important to remember these pictures not only for their stark glare at death but also for the way they're being recalled to promote a series of minor works on paper, eleven of which were in this recent exhibition, dramatically titled "The Last Paintings." In contrast to the black paintings, much is made in the accompanying catalogue of the fresh mood of these works, only a few of which had been exhibited previously. Not as large and far less formal in feeling, they are said to have a "gentle, tentative warmth," a "delicacy and distance, like chamber music overheard from the next room."

But there is a better reason than their quietness in the shadow of the black paintings that these works have remained obscure. It's because they really are last gasps, works done in 1969 that sadly reflect the end of the road. Painted flatly with a brush that sketches a thin, dry surface, there is none of that billowing ambience that transforms Rothko's paintings into deep spaces, spaces to lose oneself in. Here his rectangles meet abruptly, their edges often pressed hard against the paper so that the surface becomes absolutely literal. And while their blues and grays, and even a pink and gold, are presented as a re-



ELLEN PAGE WILSON

Mark Rothko, *Untitled*, 1969, acrylic on paper on canvas, 52½ by 41 inches. Pace Wildenstein.



JIM ARKATOFF

Two huge words: 'lifetime' and 'achievement'!" says Helen Frankenthaler, pretty much summing up the gist of the accolade recently bestowed upon her by the College Art Association. The New York native says she is "most honored" to receive the award, which is officially called the Distinguished Artist Award for Lifetime Achievement. Among

her accomplishments, the 66-year-old artist counts innumerable exhibitions around the world—a reflection of her distinguished reputation as a member of the second generation of the New York School and as the inventor of what became known as "stain painting." The award, presented at the New York Hilton during the College Art Association's 82nd Annual Conference in February, was just one of many events on Frankenthaler's agenda this year. In April, she showed a selection of recent paintings on paper at her New York gallery, Knoedler & Company. And in June, the artist (who was previously married to Robert Motherwell from 1958 to '71) will be exchanging vows with Stephen DuBrul, an investment banker.

lief from the drear of black, the colors are neither cheerful nor hopeful at all. They're washed out. In fact, "washed-outness" is what they depict—you can almost hear them wheeze.

If these pictures do have significance, it's as anecdotal evidence of what Rothko must have felt like during those terminal days. They're footnotes to his paintings of dark and extraordinary power. —Steven Henry Madoff

Richard Avedon

WHITNEY MUSEUM OF AMERICAN ART

It should come as no surprise that the man who could make elephants look elegant and rakish, as he did in his famous 1955 photograph of the model Dovima, could do the same for the long, awkward spaces of the Whitney's fourth-floor galleries. That is Richard Avedon's gift. Room after room of his exhilarating retrospective showed an eye that revels in, by turn, contradiction and summary judgment, whose portraits of Bert Lahr and Groucho Marx find them as men of enormous earnestness, whose early pictures of Italian schoolchildren display the suave composition of a fashion shoot.

By breaking up the floor into a sequence of larger and smaller rooms that focused on single bodies of work, the show became unexpectedly intimate. This sense of closeness to the work was reinforced by the simple presentation of the photographs in open frames without glass, so the eye fell directly on the images without the distraction of reflections. What became clear was Avedon's unswerving concentration