The New York Times

Cotter, Holland. "What to See in New York Art Galleries This Week." *New York Times*, January 5, 2017. http://www.nytimes.com/2017/01/05/arts/design/what-to-see-in-new-york-art-galleries-this-week.html

What to See in New York Art Galleries This Week

By ROBERTA SMITH, HOLLAND COTTER, WILL HEINRICH and MARTHA SCHWENDENER
JAN. 5, 2017

A detail from Nancy Chunn's "Chicken Little and the Culture of Fear Scene X: Poortown" (2010-11). Credit Nancy Chunn and Ronald Feldman Fine Arts, New York

NANCY CHUNN

Through Jan. 28. Ronald Feldman Fine Arts, 31 Mercer Street, Manhattan; 212-226-3232, feldmangallery.com.

Michelangelo had the grand expanse of the Sistine Chapel ceiling to work with and the story of life from Day 1 to Doomsday to tell. It took him four years to do the job. Nancy Chunn has 11 walls of the Ronald Feldman gallery for the display of what is basically no less ambitious a project, a site-specific, 500-panel painting about the social, economic and psychological hazards of life in contemporary America.

Ms. Chunn began the project, titled "Chicken Little and the Culture of Fear," in 2003 when post-9/11 apocalyptic thinking was on the rise. She modeled her narrative on the

children's tale of Chicken Little, who, when hit on the head by a falling acorn, concluded the sky was falling, and dashed off to spread the news, attracting a posse of panicked friends (Turkey-Lurkey, Ducky-Daddles, etc.) as she went. In Ms. Chunn's telling, the acorn is replaced by a falling television set, and Chicken Little's flight takes her through a world as reported, and shaped by, the 24/7 news cycle: polluted landscapes, impoverished cities, failing hospitals, paranoid politicians. The original fairy tale concludes, in some editions, with Chicken Little falling into the clutches of Foxy-Woxy. In the Chunn version, she ends up being arrested on a bogus charge (for removing a mattress tag) and jailed, among a crowd of celebrity no-goodniks, in the prison called Fox News.

Every character she's trapped with — from Clarence Thomas to Ann Coulter, and Ronald McDonald to Donald J. Trump — is identified by name, occupation and infamy in free printed exhibition guides. Produced, like the paintings, in a crisp Pop style and annotated with mordant commentary, the guides amount to a take-away show on their own and are well worth spending time with. The Sistine ceiling is about salvation; Ms. Chunn's rich, funny, furious project is about her growing desperation, and she's by no means finished with it yet.

HOLLAND COTTER

The Boston Globe

McQuaid, Cate. “Chicken Little as a 9/11 metaphor: Painter Chunn captures fear with some humor.” *The Boston Globe,* December 3, 2011. http://bostonglobe.com/arts/2011/12/03/chicken-little-metaphor/K8RHZoqtqgMNVRxeMSO0GN/story.html

Chicken Little as a 9/11 metaphor

Painter Chunn captures fear with some humor

By Cate McQuaid

RONALD FELDMAN FINE ARTS, NEW YORK
Panel details from Nancy Chunn’s ‘‘Chicken Little and the Culture of Fear’’ at the Museum of Art at Rhode Island School of Design.

PROVIDENCE - Painter Nancy Chunn is a news junkie who has admitted to ranting at her television set. Her comic, sprawling, poppy, and dire installation of paintings at the Museum of Art at Rhode Island School of Design, “Chicken Little and the Culture of Fear,’’ springs from her post-Sept. 11 examination of the aura of panic that dominated the last decade.

This is a big series of paintings, and it’s not even finished yet. Chunn has a history of making ambitious series. Every day in 1996, she painted visual commentary over the front page of The New York Times. She’s been working on ”Chicken Little” since 2004, and anticipates finishing it in 2014. It will comprise 11 multi-panel scenes, each a chapter in the chaotic, unfolding story of Chicken Little. Six are on view here.

RONALD FELDMAN FINE ARTS, NEW YORK
Detail from Chunn's ''Chicken Little'' panels.

Everyone knows Chicken Little is a nervous Nellie, set off by an acorn or a pebble hitting her in the noggin, and running frantically about telling all her friends that the sky is falling. In Chunn's final chapter, which she has not yet made but has described, the jittery protagonist will land a job as an anchor at Fox News, elevating her fear mongering to terrific heights.

Chunn paints Chicken Little, and her cronies Turkey Lurkey, Loosey Goosey, and the rest, crisply in flat, bright colors, the way they might appear in a cartoon or comic book. And, as in a comic book, certain panels telescope in on details, while others give us wide, bustling shots.

The experience of viewing this immersive installation is nothing like reading a book. There are no less than 38 panels in a given chapter, and some number in the 60s. Each chapter is mounted against a bubble of color painted on the wall, which gives order to the overarching narrative. But the individual panels, while arrayed with a clear spatial sense of the story, read almost kaleidoscopically all over that bubble, bouncing the eye this way and that in a manner that echoes Chicken Little's own darting, panicked glances.

THE MODERN INSTITUTE/TOBY WEBSTER LTD
''Procession,'' from Jeremy Deller's ''Manchester Tracks.''

Our querulous heroine goes from the garden, where a falling television (one of Chunn's iconic symbols) knocks her on the head, to a bathroom filled with hazards - electrical devices, puddles, tumbling flower pots, an alligator in the toilet - and on to the kitchen, with all its terrors, and the bedroom. There, in a disarray, she tugs the label off her mattress and is promptly arrested and carted off to Rikers Island.

Chunn presents her epic tale with such a light touch we cannot help but laugh, even as the unnerving details accumulate. Her point is needle-sharp. From mattress labels to terrorism, fear breeds on itself, and we live in a society that broadcasts and preys on it. Laughter may be the only antidote.

