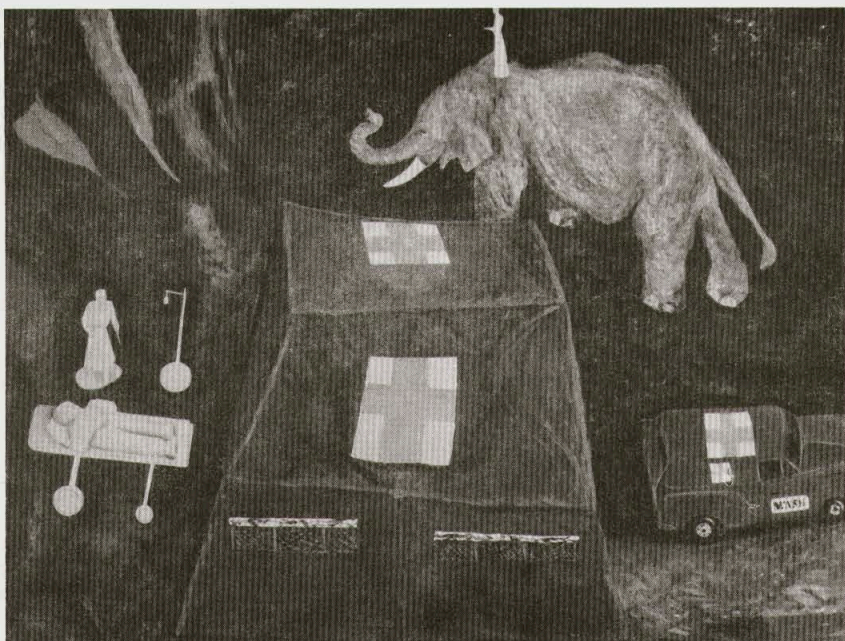


MASH, 1978

Photograph: Eric Pollitzer



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In Stanley's Barrow, 1976, the object is glimpsed through the triangular space of the shaped canvas, half buried in the grass. However, the paint, dragged and stirred, evokes the tactile presence of objects in the world, even when, as here, they are only partially seen. The sense of plastic bulk continues in Morley's new work, but the naturalistic object-references are opposed by his interest in a discursive mode.

In Christmas Tree (The Lonely Ranger Lost in the Jungle of Disires), 1979, Morley's title spells out an allegorical landscape that includes a train wreck, a toy train but a toy given substantial object-weight, a severed cobra, and a bunch of women's bare legs at the top of the picture, like a kind of Hopfrog chandelier. In MASH, 1978, we have the paradox of substantial paint used to depict a landscape of toys, as if Soutine were to paint children's games. Morley creates a kind of theater out of toys, animals, and dressed-up schematic figures: there is a sense of turbulent enactment, of psychic stress shaping both the scenario and the painting process.

Florida has been on Morley's mind for years. In 1974 he painted Miami Postcard, based on a fold-out postcard that had been ripped and crumpled. He simulated all the damage in a big, loose-jointed painting of multiple parts. He has returned to compact rectangularity, but preserves the ecstatic discontinuities internally as scale-changes and spatial jumps. One example of this is the high eye-level street scene that lurks at the center of Out Dark Spot, 1978. Recently Morley has been working in Florida, the source of the blazing birds and luxuriant foliage of the jungle of erotic desires.

Morley's work of the last 15 years represents a prolonged enquiry into the possibilities of representational art. To appreciate the speculative aspect of the new paintings, let us consider

their place in his development. As a founding Photo-Realist, with The Empire Monarch (first version), 1965, he painted bright, clear polychrome images of ocean liners that resembled closely the photographs from which they were taken. The handling of paint matched his photographic models point-by-point, yet retained an organic suppleness of manual touch when viewed close up. In 1968 he paraphrased minutely Vermeer's Portrait of the Artist in his Studio and followed it in 1969 with Chateau, a painting based on a postcard of romantic European architecture. Thus he separated Photo-Realism from its common urban and technological themes, taking images of past culture as subject matter. (This may account for his absence from the special issue on Photo-Realism of Art In America, November - December, 1972, and his being downplayed in Linda Chase's Hyperrealism, 1975.)

In the late 60's Morley's closely-worked paint surface and composed presentation relaxed. He maintained photographic equivalences in composition and tonal values, but opened the work up by painterly inflections. This tendency culminated, to abbreviate a longer story, in 1971 with Los Angeles Yellow Pages. The painting is an image of the cover of a phone book in as ruinous condition as the Miami postcard: a tear runs through the cover picture of the city to make the painting a metaphor of earthquake. Expressionistic handling and catastrophic imagery mark many of Morley's paintings of the 70's. One variant of the theme of catastrophe was to repaint his early tranquil marines in situations of imagined disaster, such as a (toy) plane crashing on a (real) ocean liner, both bodies painted in the same way.

It will be seen from this chronological sketch that Morley is not given to the endless polishing of a single apple of style as many of the Photo-Realists are. On the contrary, Photo-Realism

is one episode in a development to which the expressionistic element is essential. He has always pressed image and technique beyond their accustomed points. In the new paintings there is a convergence, not a parallel, of schematic drawing with naturalistic pigment; of abbreviated and derealised forms with a sense of dense, full mass and color. After having, more than anyone else, concentrated time in painting to the instant of a camera's click, he is now expanding art discursively, into narrative, allegory, and time.

Lawrence Alloway
Guest Curator
New York City
December 1979

Works in MATRIX:

Stanley's Barrow, 1976, oil on canvas, $41\frac{1}{2}$ " x 47".

Parrots, 1978, oil on canvas, 47" x $58\frac{1}{2}$ ".

MASH, 1978, oil on canvas, 36" x 48".

Out Dark Spot, 1978, oil on canvas, $72\frac{1}{2}$ " x $98\frac{3}{4}$ ".

Christmas Tree (The Lonely Ranger Lost in the Jungle of Desires), 1979, oil on canvas, 72" x 108".

All works are on loan courtesy of the Nancy Hoffman Gallery, New York City.

Selected one-man exhibitions:
Kornblee Gallery, NYC '57, '64,
'67, '69; SUNY, Stony Brook, Art
Gallery Gallery As Studio, '72;
Galerie Gerald Piltzer, Paris
'73; Stefanotty Gallery, NYC '73,
'74; Clocktower, Institute for
Art and Urban Resources, NYC '76;
Galerie Jollenbeck, Koln, West
Germany '77; Galerie Junka, Am-
sterdam, Holland '77; Nancy Hoff-
man Gallery, NYC '79; Suzanne
Hilberry Gallery, Birmingham, MI
'79.

Selected group exhibitions:
Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum,
NYC The Photographic Image, '66;
Sao Paulo Biennial, Brazil Environ-
ment USA, '67; Vassar College Art
Gallery, Realism Now, '68; Whitney
Museum of American Art, NYC 22
Realists, '70; Riverside Museum,
NYC Paintings from the Photo, '70;
Museum of Contemporary Art, Chi-
cago Radical Realism, '71; Wurt-
tembergischer Kunstverein, Frank-
furter Kunstverein, Kunstund
Museumverein, Wuppertal, Germany
Amerikanischer Fotorealismus,
'72-'73; Serpentine Gallery,
London, England Photo-Realism,
'73; Louisiana Museum of Modern
Art, Humlebaek, Denmark Ekstrem
Realisme, '73; Akademie Der
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town Manhattan, '76; Kassel, West
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