

# Conversation pieces

## Joint exhibition provides a dialogue between masters

By Victoria Dalkey  
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**W**hen old friends get together, you expect them to talk over old times, dwelling for a while on the past. But that is not the case with Jack Ogden and Irving Marcus, who concentrate on what they are doing now in "Visual Conversations," their joint exhibition at Solomon Dubnick Gallery.

Joined by Richard Feese, who teaches sculpture part time at California State University, Sacramento, where Ogden and Marcus, now retired, taught painting and drawing for many years, they carry on a fascinating dialogue with some common threads but also strong differences that make for a stimulating conversation.

In their heyday, the 1960s and '70s, Ogden and Marcus seemed to have more in common. Both were strong colorists who did compelling figurative paintings with enigmatic hints of narrative. Though their senses of color differed slightly (someone once described Ogden's as "bruised" in comparison to Marcus' lighter, more intense palette), they were such good friends that one often thought of them as a pair. That was a little unfair since both were strong individuals.

In recent years, their differences have become more apparent. Marcus for the most part has turned away from the social subjects drawn from newspaper photos (police raids, demonstrations) that sometimes inspired his work to a more lyrical path populated by fanciful figures in imaginary landscapes. Ogden, influenced by the late works of Philip Guston, has adopted a blunt, cartoonlike stance in gutsy paintings of studio paraphernalia and uningratiating self-portraits.

He offers several of the latter - small paintings of a tough, graying man with the face of pugilist



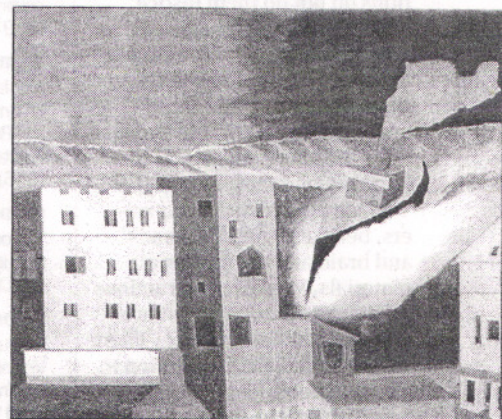
Solomon Dubnick Gallery

In Jack Ogden's comical "Starbucks," the painter (in the cowboy hat) and his friends Irving Marcus, Nick Steinmetz and Jim Albertson sit around an outdoor table at a coffee shop.

- in this large show that is bursting at the seams with almost too much work. Ogden's self-portraits mostly take a stern and unforgiving look at the process of aging, save for "Starbucks," a comical painting of Ogden with painter pals Marcus, Nick Steinmetz and Jim Albertson sitting around an outdoor table at a coffee shop. It's an affectionate satire with Ogden looking like a cowboy and Marcus the owl-eyed professor that he was.

But the works that make the greatest impact are large paintings of rows of paint cans or bowls with brushes stuck in them, set against backgrounds that veer from confettilike daubs and dashes of color to luminous clouds and amorphous veils of pigment.

Full of searing color and painterly action, these playful and exuberantly painted canvases convey the sheer joy and physicality of the painting process. Reduced to their simplest essences, the bowls and brushes become actors on a stage,



Solomon Dubnick Gallery

"Tsunami" by Irving Marcus depicts a town about to be overcome by a tidal wave. The landscape painting is representative of the artist's later works.

### Visual Conversations: Jack Ogden, Irving Marcus, Richard Feese

**WHEN:** 11 a.m. - 6 p.m. Tuesdays-Saturdays, through Oct. 4

**WHERE:** Solomon Dubnick Gallery, 2131 Northrop Ave.

**INFORMATION:** (916) 920-4547 c.  
www.sdgallery.com

# Exhibition

►Continued from page 11

vehicles for the acting out of painterly passions.

Taking on the role of symbol or archetype, the objects become more than themselves, containers and conveyors of spirit, as the title of one, "Altar," suggests. At times, the Guston influence is too apparent, as in "Red Tide," a red, black and white composition haunted by Guston's ghost. But works like "Flood Tide" and "Spring Tide" are so full of dynamic color and painterly passages that you forget their antecedents.

**I**n comparison to Ogden's blunt and very American directness, Marcus' work seems almost suave and European. His images – a blue-haired woman kicking up her heels against an intense red background, a town overcome by the giant waves of a tsunami – are the stuff of fantasies. If Ogden gives us meat and potatoes, Marcus serves shimmering and seductive desserts.

No one handles color quite like Marcus, whose almost hallucinogenic hues are like the colors we see after staring at something for a long time and then closing our eyes. Intense and unexpected, they rise up like the burbling clouds in miso soup, pulsating and shifting as we gaze upon them. Reproductions do not do them justice.

Feese's mixed-media constructions, though they are fine works, seem almost like an interruption in the painterly conversation of two old friends, and the gallery has wisely isolated them in their own corner.

Made of yardsticks and rulers, belts and buckles, beads and braid and all manner of materials, Feese's constructions often take the form of remarkably realistic-looking fish. There are a couple here, in addition to a large whooping crane and a pair of menacing ravens, but Feese also ventures into new territory, offering a whirlpool-like bowl with a fanciful face on its inside wall and a hanging construction, called "Weather Charm," that resembles a misshapen asteroid with antennas on the top and a plumb bob dangling below. They are mysterious but compelling objects that make you want to see more.