British artist Jeremy Deller takes a more heartening view of humanity. He is fascinated with the way history courses through society. Deller's show in the RISD Museum's video gallery, "Manchester Tracks,'' celebrates the city of Manchester in northwest England. Deller, who was awarded the Turner Prize in 2004, has always taken the long view. His medium is not really video - video is just the best way to document what he does, which is to invite citizens to take part in large-scale rituals.

Deller is best known for his 2001 historical reenactment of a 1984 clash in South Yorkshire between picketing miners and riot police, "The Battle of Orgreave,'' which is not on view here. It had a cast of hundreds, both professional reenactors and ex-miners. Mike Figgis made a film of the event, which suggests it was healing for the community.

Manchester, an industrial age powerhouse, hit hard times in the 20th century. It experienced an artistic renaissance in the 1970s and '80s, producing several punk and post-punk bands, including Joy Division, New Order, Buzzcocks, the Smiths, and Happy Mondays.

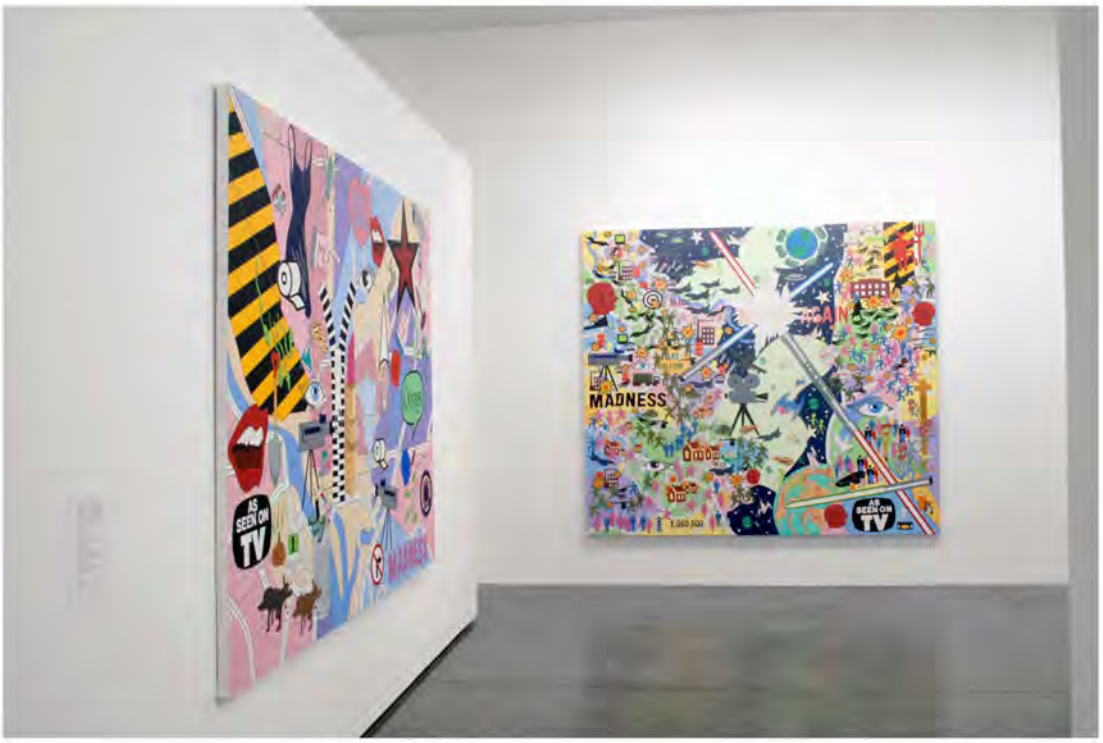
Deller's diagrammatic "Shaun Ryder's Family Tree'' lays out six generations of laborers who ultimately produced the lead singer of the Happy Mondays, as if all that sweat and toil culminated in Ryder's acid-toned portrait on the cover of the band's seminal album, "Bummed.'' It's not a stretch to think that heavy industry had something to do with spawning punk rock.

Deller's videos delight. For "Procession,'' the artist invited Mancunians to participate in a parade - "a way,'' he has said, "of showing the public itself.'' There's a swarthy marching band in kilts, with a swami's name prominently displayed on the bass drum. A float about french fries offers "The Adoration of the Chip.'' One banner reads "Unrepentant Smokers.'' Another quotes a Happy Mondays lyric: "You're rendering that scaffolding dangerous.'' Everybody appears to be having a grand time.

Part of the fun of "Procession'' is that Deller also screens archival footage of previous such events, from 1914, 1961 (when cosmonaut Yuri Gagarin came to Manchester), and 1976. They are all very much alike, with details of costume, signage, and transportation changing. But a parade has always been a parade, as industry rises and falls, as the economy batters a community.

In another joyful video, "Steel Harmony, Bolton,'' Deller invites a steel band from Manchester to play "Transmission'' by Joy Division and "Ever Fallen in Love (With Someone You Shouldn't've)'' by Buzzcocks. The steel band swaddles in velvety, liquid percussion tunes associated with driving electric sounds and sometimes dark and desperate lyrics. As with "Procession,'' the thread is there through decades. This recapitulation of music from the 1970s honors it, and reclaims it for the present.

Neel, Tucker. "Media Madness: Otis College of Art and Design." *ISM: a community project* (2008).



