

# ARTnews

JANUARY 2012

Clyfford  
Still:  
A Bigger  
Picture

The Case of the  
Stolen Turners

Who Shot  
van Gogh?

Iván Navarro:  
Man of Refraction



## José Ramón Bas

Alan Klotz

For this show, José Ramón Bas assembled memorabilia from personal trips around the globe. Viewing the many photographs of local children, one almost expected to hear the song "It's Small World (After All)" in the background. (The song originated at the UNICEF pavilion at the 1964 World's Fair.)

Taken with a plastic Diana camera, two examples of which were on display here, the photos—some candid and some posed—were casually presented, unframed and sometimes embellished with doodles and scribbling. They looked like pages torn from an artist's journal.

In fact, Ramón Bas begins much of his work with a journal-like book of musings and images, creating an imagined saga, from which he then extrapolates. The results range from a lovely image of a Senegalese boat on a beach to a series of small, formulaic mug shots of children holding up blackboards that state their feelings and wishes. "I want a sewing machine," reads the missive of a child named Sona, whose head is cropped out of her portrait. "I think about all the children of my age that lives in the streets," wrote a child called Dercas.

While Ramón Bas's affection and affinity for his subjects was evident, his informal treatment of them—almost as



José Ramón Bas, from the series "Ndar", 2008, C-print with pencil in resin, 27½" x 27½". Alan Klotz.

if they were found objects—sometimes seemed trivializing.

More effective was his straightforward, but sensitive, approach to a found cache of postcards that had belonged to his aunt Mercedes, dating back to the 19th century. Transparencies of the sepia-tinged cards encased in resin and framed in wood were strung together and suspended in long strands from the ceiling. These true found objects managed to communicate both the exotic and everyday sensibility of his subjects' much-traveled world.

—Phoebe Hoban

## Eugene Brodsky

Sears-Peyton

In this exhibition of Eugene Brodsky's silk-screen paintings, the signature image, which appears in his work in various states and scales, is of lace-curtain-covered French doors partially open into a room. A section of an ornamented

wrought-iron balcony is in the foreground. The metaphors here are rampant and quite poetic. Layers, silhouettes, openings, and textures—from solid to gauzy as well as transparent to translucent—play off against one another.

References to the methods of silk-screening were evident throughout the show. The challenge for viewers was to figure out whether they were observing a



Eugene Brodsky, *Study for Lace*, 2011, ink on silk, 74½" x 57½". Sears-Peyton.

work from the outside in, or vice versa. The large image *Study for Lace* (2011), printed on silk, with paper collaged onto it, was in many ways the most intriguing work, since it allowed viewers to interact with actual textures and not just the "impressions" of textures.

Often, Brodsky covers his works with Plexiglas, or prints the actual image on the underside, creating a kind of *hinterglas* (or behind glass) effect, one traditionally practiced in German folk art and later taken up by modern artists like Marsden Hartley. This is particularly effective for Brodsky in his smaller pieces, lending informal gestures an air of gravity or drama. A wall of such works featured freehand anatomical imagery, such as lungs or a heart, blueprints or drawings with automotive themes (*Car Sideways*, 2011), a hydrangea, and even cartoony gestures. Often the artist paints the clamps that hold the Plexiglas to the wall the same color as the background of the work itself.

There is a personal stream of consciousness to Brodsky's subject matter and manner that contrasted nicely with the technical tasks he set up for himself, providing him rich material to mull over.

—Cynthia Nadelman