

New Paintings

April 19-May 14, 1986

Reception, Sat. April 19, 5-7 pm.

Tues 10-9 p.m. Wed-Sat 10-6 pm.

**Morgan
Bulkeley**

Stux Boston

36 Newbury Street

02116 617/2677300

Morgan Bulkeley

April-May, 1986

New Pastels

Morgan Bulkeley creates intricate allegorical worlds of great charm and considerable beauty. In his latest series of oils, on exhibit at the Stux Gallery from April 19 to May 14, Bulkeley shifts his gaze from the city to the country. Nonetheless, an evolution of the same themes can be seen.

Bulkeley's city figures are hooded and disjointed denizens of an alien landscape. In one of the two cityscapes, a cloaked figure wearing a Joseph Beuys hat stands in the middle of a deserted city block and aims an arrow at a Campbell's soup can stranded in the street. But he's holding the bow backward. And one of his arms sprouts from his side. His self-destructive gesture is witnessed by several apartment buildings, which are empty and blank. There is no one there to witness or save him from his misdirected alienation.

In another canvas we see the hooded figure undergoing an initiation into rural life: someone is snipping off his cloak. Liberated from the hood of anonymity, Bulkeley's figures turn out to be lumpish androgynous creatures, reminiscent of Breughel's beekeepers. Back in the country they engage in the simplest activities. They've reverted to their primitive roles as hunters and gatherers. They also connect with each other in ways they weren't able to when they were in the city: we see the figures, covered in bandaids, huddled together, while others cart away the failed wings of their hopes and delusions.

Bulkeley never forgets we live in a fallen world. In many of the canvases there's a figure plummeting from a swinging birch tree. Life in the fallen world turns out to be charged with hope. In one canvas two birds soar above a lush, edenic landscape. Below, the earthbound plodders go about their curious business. One has feathers taped to his body. Another emerges from the tangled vegetation wearing a bird's nest on his head. They're wry images of our desire for transcendence. In the left hand corner of the same canvas a figure probes the wounds of another. The image suggests the story of Christ and Doubting Thomas. Yet another figure appears to be pulling a log out of his eye. The clouds above them remind us of the spectral buffalo that stalk the other canvases. These buffalo appear hidden behind trees or concealed in the grass. While they're clearly emblems of the all-but-lost American wilderness, they might also symbolize the artist, an amiable beast of burden whose task it is to observe and, for our illumination and delight, record the comedy.

Bulkeley's new work still carries the themes surrounding human frailty but he has extended them to more fully convey not only the ambiguities but the hopes possible in our lives.