Media Madness

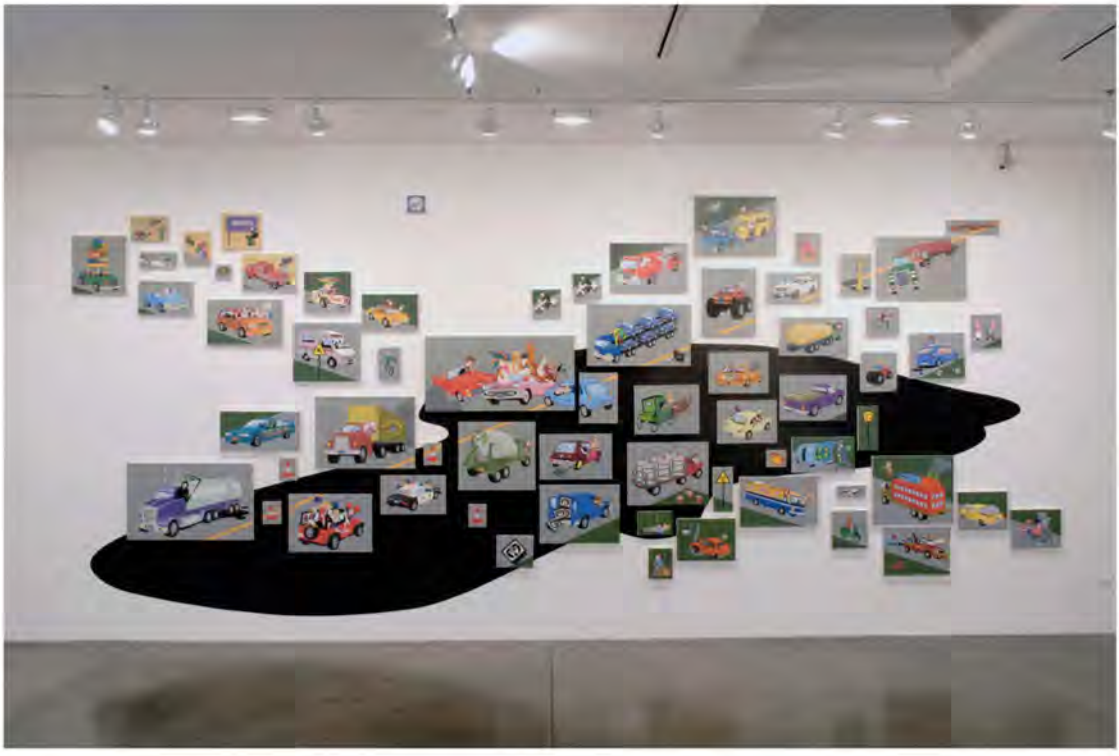
Otis College Of Art And Design

Tucker Neel text
Chris Warner image

Nancy Chunn is a self-described political junkie. Her most recent show, Media Madness, at Otis College of Art and Design, attests to her addiction to the news, an addiction that seems to suit her well. While she doesn't take revenge on the news media per se, Chunn acts more like a sieve, distilling current events into a personal lexicon of images, signs and symbols to make maps, diagrams, and hieroglyphs that express her fears, frustrations, humor and anxieties.

Chunn is best known for Front Pages, a body of work from January 1-December 31, 1997. During this year she drew on the front page of each day's New York Times newspaper with bright pastels, adding her own images over photographs, obscuring headlines and sometimes entire stories with expanses of color and carefully chosen texts. Media Madness presents the viewer with two months, June and July, arranged as if they were days on a calendar displaced onto the gallery wall.

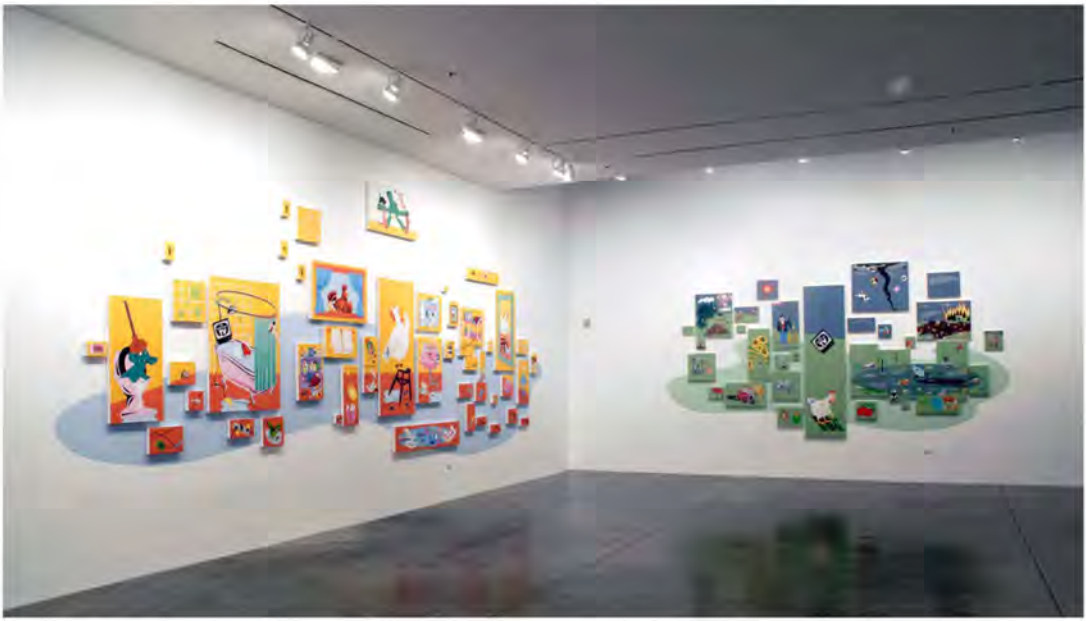
Chunn's interventions champion her own subjectivity with quips and witticisms and comic-book-like images that bring out the humor, sadness, or



ambivalence she feels in relation to the stories in the paper. So a story on, say, an I.R.A. bombing in a British city, condenses into "UP TO THEIR OLD TRICKS" (written in green of course) above two explosions. By whittling the daily news into one-liners, easily digestible combinations of images and text, she replicates the corporate media's habit of substituting surface for substance, producing sound bites instead of informed analysis, talking points enslaved to the constraints of a scrolling news ticker.

