

ARTnews

Raven Schlossberg

Pavel Zoubok

Raven Schlossberg's intriguing show of collage-on-birch panels riffed on a tradition that predates Victorian ladies and their eccentric scrapbooks.

From 18th-century Europe to America in the swinging 1960s, decoupage—the technique of decorating surfaces with paper cutouts—has carried on a love affair with exotica. Much of contemporary collage is the offspring of this passion. It all began when Venetian

cabinet-makers tried to cash in on the rage for Chinese lacquerwork by gluing paper engravings to furniture and covering the surfaces with varnish. The craze spread to England, where it was dubbed “Japanning.”

Schlossberg gives a new twist to an old trope. She covers each of her panels with dozens of little cutouts, layering antique and Asian imagery in a way that combines nostalgia with a chilly postmodern eye. In *Gibraltar* (2011), figures that look as if they'd stepped out of the film *Lawrence of Arabia* are overlaid with pictures of porcelain statues, hourglasses, matadors, Moors, swans, horses, chalices, and locket-size portraits of señoritas. *Plum Blossom of a Dark Night (Henri's Dream)*, 2012, takes Chinoiserie over the top, with a multitude of tiny geishas in red, blue, and violet hues, while *The Pride of the Peacock is the Glory of God* (2012) combines images of that most aristocratic of bird species, along with parrots, fans, flappers, postcards, and raven-haired beauties.

In each work, the effect is hallucinatory and as heavy as brandy-soaked fruitcake. One might expect such works to be set in oval, gilded frames, scalloped around the edges. Instead, Schlossberg presents them as stark, unframed rectangles—one clue this isn't really your great-grandmother's bric-a-brac.

—Mona Molarsky



Raven Schlossberg, *The Pride of the Peacock is the Glory of God*, 2012, acrylic and ink on fabric with paper collage on birch panel, 24" x 20". Pavel Zoubok.