

RICHARD GRAY GALLERY

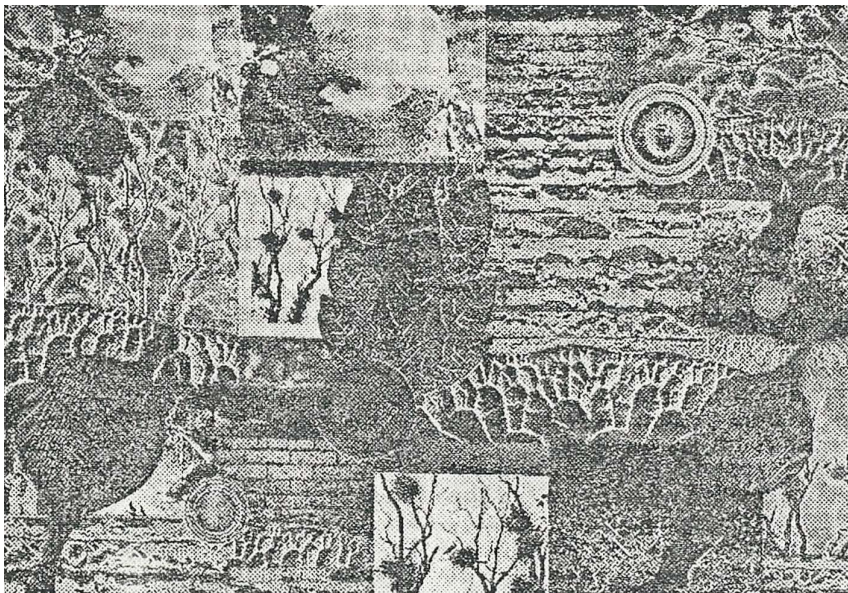
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ART

Collages bring order to chaos

By Sue Taylor | Friday, September 25, 1987



Evelyn Statsinger's collage "Total Rocall" is included in an exhibit at the Jan Cicero Gallery through Oct. 9.

Evelyn Statsinger's supremely subtle collages in many ways resemble her paintings. Beautifully crafted and tightly composed, they're often enigmatic, infused with the most elusive kind of poetry. She creates these additive picture-poems from prints, photographs and Xeroxed images, which are cut, torn or pinked and then arranged on thin panels in an inevitably ordered fashion.

On view at Jan Cicero Gallery, 221 W. Erie (440-1904),

through Oct. 9, Statsinger's newest collages seem, as the title of one of the works suggests, like "dream windows" onto a world of imagination and memory. Her colors, for the most part, are the pale shades of nostalgia — lavender, ivory and buff — as if time had veiled these scenes in grayed or faded hues. Visions of nature — storks in flight, for example, desert cacti, mushrooms and flower — coexist with images of man-made objects such as hand mirrors, dolls, doilies and moldings.

While Statsinger undoubtedly selects these motifs for their evocative associations, an overriding concern for pattern also must motivate her choices. Certainly the regularity and repetition that characterize knitted or woven fabrics, a wall of brick or the netting of a tennis racquet make these subjects keenly attractive to an artist longing to discover order in a chaotic, incomprehensible world. And while Statsinger's neatly resolved compositions may echo the modernist grids of Agnes Martin or Sol LeWitt, her rigorous formats seem more rooted in personal compulsion than in art

historical models. Her technique is meticulous, at times even fastidious, a paradigm of discipline and aesthetic control.

There's room within this formal rigor for delightful fantasies, as Statsinger invents an aquatic realm with bizarre creatures swimming through tangles of seaweed spaghetti in "Sea Depths," or as she conjures up an enchanted forest to welcome two naked children in "Reflections." On occasion, however, such playfulness gives way to a more sinister world of dread, of death and decay, where the artist introduces rare fields of blood red to signal potential distress.

In "Imminent Dangers," for instance, circular-saw blades menace a little girl whose silhouetted figure is minus arms and a leg. And in "Pious Vigil," images of human fossils and a mourning pope reinforce the funerary overtones of the title, while juxtaposed with scenes of dilapidated buildings in the aftermath, perhaps, of a bomb or an earthquake.

With the medium of collage, Statsinger has found the perfect vehicle for her all-encompassing meditations: Subsumed within the regularized pattern of the work of art, her allusions to death and disaster become contextualized — like the events themselves in the course of history.