Whether the viewer agrees with Chunn's summation of the daily news is beside the point. The work is wholly about one woman's act of reading and reflecting over the course of a year. The artist is the sole locus for the work so impartiality flies out the window. Here we see how the news acts on and through a person. In this way her work performs entirely differently from conventional news media, which relies on the myth of objectivity to maintain credibility.

In addition to revisiting Chunn's seminal work, Media Madness also includes Chicken Little and the Culture of Fear. Consisting of a suite of four different installations of dozens of small and large canvases arranged on the gallery wall in an expansive salon style, the work tells the story of Chicken Little, a worrisome fowl beset by seemingly endless obstacles and hazards, from falling televisions to homicidal tractors, bimbos in Broncos, and invasive CIA agents. While the work turns many current political, environmental and social issues into a fable with no resolution, Chunn has said that when she completes the last group of paintings she'll eventually have Chicken Little working for Fox



News, a fitting end to a story about fear mongering in the new millennium.

The images of burning forests, toxic waste, genetically modified food and over-consumption in Chicken Little and the Culture of Fear may just be fleeting glimpses of a world temporarily out of balance, or images of an entrenched uber-capitalism that generates countless injustices and neglected catastrophes. Perhaps the saddest thing of all, and what gives Chunn's work legs, is that the symbols and icons imbedded in her work will outlive the immediacy, the context, of their creation.

This observation came to the fore in her Four Seasons painting series. Utilizing Chunn's familiar stock of symbols first developed in the Front Pages series, the paintings depict major news stories that occurred during each of the four seasons in 1999. But if it weren't for the didactic wall text explaining the subjects of each work, one could easily see these paintings as contemporaneous with today's breaking news. In this way they are history paintings, their subjects specific, yet enduring.

In Spring Cleaning (Spring 1999) the flat, angular images of fallen bodies, fighter jets, armed soldiers, and explosions meant to reference the violence of the Columbine school shootings and the war in Kosovo immediately bring to mind the dead bodies and battle fields associated with the seemingly endless wars America fights either directly or by proxy all over the world today. The message in the work may be rooted in a specific time and place, but the larger polemic is not necessarily historically constitutive. As long as war and violence are part of

our everyday life, these pictographs of crumbling buildings, troop formations, bombs, funerals, guns and dollar signs will have lasting resonance.

Looking at Scandal (Winter 1998-99), emblazoned with Day-Glo images of sperm, moist red lips, a giant unzipping zipper and a garbage can stuffed with money and a copy of the Star Report, one cannot help but think of the Bill Clinton/Monica Lewinski muckraking that inspired this flamboyant painting. Yet the toilet at the center, the accusing fingers, computer, and the bald headed man exclaiming "Oops," also immediately calls to mind the many right wing politicos recently outred for their less-than-hetero behavior. While the story in the painting is from a bygone era, its sentiment is symbolically perennial: We seem to be more interested in who politicians fuck than who they fuck over.

Perhaps this is the larger message imbedded in Chunn's work, that we should use the news as a vehicle for developing our own symbolic, and perhaps radical responses. Registering dissatisfaction is a first step bug we need to go beyond critiquing the news to actually making the news. Now that the time for action has come the pressing question is how do we, as cultural producers, change the game, rewrite the rules and shift the power structure in such a way that the images displayed in Chunn's work are no longer up-to-date, but instead vestiges of an embarrassing yet distant past?

For more information please visit: www.otis.net

Jones, Joyce. "On Exhibit: Reading Between The Lines." *The Washington Post*, January 16, 1998.

Nancy Chunn's 1996 front pages featured (from left) smiley-faced primaries on March 6; angels hovering over the July 19 page devoted to the TWA crash; and the welfare bill starting a stampede on Aug. 1.

Reading Between the Lines

By Joyce Jones

THE NEW YORK Times might claim "All the News That's Fit to Print," but artist Nancy Chunn has news for the Times. Like a reader talking to herself as she peruses the morning paper, Chunn has taken every Times front page in 1996 and added her color commentary right on A1. The resulting 366 images are on exhibit at the Corcoran Gallery of Art through March 1.

Chunn, a 56-year-old New York artist known for her straightforwardly political works, has found a popular, easily accessible medium in her personalized news pages. Taking each front page, she used rubber stamps and pastels to augment the stories and images with her slant. In the process, she developed an extensive iconography—scissors signifying budget cuts, coffins representing the dead—and in many instances color coding combines with symbolism. For example, a pink pawn appears on the story of Whitewater figure Susan McDougal's sentencing. When an image won't do, she stamps on expressions such as "Ban the Bomb" or, in the case of a tobacco-related story, "Ban the Butt." Expressions like "Leave and let die" are reminiscent of artist Jenny Holzer's aphorisms though not as original or thought-provoking. And sometimes they're so obvious that they merely elicit a "So what's new?"

Each of the 12 months is grouped together and hung in order, filling one gallery. The progression clearly shows a transformation as Chunn moves through the year. January found her mostly coloring the photos, but pretty much staying within the lines, and stamping telegraphic responses over story copy. Consequently, the earlier months are grayer and less exciting. As summer turns to fall, images begin to take over the pages, and the months of August through December are the most vivid. Where in March she simply put smiley faces on Bob and Elizabeth Dole, in August the Clintons and Gores become the Jetsons and Bob Dole and Jack Kemp are Fred Flintstone and Barney Rubble.

