

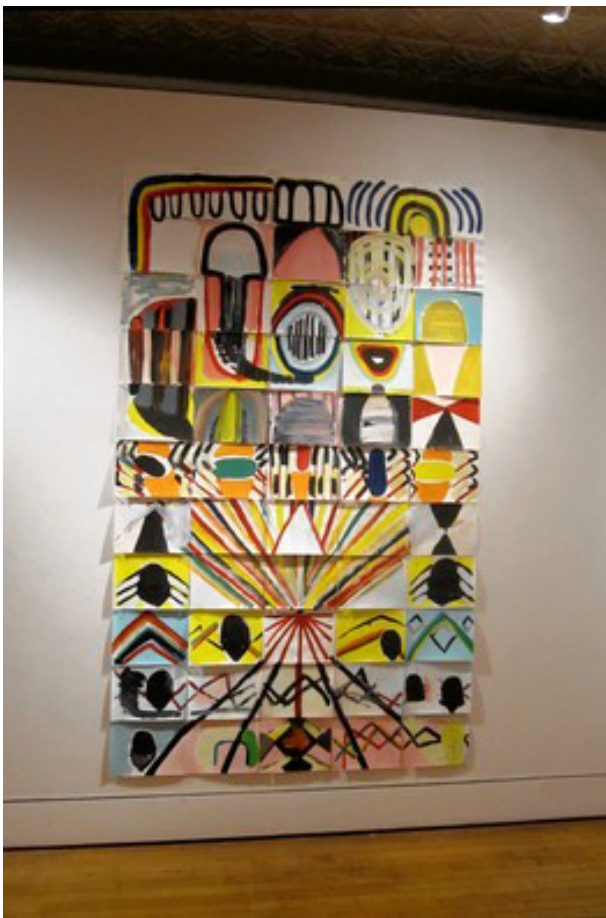
THE WALL STREET JOURNAL.

CULTURE

An Improv of Color and Threads of Hope

By James Panero

June 22, 2012 6:33 p.m. ET



Julie Torres's 'My 12 Hours With Austin Thomas' (2011) at Taller Boricua JULIE TORRES

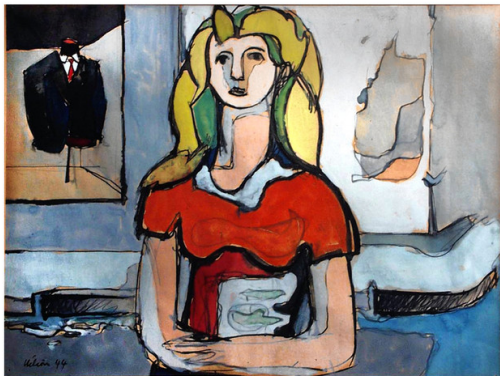
Julie Torres: 'Bold as Love'

Taller Boricua
1680 Lexington Ave.,
(212) 831-4333
Through July 14

Every schoolkid knows that painting can be fun. Julie Torres (b. 1971) doesn't let us forget it. This Brooklyn-based artist is an evangelist for the radiant line and the colorful schmear. Much of her work is the result of marathon studio sessions that are part performance and part product. By painting a wall of works in a single day, often in the company of other artists, she tweaks what an abstract artist is supposed to be. Rather than labored, secretive and solitary, her work is ad hoc, transparent and communal.

Taller Boricua, a nonprofit gallery in the Julia de Burgos Latino Cultural Center in Spanish Harlem, captures this exuberance. The show also demonstrates how New York's alternative arts scene now includes Brooklyn, Queens, the Bronx and northern Manhattan. Here, Ms. Torres carries her improvisational style to the carefree placement of work. Paintings of bright shapes and bold colors bend around corners, appear at ceiling height and floor level, and on two doors hidden in the gallery. Mounted with pushpins, these works on paper in acrylic, gouache and watercolor are all left unframed.

Not everything performs at grade level. A few too many rainbows are scattered about. But underlying the apparent simplicity is smart paint handling. Ms. Torres's most resonant work is "My 12 Hours With Austin Thomas" (2011). More than 8 feet tall, composed of 55 individual paper sheets, this is abstract art in mural form. The painting has a message, and the message is to paint.



Jean Héliion's 'Pegeen' (1944) at Schroeder Romero & Shredder SCHROEDER ROMERO & SHREDDER

**Jean
Héliion: 'Five
Decades'**
Schroeder
Romero &
Shredder
531 W. 26th St.,
(212) 630-0722
Through June 30

Walk past the
edgy group show
in the front room
of Schroeder

Romero & Shredder, and you'd be forgiven for thinking there's another multiartist exhibition in the back. Here are abstractions, doodles, illustrations, representational paintings, and just about everything in between. That Jean Héliion (1904-1987) created them all speaks to the range of this influential French-American artist.

Mr. Héliion was often out of step with the styles of the day. He was abstract in the 1930s, representational in the 1950s. Now these shifts demonstrate his independence of vision. This compact survey, a joint effort of the gallery and Deborah Rosenthal, lets us see the connections between wide-ranging works. The sculptural shapes of "Abstraction" (1939) reappear in the wrinkled bed sheets and folded arms of "Nu Accoudé" (1949)—an exquisite example of the artist's representational abilities.

Mr. Héliion drew "from daily experience as well as from culture, from the experience of others," as he once told the artist George L.K. Morris. He excelled in his powers of observation, even if the execution didn't always equal the vision (as in the overcooked "Remake" from 1983).

Mr. Héliion lived an impressive life. After being captured as a French soldier in 1940, he spent two years as a POW before escaping from a Nazi prison ship. Ms. Rosenthal has written the foreword to a reissue of his book about this ordeal. A best seller when published in 1943, "They Shall Not Have Me" is a manifesto of freedom from an artist who refused to stand still or look away.

Abdolreza Aminlari And Drew Shiflett

Storefront Bushwick

16 Wilson Ave., Brooklyn
(917) 714-3813
Through July 1

Storefront gallery, now called Storefront Bushwick, has been at the center of Bushwick's burgeoning arts scene since opening 2½ years ago. Now under the sole directorship of the painter Deborah Brown, the gallery has a knack for exhibiting the neighborhood's best young talent alongside midcareer artists who largely came of age in Williamsburg.

The gallery's program shows the continuity of what is sometimes called DIY (for Do It Yourself) art—work that is unslick, irony-free and made by living, breathing artists rather than studio



Drew Shiflett's 'Easel Sculpture #2' (2000) at Storefront Bushwick DREW SHIFLETT/STOREFRONT BUSHWICK AND LESLEY HELLER WORKSPACE

assistants. The latest exhibition of art by Abdolreza Aminlari (b. 1979) and Drew Shiflett (b. 1951) demonstrates how impeccable the gallery's cross-generational pairings can be.

Mr. Aminlari "draws" abstractions with string stitched through paper. Ms. Shiflett creates abstract sculptures of paper, fabric, cardboard and other materials. Both artists match the ideal and the homespun, the ethereal and the craft-based in ways that seem indicative of an outer-borough aesthetic.

It's hard not to see golden carpets flying through the intricate work of the Iranian-born Mr. Aminlari—and, in Ms. Shiflett's sculpture, the magical loom that created them. With an intense pencil-drawing by Lauren Seiden (b. 1981) peeking out from the gallery's project space, this delicate show lifted me up and had me floating down Flushing Avenue.

—Mr. Panero is managing editor of the New Criterion. Peter Plagens is on vacation.