

# ARTnews

## Wang Tiande

### Chambers Fine Art

Wang Tiande has built his career on pushing the boundaries of the Chinese ink-and-brush tradition. Here he showed landscapes in two experimental styles with very different effects.

For one suite, Wang laid a sheet of semitranslucent paper with imagery burned through it over a sheet of white paper painted with black ink. The contrast between the haziness of lines viewed through the cover paper and the clarity of portions visible through the burned openings could be read as an attempt to render shifting focal lengths. In the best work, the result was a kind of perspective study, with trees in the foreground and mountain peaks in the distance, for instance. But often the layers seemed to have little relation to each other.

Just as the brush tradition does not allow the artist to rework a line, so it is when burning paper with a cigarette. Paradoxically, however, the layering of these techniques resulted in an allover commotion that left the drawings more labored and moribund than spontaneous and fluid.

The second group of works here—horizontal photographs—was more consistently rewarding. Wang conceived these after ashes from his cigarette drawings reminded him of a Chinese custom of burning used paper, even scrap paper, to



Wang Tiande, *Gu Shan II* (detail), 2007, color photograph, 12½" x 64". Chambers Fine Art.

demonstrate reverence for both writing and paper. The artist purchased contemporary reproductions of 1,000-year-old ink-and-brush masterpieces and burned them. Then he piled up the ashes and remaining scraps to resemble features of tra-

ditional landscapes and photographed them with a short depth of field to create sharp peaks and misty shorelines. Finally he montaged various images digitally and printed them on textured paper. These rich, contemplative works were both conceptually engaging and beautifully executed.

—Eric Bryant

## Mikhail Baryshnikov

### Edwynn Houk

Mikhail Baryshnikov has had a sustained interest in picture taking since the 1980s, initially encouraged by his friend Leonid Lubianitsky, a theater photographer. This exhibition, "Dominican Moves," a ravishing composite portrait of the rhythms of the Dominican Republic's culture, demonstrated how far the acclaimed dancer has pushed his photographic experiments since the first black-and-white images he shot during his travels.

Taken over the course of 2006 during visits to the island nation, where Baryshnikov has a home, these large-scale color images offered a subjective response to the way dance seems to erupt spontaneously in a place known for such styles as bachata, merengue, and reggaeton. Obviously

attracted to the human body in movement, Baryshnikov explores different social strata in this series—from pole dancers at exotic-dance halls to couples swaying at casual roadside cafés to well-coiffed patrons sweeping across night-



Mikhail Baryshnikov, *Untitled #1*, 2006, pigment print on Hahnemühle German etching paper, 47" x 43". Edwynn Houk.

club dance floors. He captures it all in a blur, which serves to obscure the faces and draw attention to the directional energy of the bodies and the charged space around them. The movement of the dancers and his digital camera turns reflections off jewelry and clothing into buzzing lines of light.

Baryshnikov brings out his saturated palette, with rich purples and reds, and his strong contrasts, with electric light against black night, through carbon pigment printing on watercolor paper that gives a very painterly effect. While there were standouts, including the larger-than-life-size close-up of a woman with raised arms and currents of light glancing off her hair, the pictures worked best as a group—a sultry party ringing the gallery walls.

—Hilarie M. Sheets

## Matt Ernst

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In the 1920s Sigmund Freud, in his book *The Future of an Illusion*, wrote that religion offered the illusion of "the fulfillment of the oldest, strongest, and most urgent wishes of mankind," and that these wishes could be fulfilled because people believed in religion's power to do so. Matt Ernst adopted Freud's title for his recent show, and it aptly characterizes his series of paintings about fantasy realized through appropriation.

Referring to comic books, entomology,