

# GLADSTONE GALLERY

Ken Johnson, "Carroll Dunham," *New York Times*, December 7, 2012, p. C28.

## Carroll Dunham

Gladstone Gallery  
515 West 24th Street  
Chelsea  
Through Jan. 19

I wish the poet and speculative mythographer Robert Graves

could see Carroll Dunham's exciting new paintings. All nine of these big, punchy, cartoonish pictures represent landscapes resembling a South Pacific paradise, with chunky, fat-leaved trees and colorful flowers. Six feature the figure of a naked woman of heroic proportions, with wild black hair drawn in thick black lines, bathing, swimming and cavorting in this Edenic setting.

An odd thing about this woman is that her skin is of an unnatural chalk-white hue. This, I imagine, Graves would recognize as an ancient, archetypal attribute relating her to the moon. So, perhaps she personifies not only earthy, untrammelled bodily energy, but also what you might call lunar consciousness: a kind of intuitive mentality that in many old, esoteric traditions represents the opposite of "solar" rationality. In Mr. Dunham's dream world, the sun shines cheerfully in blue skies, suggesting a poetic reconciliation of usually opposed states of mind.

The paintings, which call to mind Henri Rousseau, Picasso and R. Crumb, look as if they were made in fevers of inspiration, as if the artist were possessed by the spirit of his own inner wild woman. Yet his compositions have a blocky solidity in contrast to the activities they represent. One canvas depicts a tree whipped by violent wind, which is manifested in a seemingly spontaneous flurry of black brush strokes scumbled over the topmost leaves. Maybe it is an allegory of the artist holding fast to his roots in the earth of painting itself while bending to gusts of visionary imagination.

KEN JOHNSON



COURTESY OF GLADSTONE GALLERY

"Late Trees #5," one of the paintings in Carroll Dunham's exhibition at Gladstone Gallery.