

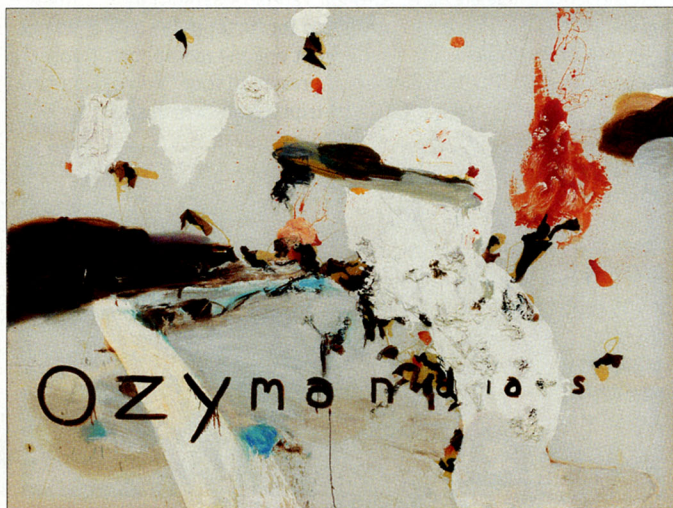
GAGOSIAN GALLERY

ARTnews

Julian Schnabel

Gagosian

Julian Schnabel's 12 large-format paintings in this exhibition, "View of Dawn in the Tropics," were at once visually powerful and intellectually enigmatic. The



Julian Schnabel, *Ozymandias*, 1990, oil, resin, gesso, and leather on sailcloth, 156" x 208 1/4". Gagosian.

title for the show came from a 1974 book by the Cuban dissident novelist Guillermo Cabrera Infante. Schnabel incorporated the words in two 1993 oil paintings featured in *Draw a Family*, a recent catalogue of the artist's work over the past 40 years, published by Karma. But what the words mean in the context of Schnabel's art defies explanation.

Similarly, at Gagosian, three predominantly red untitled works (from 1990–91) carried the words "los patos del buen retiro" ("the ducks of the Buen Retiro," a park in Madrid). Isolated in a room of their own (the equivalent of a park, perhaps), the paintings created an environment reminiscent of Monet's *Water Lilies*, but the words, which may have been floating in Schnabel's mind as he painted, revealed nothing about the works themselves.

The incorporation of words in paintings is one of Cy Twombly's favorite devices, and it may be that Schnabel is simultaneously honoring Twombly and contesting him by suggesting that to include ideas in pictures subverts art's visual essence.

On the other hand, the magnificent *Ozymandias* (1990), a huge composition of oil, resin, gesso, and leather on sailcloth, contradicts that contradiction. Here Schnabel recycles the Romantic poet Percy Bysshe Shelley's sonnet *Ozymandias*, about the perishable nature of glory. Like the broken statue in the poem, the painting is all fragments, with strips of leather glued onto the surface creating a three-dimensional effect, as if

we were seeing the work from above rather than head-on. The white shape dominating the surface could indeed be the "shattered visage" of Shelley's pharaoh half-buried in the sand.

But unlike that poet's smashed monarch, Schnabel's rough profile, along with all the other works in this show, is an homage to ruins and remains—the raw material transformed through imagination and memory into dazzling visual images.

—Alfred Mac Adam