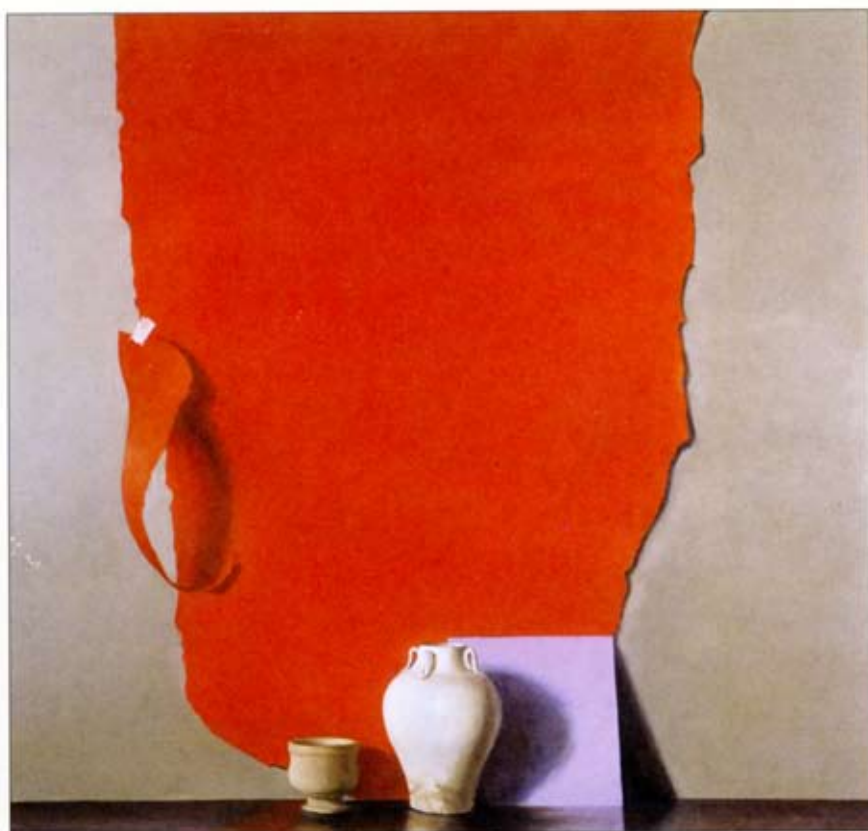

American Arts

QUARTERLY

Fall 2006



New Morgan Library & Museum

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Americans in Paris

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Remembering How to Draw

This fall Forum showed recent paintings by Raymond Han, best known for his tight rendering of figures and objects against pearly, featureless backdrops. Han's cool, neoclassical approach is evident in *Awakening Spring* (2006), with three barefoot modern nymphs deployed in a frieze across a neutral space, and only a few cut flowers as attributes of the season. A clutch of still lifes feature white ceramic vessels that would not be out of place in a Robert Adam drawingroom, with the addition of intriguing elements such as flowers, photographs and art reproductions. The witty *Still Life with Virginia Woolf and Fiona Shaw* (2006), for all its references to the sister arts of literature and theater, is essentially an investigation of white shapes. More color appears in *Mixed Bouquet with Bronze Serpent* (2006), but the standout work in the show, also 2006, is *Studio Still Life #4* (cover). The still-life elements—a white classical-style amphora and a beige mortar, backed by a lavender square of board—are pushed to the bottom of the composition. More than three-quarters of the space is devoted to the irregular sheet of vermilion-red paper tacked to the taupe wall, with an extra curl taped to the larger sheet. The red sheet is illusionistically rendered, with shadows along the ragged right-hand edge and the sumptuousness of a medieval Cloth of Honor. But the image also works as a first-rate abstract composition. Skillful artists who have developed a signature formula are often wary of striking out in new directions. This exciting foray into color field suggests Han may be embarking on a new phase. It's a terrific picture. "Raymond Han: Recent Paintings" was on view through October 21, 2006, at Forum Gallery, 745 Fifth Avenue at 57th Street, New York, New York 10151. Telephone: (212) 355-4545. On the Web at www.forumgallery.com