



Paul Manes,
Prometheus, 1999,
burlap and pigment
on canvas triptych,
overall, 46½" x 192".
Kouros.

Paul Manes

KOUROS

Paul Manes uses still-life props to create the semblance of earth-colored landscapes, and clay to paint pictures of clay objects. Although many of the works in this generally impressive exhibition represented crockery, they were far removed from the look of traditional still lifes. Manes's large canvases are filled to the brim with bowls seen from on high. These richly textured paintings suggest more than anything an overview of the pockmarked lunar surface, reminding us that the word "crater" signifies "bowl" in Greek.

Manes applies handmade paint to canvases covered with burlap. Earth-colored pigments, India ink, and gray French chalk are mixed with acrylic binder. Black gesso is part of the artist's arsenal, and so is kaolin, a fine, yellow-white clay that's the main ingredient in porcelain. These materials yield the sort of palette we

tend to associate with Analytic Cubism. In Manes's hands, however, they produce subtle tones that create the illusion of volume. What first appear to be black ellipses and crescent-shaped lines describe the bowls' rims. In

fact, this limning is really the dark space between pieces of collaged cloth.

The strongest work in the show was neither a still life nor a landscape. *Prometheus* represents a head-on view of a B-17, the bomber known as "the Flying Fortress" in World War II. The wingtips of this grand old war bird almost touch the edges of the 192-inch-wide triptych. The central panel rises to accommodate the rudder. Concentric circles indicate the plane's nose and whirling propellers. Segmented fabric recalls an age when aircraft were made out of wood and cloth, and the work's raw beauty evokes the battle-scarred spirit of a genuinely heroic subject.

—Gerard Haggerty