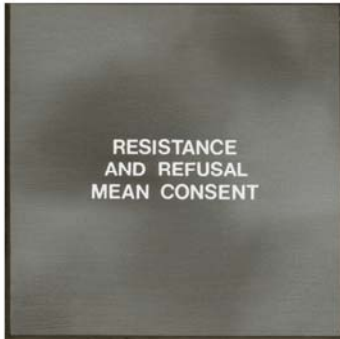


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## Dotty Attie at P.P.O.W

Dotty Attie creates picto-narratives by juxtaposing small paintings that contain appropriated images with others bearing short phrases. Lined up horizontally on the wall, these sequences of canvases create sentence-like structures that one tends to read from left to right. Attie's earlier works in this vein have often been ambiguous and rebus-like commentaries on gender politics. The works in this show are structured around a single statement that undergoes surprising and subtle changes in meaning as it is recontextualized in different sets of images.

The repeated sentence is a mouthful: "Sometimes a traveler in foreign lands where customs and mores are unfamiliar will find to his surprise that in certain places and at certain times resistance and refusal mean consent." Broken up and interspersed with painted images, this little paean to cultural relativism takes on shadings of colonialism, class privilege, authoritarianism and Orientalism. One sequence, for instance, involves images that appear to be culled from war photographs and movies. Familiar battle scenes of soldiers wearing gas masks, carrying their dead and running through rice fields culminate in scenes of the capture of prisoners. In the last scene a dead captive hangs from a post. Another sequence evokes colonial conquest and the European traveler's

fascination with exotica. Here we see a properly dressed colonialist riding a camel, some groups of veiled women and imperial soldiers at their desks. The last image is a bare-breasted, dark-skinned woman who wears a wedding veil as she holds the hand of her formally dressed groom/conqueror.

Although Attie paints basically in grisaille, she will often add color to the figures to approximate old-fashioned hand-tinted photographs. She also varies the visual rhythms by sometimes putting two image panels next to each other with intervening text. The larger sequences feature up to 18 images and 10 text panels. In some smaller sequences, Attie employs only two image panels flanking a text fragment.

Other narratives revolve around crime (the denouement is an image of the electric chair) and sports (ending in a knockout in the boxing ring). In each case, the combination of disturbing images with the last five words of the sentence packs a wallop, as the more benign sentiments hinted at in the preceding juxtapositions are revealed to have ugly underpinnings. Creating variations on a single theme, Attie encourages us to rethink the whole gamut of social relationships. In case after case, "resistance and refusal" clearly only mean consent from the perspective of the one who wields the power.

—Eleanor Heartney