You'd think after a year of working seven days a week to keep up, Chunn would have been running out of ideas, but instead she seems energized as the year's end nears. Individual pages as well as the entire months of October, November and December become more surreal, whimsical and creative: a dragon slithers, a forest springs up complete with woodland creatures, a bear balloon from the Macy's Christmas parade devours a man. Chunn's pages are strongest when she fills them with these free-association montages rather than the more simplistic slogans. "The closer I got to finishing the more I piled on the page," Chunn explained at the exhibit opening. "It's like I didn't want it to end."

In a way, it hasn't ended. Chunn has more recently given her treatment to a month of front pages from The Washington Post. The 31 fronts from October 1997 are on view at Addison/Ripley Fine Art near Dupont Circle. According to Chunn The Post's more modular, horizontal layout was a design challenge. "Graphically, the Post was more difficult to deal with because it was divided more at the fold, and the bolder heads left less room for my comments." And she even did an impromptu content comparison. "I counted up and there are more women on the front pages of The Post than in any of the New York Times months.... There's lots of pink."

"Front Pages 1996" has been a boon for Chunn. Rizzoli International Publications has released the pages as a book and the Corcoran has answered Chunn's other wish. "I wanted two things out of this: a book and to show in Washington, D.C. I wanted people in D.C. to see it. I wanted them to see themselves."

NANCY CHUNN: Front Pages 1996 — Through March 1 at the Corcoran Gallery of Art, 500 17th St. NW (Metro: Farragut West, Farragut North). 202/639-1703. Open daily 10 to 5, and until 9 on Thursdays. Closed Tuesdays. Suggested donation: adults $3, students and seniors $1, family $5.

NANCY CHUNN NEW WORK 1997 — Through Feb. 28 at Addison/Ripley Fine Art, 9 Hillyer Ct. NW (Metro: Dupont Circle). 202/328-2332. Open Tuesday through Saturday 11 to 5 and by appointment.

Morris, Amy. "Extra! Extra! News as Artworks." *Northern Virginia Sun,* January 28, 1998, p.7.

Extra! Extra! News As Artwork

Corcoran Gallery Features Artist's Reaction to Front Page News of 1996

by AMY MORRIS
Staff Writer

Contemporary artist Nancy Chunn has done what many of us dream but few have managed.

She's taken her love for art and interest in current events and combined them to create her latest exhibit, "Front Pages 1996 (One Year of the New York Times)," now at the Corcoran Gallery of Art in Washington.

Galleries

"I'm a news freak. I'm always reading the papers. I'm always looking at the news," Chunn, 55, said during a press preview of her work earlier this month. "I've never worked liked this in my life. I'm just fried."

Every day in 1996, from Jan. 1 to Dec. 31, Chunn took the front page of the New York Times and inserted her take on each story with more than 500 images and phrases.

Exactly 366 papers (1996 was a leap year), grouped by month and arranged chronologically, are the result of her efforts. The concept of the exhibit is simple, and Churin is the first to admit it.

On closer inspection, the visitor can see the thought and foresight that took each page from concept to reality.

Chunn encourages others to follow her lead and question what goes onto the front page of a highly respected newspaper and why.

For Chunn, the year of 1996 taught her much about the media, her perspective on life, and the unrelenting passage of time.

"This project made me keep thinking about death," she said. "I felt like I was a gerbil spinning in a wheel. I was so conscious of time passing by."

Terrie Sultan, curator of contemporary art at the Corcoran, said she has been an avid follower of Chunn's work for many years. She visited Chunn's "Front Page" exhibit in New York, and invited her to Washington.

"Her work really attracted me, not only because it's an overview of what 1996 brought to us, but how the information was presented to us," Sultan said.

Nancy Chunn's take on World AIDS Day, with the assistance of the New York Times.

CORCORAN GALLERY OF ART

Obviously, stories on the front page of the New York Times are different, but in 1996 they contained many of the same elements that are inherent in life, such as death, money and politics.

Chunn repeatedly used the same images to symbolize each, and her work is dotted with chalk outlines and moneybags.

Politicians are often depicted as generic, smiling faces and captioned with phrases that, in Chunn's view, say what candidates won't.

For example, on top of a picture and story about former Republican presidential candidate Bob Dole, Chunn has stamped her own take on the story, which reads, "How did I get into this mess?"

She said her own "liberal to radical" political leanings influence her art to some degree, but that she is careful not to allow any outside forces do the same. She was recently invited by the New York Times to observe a front-page meeting, a courtesy extended to only a few outsiders, but she turned them down.

"I don't know if I want to know why some stories make it in over others. It might influence my art, but it was a great honor to be asked," Chunn said.

Some stories of 1996 transcended all politics, such as the downing of Flight 800. Many of the July and August front-page stories detailed the search for bodies. Chunn defined the event her way by coloring the copy and pictures with an ocean-blue pastel, and sketched underwater angels. This theme was carried on sporadically almost to the end of the year, as new news relegated the fatal crash to the inside pages.

Despite her constant working schedule, Chunn insists she is not tired of reading and reinterpreting the day's news for an audience. In fact, she is now busily working to exhibit her most recent work, a collection of Washington Post front pages from October 1997.

"This paper was challenging because the basic design is different," she said. "Also, it concentrates much more on local news than the Times."

In her opinion, the most interesting story of that month was the first successful cloning of a sheep. The clone was named Dolly.

"I personally think that's the biggest thing that happened this year," she said. "A hundred years from now, that story will still have the biggest resonance."

