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Smart-Ass-Escapist Art

Martha Rich

I came to this art thing pretty late in life. Even though I have been drawing since I could hold a pencil, somehow I ended up in corporate America for 15 years bouncing from cubicle job to cubicle job. I was fast tracked into the typical American life: job, marriage,



kids and a picket fence. Pretty boring. Luckily, a series of unfortunate events and excellent people gave me the courage to ditch the pantyhose, cubicles and picket fence before I got too sucked in, and lost forever.

Because your vision gets warped when you are climbing up the corporate ladder, I have a pretty smart-alecky, but grateful attitude towards art. It is amazing to me that I get to do what I do. I am thankful for this. Compared to the insanity that is going on all over this fucked up world, the life we get to lead here is incredible. So, my panties get in a wad when I see how people take all this for granted and how they take themselves too seriously or get caught up in fame and status and greediness. Maybe that is because I am not famous or fancy myself, but wish I was. Hmm, too much psychology. Anyway, I just get irritated easily, but at least I admit it.

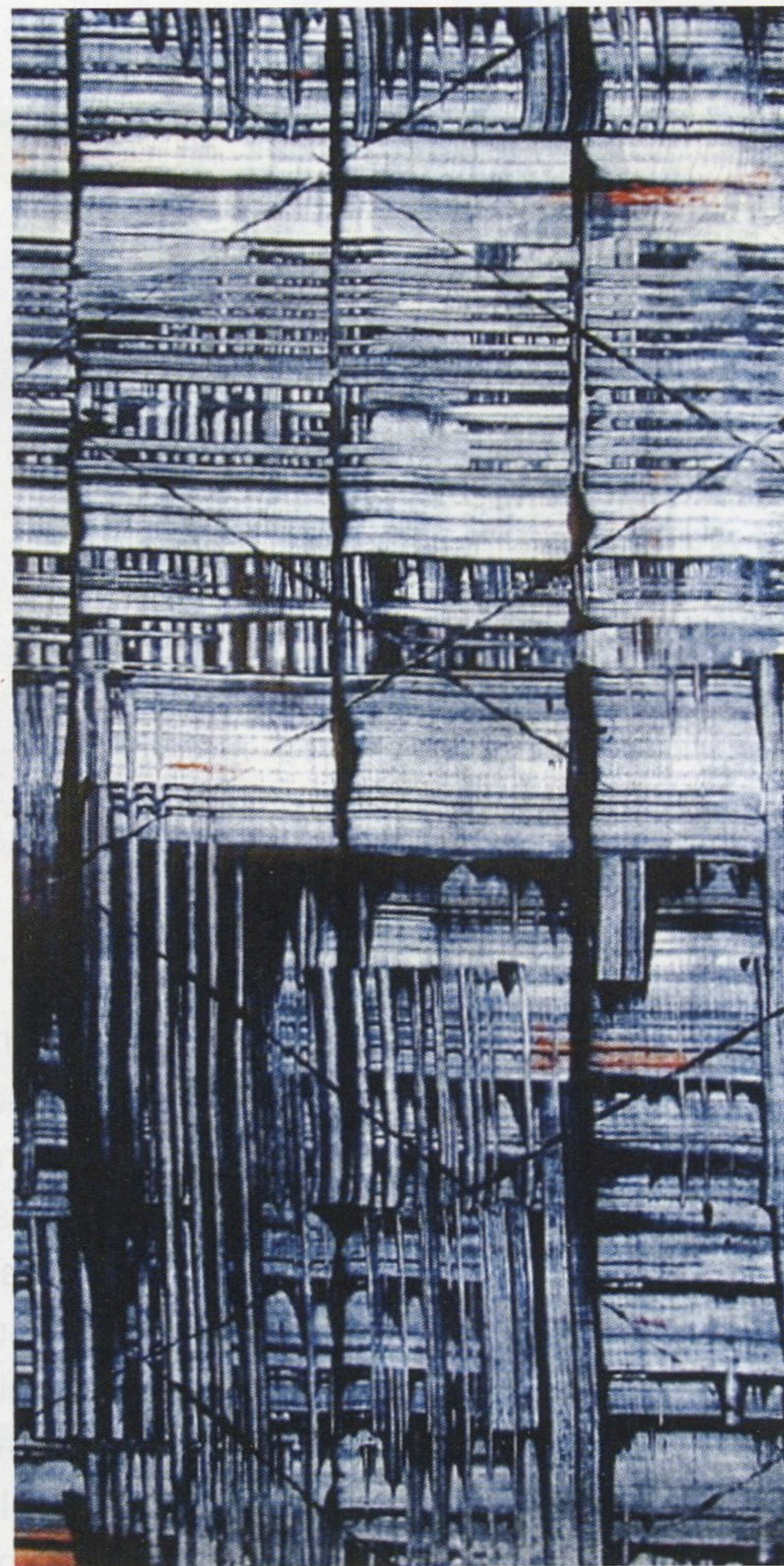
So, I guess I would call my art "smart-ass-escapist art." I am an insecure smart ass and I like humor and pointing out the pointlessness of taking it all too seriously. It isn't much deeper than that. The world makes you want to cry sometimes, so I have to paint something funny and ridiculous in order to deal.

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Nicola Parente

Nicola Parente creates expressive abstract paintings from his studio in Houston, Texas. Born in Italy, he draws from a rich Italian heritage and a deep well of cross-cultural experiences to bring his art to life. Working in a variety of media and formats, Parente engages the viewer in dialogues regarding the universal phenomenon of human encounters.

Parente's new series, "The Edge of Urban Time," examines our human encounters with urban environments. Inspired by the re-gentrification of metropolitan communities, his art defines the intersection of daily urban life and the timeless multi-cultural celebration, with red as the symbolic color of the heartbeat and life of the city. His paintings capture the fluidity and static elements of the urban matrix, referencing the architectonic images, reflections and rhythms of its landscape. □



Wienerschnitzel Nourishment

Erik Mark Sandberg

The majority of my works are allegorical narrative paintings. After completing my education at Art Center College of Design in Pasadena, CA, I wanted to continue my explorations into painting and process, and the inherent narrative quality of painting is what continues to lure me. I found that this quality gave me a way to dazzle and attract the viewer as well as a way to communicate through nuanced narratives. This initial attraction, which leads to an illumination of original intent, is also the initial goal of the work.

I am a strong advocate for studio practices and the process-based explorations of new materials. The assembled surfaces and the organization of various elements provide the works with characteristics that are attractive in the way that the seductive glow of a jewelry case inside of a low-end department store can be attractive.

The intent of my works is to convey the tension that lies between environments and their inhabitants. This duality is thus between the organic and inorganic, the living and dead and the basically the uncanny. Most of the works reference home and childhood memories. Others depict portrayals of a corrupt glamour-addicted society. The figures have the feeling of being trapped in their own manufactured composite reality and carry an atmosphere of ambiguous remembrance.

Society is becoming progressively disconnected. We are strung out by "Wienerschnitzel" nourishment, conversations through online, digital egos and wearing the same crappy pair of Gap khakis that my housing association's resident Nazi wears. □

Left-right: **Martha Rich**, *Banana Prayers*. Mixed media on wood. Private collection. / **Nicola Parente**. / **Erik Mark Sandberg**, *Westminster*.