

Whirl of Interiors

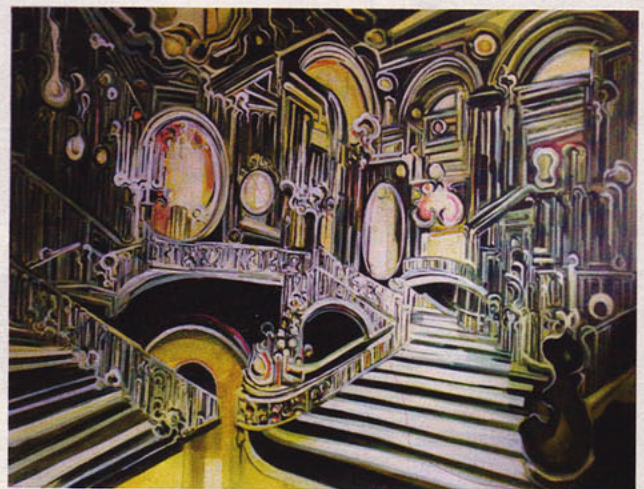
WITH OFF-KILTER PERSPECTIVES, MADDENING DESIGN PATTERNS AND THEATRICAL CONFABULATIONS, THESE FEMALE PAINTERS PURSUE A DIFFERENT KIND OF DOMESTIC ART. BY MAURA EGAN



"Maelstrom/Before" The disorienting details in Francesca Gabbiani's paper and acrylic collages — labyrinthine passages, mirrors within mirrors, wallpaper patterns that jump off the canvas — can leave the viewer with a touch of vertigo. "It's like being trapped inside," says the Canadian-born Gabbiani, based in Los Angeles. Her inspirations are as eclectic as they are horrific — say, Edgar Allan Poe's "Fall of the House of Usher" or the '70s Belgian vampire film "Daughters of Darkness." But in her work, blood and gore are replaced with a cool detachment, "as if something bad just happened or is about to happen," she says.



"Koenig House" "I am interested in American faux appropriation," explains the painter Rosson Crow, who recently moved to Los Angeles after a year in France. "I like the idea of the Paris Las Vegas hotel rather than actual Paris." For her current show at Honor Fraser gallery near Culver City, Calif., the Texas native created electric visions of a Hollywood Western set, the Ambassador Hotel (where Robert F. Kennedy was assassinated) and a Pierre Koenig house, to which she added a rococo-style chandelier. Crow's colorful, almost frenetic style has roots that extend well beyond Tinseltown. In the 1970s, her mother designed the interiors of private jets for clients like the Sultan of Brunei.



"Staircase Tunnel" While studying at the Royal Academy of Art in London, the Corfu-born painter Emi Avora often flipped through luxury-apartment brochures from real estate agents. More recently, she has gathered material sketching in fancy department stores and five-star hotels. "I create these fictional spaces that are quite decadent and maximalist," says Avora, who cites French Symbolists like the artist Gustave Moreau and the writer Joris-Karl Huysmans as inspirations. She tweaks grand spaces by exaggerating Art Deco flourishes and painting winding stairwells and reflecting mirrors that create a Escheresque maze.