In addition, Chunn has just released a collection of her work in book form, which she dedicated to "all that read out loud."

"Nancy Chunn: Front Pages 1996" will be on display at the Corcoran Gallery of Art until March 1. The gallery is at 500 17th St. NW in Washington.

Mahoney, Robert. "Nancy Chunn, Front Pages 1996." *Time Out New York*, February 6-13, 1997: 41.

Nancy Chunn, *Front Pages 1996*

Ronald Feldman Fine Arts, through Feb 15 (see Soho).

I'm a news junkie, so Nancy Chunn's pastel-and-ink alterations of every front page of *The New York Times* from 1996 is my kind of art. Chunn presents 12 suites of drawings, one for each month, pinned up on the wall in a block. Although you may well wonder about Chunn's style, presentation and the prospects for the archival preservation of these jazzy renderings on fragile, disposable newsprint, the best way to view the show is to slow down a bit. You'll be left in awe of Chunn's stamina and the power of her commentary.

Particularly compelling is the way she colorizes photographs: the flames of a black church fire guttering into KKK hoods; Clinton as Raggedy Ann at the Democratic Convention; Yeltsin and Gore taking a meeting, transformed into a pair of stiff trees. These and other drawings could stand on their own as pungent political cartoons. Chunn also peppers texts with stenciled slogans and simple, evocative icons: Every bomb blast in Israel during the last election—so instantly, depressingly forgotten—piles up mounds of stick figures across the page. Campaigning politicos sport have-a-nice-day faces. Every obituary is reverently lined in black, especially those for French president Mitterrand and Marcello Mastroianni.

You can tell what gets Chunn hot, and what does not. Politics seems to turn her off: Election day prompts a whirlwind of

Nancy Chunn, *Front Pages 1996* (detail), 1996.

dollar bills and sacks of cash—a scathing criticism of campaign finance. She loves sports, scattering stars across coverage of the Olympics and the Yankees' World Series victory. But, clearly, the major story of the year for her is the crash of TWA flight 800: Over each related article or photo, she draws a blue sea with hovering angels.

Some may quibble with Chunn's editorializing—by turns judgmental, cynical, sad and sentimental. But this is the key to her success: She eschews a rigid political correctness for the free-for-all tearjerking of tabloid culture. By surrendering herself fully to the language and form of her material—newspaper reporting—she rarely strikes a false note. Sustained over 365 days, this is a remarkable achievement.—*Robert Mahoney*

Frankel, David. "Nancy Chunn: Ronald Feldman Fine Arts." *Artforum* XXXV, No. 9 (May 1997): 106

NEW YORK

NANCY CHUNN

RONALD FELDMAN FINE ARTS

For some time now, one of the more tiresome tics of general-readership art writing has been the accusatory repetition of the word "didactic"—a dismissive code, both smug and defensive, meant to justify the writer's squeamishness in the face of artworks with discomfiting social content. Unfortunately, since politically oriented art is as subject as any other to rhetorical flaws, there has been plenty of drab and gauche work around with which to tar the rest of what, over the last two decades, has actually been a vital aesthetic current. But lately a number of artists, particularly those old enough to have observed or rather endured from the inside this country's punitive recent reaction to socially probing art, have been figuring out ways to pursue their public concerns while also creating a visual sumptuousness to outmaneuver the labels used against them. I don't know whether this was a deliberate goal of Nancy Chunn's in "Front Pages 1996," but certainly the show was in every way true to her history as a political artist while also being one of the more spectacular gallery sights of this season.

Every day last year, Chunn took over the front page of *The New York Times*. In a process that looks spontaneous but must have involved both foresight and considerable concentration, she covered the news with replies to it—with images and verbal quips rubber-stamped and drawn in pastel directly over the newsprint. The resulting 366 pages (1996 was a leap year) were hung abutting each other in large grids grouped by month. Chunn's images could be as simple as, say, a black frame around the photograph of Barbara Jordan published on her death, or stamps of smiley faces applied to stories about politicians. They could also be more ambitious, particularly as the year went by and Chunn both hit a rhythm and raised the stakes. The most striking passages dealt with the destruction of TWA Flight 800: Chunn filled the whole text and picture space of every article on that subject (which took up a lot of column inches) with a blue field, across which passed little angels. As you watched, these blue geometries suddenly almost monopolized the *Times*' front page, then dwindled, then started disappearing and recurring, flickering on and off, charting both the importance of this event in public consciousness and

Nancy Chunn, *July 30, 1996*, 1996, ink and pastel on newspaper, 21½ x 13¾".

the unresolved limbo in which it still remains.

Probably everyone who reads the *Times* talks back to it to some extent, in a stream of inner muttering about both the events recorded in the paper and the paper itself. "Front Pages 1996," 1996, translates this constant comment into visual terms. True, many of the comments are verbal ("HOLD YOUR NOSE AND VOTE," writes Chunn on Bill Clinton's reelection plans), but one is looking at a kind of rich pattern, the black and white newsprint forming a ground on which colors and motifs arrange themselves according to a scheme that seems fluid but not accidental, responding as it does to both the *Times* editors' space and placement decisions and Chunn's own aesthetic and moral urges. Properly postmodern, the work is a grab bag of imagery, from comic strips to Renaissance *putti*, from signage to Ed Paschke–esque chromatic games. It is also ceaselessly inventive, as when, bubble-like, the glass balls on the Christmas tree that fills the December 25 page frame some of the faces in that day's photos—Yasser Arafat and Benjamin Netanyahu. And oddly enough, the work has a sociopolitical version of the classic formalist push-pull, as the eye is dragged back and forth between foreground and background, the *Times* and Chunn's additions to it, in a constant, absorbing tension and interplay. Meanwhile, the work as a whole has the effect of a Joycean stream of consciousness: making your way through its temporal flow is like being inside a mind as it copes with quotidian public life. Dense and detailed, the work is provocative, gorgeous, and as full of incident as—well, as the daily news.

