

NEW YORK

across the bottom of the picture) from Gilbert, tucked into an upper corner, gazing wistfully down at George and at boys playing ball on a snowy field. *Out-span Lick* is a paean to the sting of desire: two quivering tongues lasciviously groping toward two slices of tart citrus hanging just out of reach. Women never appear. Handsome males, sensitive males, males peeing, males caught by the twin blights of poverty and injustice, males in the throes of poetic feelings—these are Gilbert and George's polite preoccupations. The photomurals become moralistic greeting cards. In the latest work at Sonnabend, the commentary is a little more pointed but no less discreet. The "living sculpture" is harmless and lovable, a clever teddy bear quoting from Joyce and pointing a finger at pain, but from a thoroughly British distance. (The Guggenheim Museum, 1071 Fifth Avenue, at 89th Street, through June 16; Sonnabend, 420 West Broadway; through June 1.)

Sue Coe STUDIED AT LONDON'S ROYAL College of Art, and there is nothing restrained about her anger. Her work willingly hovers on the outer limits of art-world respectability, like Daumier's. Politics, for her, is a path strewn with victims. With the instincts of a muckraker-journalist she draws characters deformed by political and moral torture: animals in grisly experiments; women raped; the homeless oppressed by landlords; the harsh fate of South African blacks. If there is a certain predictability about these topics, at least Coe allows no condescension in her drawing. Her characters are tossed about in dark, giddy spaces by forces beyond their control. Through these near-black mergers of graphite and oil paint, bloodred legends protrude like banner headlines, often with a bitter, sarcastic poetry in their own right: "If animals believed in God," reads one, "then the devil would look like a human being."

Unfettered moral outrage is as rare in this "expressionist" age as it was during minimalism. Coe's first New York solo show, in 1983 (this is only her second), was a tough, uncompromising, and welcome debut. Yes, she's a hard-liner, but no great satirist was ever dispassionate or evenhanded. Watch her carefully, because there is intelligence at work here. (P.P.O.W., 216 East 10th Street; closed.)

Stephen Davis SPENT TEN YEARS ACQUIRING a respectable reputation in California with abstract paintings that projected from the wall. Now that he has settled in New York (as has his dealer, Malinda Wyatt, also from Los Angeles), he has retained the occasional triangle or square and sent it floating in among a tangle of drips, meanders, and sketched images, in paintings that assault you with

Jeanne Toast Cole Porter in this sophisticated, 1930s-inspired dress. The skirt has a deep V-yoke and long, four-gore trumpet skirt—the bodice a bateau neck, soft flutter sleeves and a waist gently bloused. Matisse lilac and red flowers on black rayon crepe. 4-14, 140.00



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