

## **Nancy Chunn**

**Ronald Feldman Fine Arts Inc.  
21 Mercer St., 212/226-3232**

In her first one-person exhibition in New York since her 1984 show at Concord Gallery, Nancy Chunn showed paintings that are quietly elegant, yet visually stunning, emotive, and clear.

Born in Los Angeles and educated at the California Institute of the Arts, Chunn shares with other artists Feldman represents (Californians Helen and Newton Harrison and Eleanor Antin, for example) a passionate concern for ending societal oppression and physical destruction. The influence of Cal Arts' emphasis on Conceptual art is clearly reflected in the subject matter of the paintings: the geographical and political features of Vietnam, Chile, Nicaragua, Guatemala, and Iran.

Chunn's flat renditions of countries and continents are linked and overlaid with lengths of chain that serve to move us through the dark, rich flatness of her paint and suggest analogies and relationships. Her painstaking, precise painting technique creates a spare, luminous surface which, with measured modulations, is sustained from one painting to another.

Chunn employs colors deemed "exotic" or "orientalizing" by Western Europeans in the late nineteenth century, and which here retain their "un-American" connotations. Green-blues, earth reds, silver-grays, and black separate land from water, or internal from external, in the greater body of Third World—which, at her hands, takes on the aspect of a "Dark Madonna."

A decade ago in a dream, Chunn asked to use all of herself in her art. A voice answered, "Yes. But you have to make it better." An image of

Chile, Vietnam, or Iran, repeated in several versions in the current body of work, explores the possibilities of paint, but also gets closer to what Chunn wants to express: ethical and moral feeling as well as aesthetic meaning.

Chunn's self-criticism and conviction, relentlessness and modesty, serve her well in all of her work here. The spirit of these paintings, while analytical, transcends the grim tones and conceptual chaos with which we have been forced to greet 1987 worldwide, and the bilious rhetoric currently used to mask them.

**Arlene Raven**