—*David Frankel*

Smith, Roberta. "All the News That's Fit to Paint." *The New York Times*, January 31, 1997: C-27.

ART REVIEW

All the News That's Fit to Paint

By ROBERTA SMITH

NANCY CHUNN, who is 55 and has exhibited in New York City since the early 1980's, has always seemed content to let her art take second place to her high-minded political beliefs and her interest in current events. In more than a decade of darkly colored paintings and drawings, she has attended to nearly every international hot point, usually with results that felt morally right but looked drab and obvious.

Her images, often involving maps of troubled nations bound in chains, resembled little more than estheticized political posters. And the mouthful-titles didn't help: "Korea: Rule and Divide," "Iran/Iraq: Bangs and Whimpers," "Philippines: Guns, Goons + Gold" and "Haiti + Dominican Republic: Terror in Paradise."

Starting around 1990, Ms. Chunn shed some of her visual inertia with a series of paintings devoted to the ancient past — the history of early China, to be exact — that were animated by darting hordes of tiny figures and mounted warriors, and brighter, more painterly colors. Now her art has loosened and lightened further. Her third show at the Ronald Feldman gallery in SoHo is the best of her dedicated career.

Ms. Chunn has accomplished this improvement by returning to breaking news with a diaristic vengeance, making her grand obsession with current events intimate, loquacious and visually explosive.

The process was simple but labor intensive. The artist has spent the last year doing little besides carefully studying the images and articles on the front page of The New York Times every day. This is nothing new for Ms. Chunn, except that now her news source has also become her artistic surface. Having digested the news, she then added words and images of her own to the front page, working primarily with pastels, lettered stamps and imagistic stamps, many of them custom-made. She did this from Jan. 1 to Dec. 31, 1996, beginning each day with the purchase of four copies of the paper. One was sent immediately to a conservator to be "washed" or de-acidified (a two-week process that left her in a constant state of catch-up); the others were studied or used for sketching out ideas.

> A year of front pages as a yearlong artistic surface.

The resulting 366 newsprint drawings, arranged chronologically and grouped month by month, cover the walls at Feldman like the pages of a big illuminated manuscript: a year in the life of a planet, a newspaper and an artist. The war in Chechnya, the bombings in Israel, the Presidential campaign, the extended tragedy of Rwanda, the downing of T.W.A. Flight 800, the Yankees' World Series victory, the flap about one-sex marriages, Ms. Chunn comments on all this and more, running through a veritable emotional spectrum as she goes.

She seems to have relished the opportunity to talk about more than one thing at a time, and to follow her sense of humor as much as her conscience. She tends to be blunt, to reduce things to a few terse words or images. The many articles about bombings, for example, are stamped with orange explosions, stenciled bodies and coffins. Politicians are frequently turned into red-cheeked clowns. Stamped dollar signs are ubiquitous, on articles about budget cuts, corruption and campaign financing, for example. But it's a measure of the work's visual diversity and intricacy that, by year's end, Ms. Chunn had had more than 800 stamps fabricated.

Sometimes she boils the printed word down to television news sound bites. "Deadly Neglect" is stamped across an article about a Government report blaming lax security for the bombing of a United States Army base in Saudi Arabia. Sometimes the reactions sound like headlines from other newspapers: an article about welfare cuts is stamped "Congress to Kids: Go Starve." But the show is more than an idiosyncratic, hand-tinted commentary on the ups and downs of 1996. It also demonstrates an artist exploring and expanding upon the possibilities of a visual system that initially might have seemed somewhat limited.

At the year's beginning, Ms. Chunn tends to simply color in the images, capitalizing on the often wonderfully shadowy or hallucinatory effects of bright pastels on newsprint (an effect that can also recall the work of such 80's "Pictures" artists as Troy Brauntuch). But as she progresses, her colors start overflowing the

boundaries of individual images, traveling around the page. Art history sometimes enters the proceedings. She redraws a front-page photograph of Theodore Kaczynski, the accused Unabomber, into an intense van Gogh-like portrait. And the crash of T.W.A. Flight 800 into the Atlantic sends her back to Giotto's "Lamentation" for a field of deep blue dotted with grieving angels. She uses it every time the crash is written about, sometimes expanding the blue until it almost covers the entire page to create the show's best and most cathartic passage.

Ms. Chunn's new work has many precedents in the diaristic strategies of 1970's Conceptualism and its legacy, including On Kawara's daily date paintings; Jennifer Bartlett's "Rhapsody," an encyclopedic painting on more than 1,000 12-inch-square enamel plates, and various forms of "endurance art." And she follows a number of other artists in incorporating The Times into her work: Sarah Charlesworth, Adrian Piper and Robert Gober have all manipulated its articles and images with social intent. Ms. Chunn doesn't so much manipulate as embellish, giving her version of the private reactions and commentary that run through most people's minds as they read (or watch) the news. This is one reason this work is so immediate and pleasurable. Another is that she has finally found a convincing way to give visual form to the intense interest in human affairs that has always fueled her art. It will be interesting to see where she goes from here.

"Nancy Chunn: Front Pages 1996" remains at Ronald Feldman Fine Arts, 31 Mercer Street, SoHo, through Feb. 15.

Zindman/Fremont

A diary of breaking news: One page from Nancy Chunn's 366-piece installation, "Front Pages 1996," at Ronald Feldman Fine Arts.

Kuspit, Donald. "42nd Biennial: Corcoran Gallery of Art." *Artforum* XXX, no. 6 (February 1992): 121-22.

