

Suzanne Unrein
Galleri Urbane, Dallas

www.galleriurbane.com

My trip to Galleri Urbane would have left me only marginally more surprised if I'd found burning bushes, stone tablets and proverbial honey from a rock. Loaded into one end of this unpretentious and welcoming gallery space is some of the most startling and grand work I've seen in years. I refer to Suzanne Unrein and her genius at swathing great wallops of paint on canvas with praiseworthy skill that does nothing less than invoke the great masters. Two canvases are embodiments of sheer joy to behold and are thoroughly capable of single-handedly inveighing against the notion that Dallas is a backwater with little to offer in the way of massively attractive visual fare. Put another way: I would not be surprised if I'd first discovered these paintings on the walls of The Modern in Fort Worth or The Menil Collection in Houston.

So. I mean "massive" in every sense of the word. These are relatively large works but, more importantly, the insinuated scope is large; the swiped hauls of broad, scooping paint suggests the entwined hounds, boars and prey reminiscent of Peter Paul Rubens. But this is Rubens with the gloves off.

You'll find no Flemish red, blue or gold. These are the earthy greens and brownish grays of a muted palette. But there's such raw action being depicted that it seems we're witnessing the beginning of an end. We're watching an old world not being dismissed but made new. I would suggest that Ms. Unrein presides over the Rubenesque past by committing it to the future — a feat typically relegated to the hallowed ground of the great poets and artists in the Western tradition. But here it is. And, thank Yahweh, it's in our own 'hood.

"Detour" and "Obliquity" are pieces so rounded in their contours that they remind us (subtly) of the ferocity of exotic animals, hippos and crocodiles, painted by Rubens, as well as the rounded haunches and necks of his muscular horses and dogs. His world is one of immediate and savage profundity. And that is precisely what Ms. Unrein has captured so remarkably. It's not a copy, of course; it's an invocation of gods once laid to rest and now resuscitated just a stone's throw from central Dallas. Head for Monitor Street and see for yourself. This is good stuff. Great, even. **Opens Sept. 11.**

— PATRICIA MORA