

ARTS UPDWN

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WHEN SMALL IS BIG

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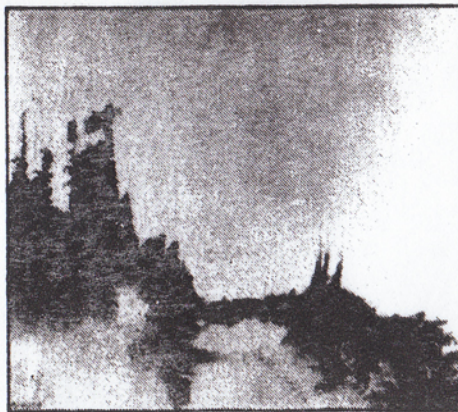
Unfortunately big and tall is often erroneously accepted as better than short and small, but in small art works — all heights are reachable.

Miniature Masters

The Barnes Foundation in Philadelphia has an outstanding small Tintoretto consisting only of two male heads, (close together engaged in conversation) and a wine glass. This small painting is pithy andan' esthetic shock. It is the ultimate abstraction. You can see the limited paint strokes — sip zap, blip blap — and it is finished, creating a high level truth. Years ago, a Brazilian Museum loaned its collection to the Brooklyn Museum where I saw the gratest small Daumierever. It had super-power, packed with subterranean harmonies and a depth of concept that was extraordinary. These two small works by these incredible masters are big-big giants-bigger than ordinary life.

Many galleries, at this present time, are showing small works. Perhaps you can enjoy some esthetic shock when you visit these galleries. Bring a magnifying glass.

Sal Sirugo shows over 50 miniature landscapes (1950-1980) at the Landmark Gallery 469 Broome Street until February 19. The media is ink with washes. They look like etchings—but not the usual etchings that come to mind. Some resemble photographs



Sal Sirugo "Comp. M-17"

—but not what that implies either. They look like atmospheric Chinese silk paintings—but not really. Sirugo is truly an original—and an enigma. If you go right by him, because he isn't shouting, then you should continue walking by because he will be over your head anyway. If you try to analyze his works, you will find that you will be going through a puzzling process of elimination in the attempt to decipher his "Why", ease and spiritual gentility that emanates from these small works.

Actually, I see these great little gems as

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some rare books that one can treasure in one's library to be taken down from the walls and held in the lap to study. Preachers, Priests and Rabbis can learn much from Sirugo because Sirugo IS nature and they (the clergy) are benevolent surrogates. No one makes marks where the finger propulsion or "hand foot-prints" disappear, leaving you to ponder the exact execution. Only DaVinci and a few others did that.

What happens when: The Marks disappear, or the usual obvious handwriting, the mannerist bravura, show off virtuoso, no color, no ink hatchings, no impressionistic jingoism? What manner or method produced these mystical, nature saturated, deeply-felt mysterious landscapes? The only connection with us is that they look Oriental and have that great Chinese resolve and authority. Yet —the method of execution is different. The Orientals and Sirugo have entered the same heaven but Sirugo got there by an American airplane—and did the driving himself. Some of the works are very realistic, but are done in an abstract fourth world language.

Sirugo's abstract is not the abstract that comes to mind either. It is not obvious gesture, it isn't grid, or color field, or step one, step two. It's not the marks of a man, or a bird, nor beast—it's Sirugo !