Nancy Chunn, *China II: Han Dynasty; 206 B.C. to 316 A.D.*, 1990, oil, ink, and wax on two canvases, 78 x 104". From "42nd Biennial."

WASHINGTON, D.C.

"42ND BIENNIAL"

CORCORAN GALLERY OF ART

Abstraction is once again on the creative march, and, indeed, many of the works in this exhibition use known means, in novel ways, to uncanny, often witty effect. Though the work in this show is predominantly abstract, many of the paintings incorporate representational imagery. Titles also play an important role in much of this art, generating associations, suggestive, perhaps, of a calculated turn to the literary. This is a way of pushing abstraction beyond the art-about-art dead end of naive formality. L. C. Armstrong, for example, uses the grid as a sardonic calendar in *A Month of Sundays*, 1990. Nancy Chunn quotes figural images from early Chinese history, which she then spreads across a grid, sometimes incorporating a shadow drawing of the Buddha or a map of China. The overall effect is an ironical synthesis of "gestural" and geometrical elements. Lydia Dona also mixes gesture and geometry, to generate a new effect of irksome ineffability, and something similar occurs in Willy Heeks' ostensibly graceful, even ingratiating paintings.

In other words, the best of these works generates an ironical ambivalence—an emotionally perverse effect on the basis of an unholy alliance of means. Sometimes they also suggest that abstraction is a kind of play at the border between meaning and representation, as in Tishan Hsu's fascination with close-ups of a bullet hole in the flesh that ironically have a kind of techno-surreal look. Judy Mannarino's extravagant painterliness also seems to serve this idea, although in her case the ironical representation of emotional meaning seems to be the issue, as her titles suggest. The same might be said of Michael Miller's messy grid, if in a more oblique way. Like Mannarino's paintings, Miller's seem calculated in their surface hysteria, as though to signal that he is not naive about the expressive effect of painterliness and does not want his work to be taken as naively expressive. Defensively expressive, then? Indeed, none of the artists wants to appear naive about either technical or expressive effects, suggesting that they have no clear end in mind but are simply working up intriguing surfaces.

Certainly this seems the case in Sabina Ott's paintings, presented as emblematic of the "feminization of abstraction." But what does "feminine" mean in this context, except that a woman has painted the work? Like all post-Modernist tags, it seems hollow—not a Modern hollowness yearning for fullness, but a contrived post-Modern hollowness of ingenious meaninglessness. Irene Pijoan's paintings suggest a similar feminization, especially because of their beauty—a term I allow myself to use because of its meaninglessness. Does this make Eldridge Rawls' paintings—at once vigorous and delicate—androgynous, and Thomas Eric Stanton's paintings masculine, by reason of their painterly aggressiveness? And how do Andrea Way's mineral-looking, intricate, luminous surfaces—clearly the result of a magnificent obsession with linear detail—fit into the sexualization of abstraction this exhibition seems to propose?

Such sexualization is most apparent in Lari Pittman's works, which, for all their surreal Pop imagery, are supposed to be abstract, whatever that now means. The number 69 frankly and confrontationally appears in virtually all the images, which are melodramatic and haunting, if in an, at times, corny Hollywood way. I am told that the artist regards mutual fellatio as the profoundest form of sexual and emotional intimacy, and that he wants to get this tabooed message across. But would this sexualize abstraction or is it simply propagandistic—message art with a different message? In any case, the exhibition tends to overload abstract painting with meanings in an effort to revalidate it. But the paintings themselves, which are very articulate in dealing with the inarticulate—in making the unfathomable seem visually fathomable—have no need of wild associations to substantiate their credibility.

—Donald Kuspit

Raven, Arlene. "Nancy Chunn." *New Art Examiner* 14, No. 7 (March 1987): 43.

Nancy Chunn

Ronald Feldman Fine Arts Inc.
21 Mercer St., 212/226-3232

In her first one-person exhibition in New York since her 1984 show at Concord Gallery, Nancy Chunn showed paintings that are quietly elegant, yet visually stunning, emotive, and clear.

Born in Los Angeles and educated at the California Institute of the Arts, Chunn shares with other artists Feldman represents (Californians Helen and Newton Harrison and Eleanor Antin, for example) a passionate concern for ending societal oppression and physical destruction. The influence of Cal Arts' emphasis on Conceptual art is clearly reflected in the subject matter of the paintings: the geographical and political features of Vietnam, Chile, Nicaragua, Guatemala, and Iran.

Chunn's flat renditions of countries and continents are linked and overlaid with lengths of chain that serve to move us through the dark, rich flatness of her paint and suggest analogies and relationships. Her painstaking, precise painting technique creates a spare, luminous surface which, with measured modulations, is sustained from one painting to another.

Chunn employs colors deemed "exotic" or "orientalizing" by Western Europeans in the late nineteenth century, and which here retain their "un-American" connotations. Green-blues, earth reds, silver-grays, and black separate land from water, or internal from external, in the greater body of Third World—which, at her hands, takes on the aspect of a "Dark Madonna."

A decade ago in a dream, Chunn asked to use all of herself in her art. A voice answered, "Yes. But you have to make it better." An image of Chile, Vietnam, or Iran, repeated in several versions in the current body of work, explores the possibilities of paint, but also gets closer to what Chunn wants to express: ethical and moral feeling as well as aesthetic meaning.

Chunn's self-criticism and conviction, relentlessness and modesty, serve her well in all of her work here. The spirit of these paintings, while analytical, transcends the grim tones and conceptual chaos with which we have been forced to greet 1987 worldwide, and the bilious rhetoric currently used to mask them.

Arlene Raven