

surface, the picture effectively combines elements of the Italian master's work with graceful lines akin to Chinese calligraphy. In *Shower of Gold*, a stem of red-gold leaves seems to dance in a midnight-blue sea. A jellyfish floats at the right, its tentacles yellow and mauve, while an orange mollusk at the lower left hugs the bottom.

In Colville's "Colossus" series of 1983 her imagery consisted of abstract biomorphs that suggested fossils and skeletons. Consciously executed in a palette akin to that of 15th-century Italian painters, the series represented her attempt to evoke what she calls "the ultimate sense of classicism." In her "Bennington Urn" series of 1981, she sought to explore the urn as a symbol of both classicism and death. In these new encaustic meditations on the sea, Colville continues to explore the relationship between art and nature, and in doing so she has created pictures well worth viewing.

—Shellie R. Goldberg

## REALISM FROM CHINA

Grand Central

**E**XOTICALLY costumed Mongolians and Tibetans were the featured subjects in this show of five realist painters from mainland China. The artists have emerged from a background of academic training—with an emphasis on Soviet-style Socialist Realism—to create sophisticated, individualistic work.

Chen Dan Qing records his Tibetan subjects and their moods with cool yet compassionate sensitivity. These handsome bronzed people in their great sheepskin coats and richly colored beads appear in stark, unsentimental scenes of everyday life. In rendering their primitive existence as peasants and shepherds, Chen uses an earthy red-brown palette. Zhang Hong Nian employs an almost neoclassic style in his narrative paintings. Like Chen's people, the herders pictured here are also imbued with feeling, a quality that was missing in the ponderous official propagandist work of the past. Andrew Wyeth's brand of tough yet lyrical realism has enchanted the new generation of realists in China, and its influence is evident in Zhang's work.

Jin Gao's scenes of warmly posed mothers and children avoid sentimentality through unusual formal arrangements. This method is even more apparent in her landscape compositions, which have an almost abstract quality.

Li Quan Wu paints beautiful women who are characterized by a certain ripeness as well as a psychological depth. And Wang Jida, the only sculptor in the show, conveys in his roughly pressed surfaces the sheer

strength of Mongolian wrestlers.

The Chinese realists grew up with picture-book images by David and Millet, as well as by the Russian academic painters Repin and Berov, because there was no opportunity to see original Western oil painting in China. After the Cultural Revolution and the normalization of U.S.-China relations, they added the Americans Cassatt, Sargent and Wyeth to their most-admired list. The response of young Chinese painters to these influences and the way their painting is evolving as a result were among the revelations of this compelling show.

—Joan Lebold Cohen

## LARRY BROWN

Carlo Lamagna

**I**N BROWN's fifth solo show in New York, he exhibited nine oil-on-wood reliefs painted in rich, luminous colors. While the medium is clearly a departure for the artist, these plywood constructions grow quite naturally out of his earlier works in latex and painted paper, which were concerned with process and the essence of objects. Later, between 1977 and 1984, Brown introduced layerings of cut and painted paper to create a strong sculptural presence; the act of building continues to be central to his current work. He begins by constructing multidimensional forms out



Pat Colville, *Shower of Gold*, 1985, encaustic on canvas, 66 by 50 inches. Condeso/Lawler.

of plywood, then paints layer upon layer, creating a sumptuous painterly surface.

The most striking work in the show was *Turkish Consulate*, painted in brilliant hues of red and yellow. Brown juxtaposes austere linear towers with swirling organic forms and creates a tension between the strict geometry of the underlying base and the gestural surface of the paint.

Brown is interested in the illusions produced by pictorial elements that transgress



Zhang Hong Nian, *Going to School*, 1985, oil on canvas, 23½ by 27¼ inches. Grand Central.

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