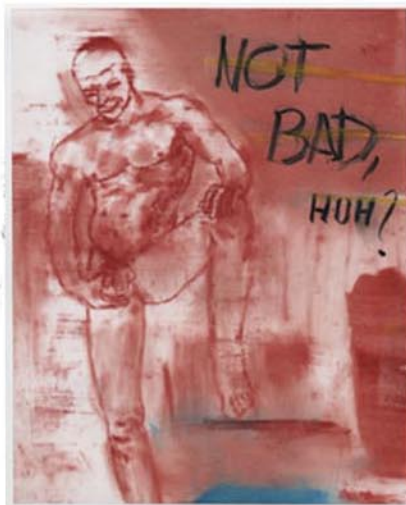


Leon Golub at Ronald Feldman

Six monumental canvases from Leon Golub's "Graeco-Roman Colossi" series dominated Ronald Feldman's main gallery. This selection of lacquer-on-canvas works from the late 1950s and early '60s was the largest group of Colossi exhibited within the past 15 years. The distressed surfaces, with their flinty earth tones, cobalt blues and nacreous whites, hold light like rough alabaster. The figures' graceless heads and truncated torsos, made of the same stuff as the paint-mortared fields, settle weightily against the image plane's boundaries and stare sightlessly into the middle distance.

The gallery's other room hosted a single recumbent Colossus—*Reclining Youth* (2003)—in the form of a 6½-by-16-foot cotton tapestry. In the same space, running single file around three walls, were 44 small oil stick and ink paintings on vellum and Bristol. Set at regular intervals along a shallow, unfinished wood shelf, the 10-by-8-inch works leaned informally against the walls. "Erotica, Etc." (2000-03), as they are collectively titled, chronicles a raggedly rendered procession of satyrs, hermaphrodites, slaving dogs, posturing hunks and self-pleasuring bombshells. As overhead light passed through color washes on the translucent vellum, the works appeared to glow;

Leon Golub: *Not Bad, Huh?*, 2003, oil stick and ink on vellum, 10 by 8 inches; at Ronald Feldman.



heavier smears of oil stick seemed to levitate.

Golub's carnal works radiate an erotic appetite as fiercely as Picasso's late graphics. But unlike the latter's compliant *filles*, Golub's Junoesque women project a potency exceeding even that of the Spaniard's priapic Minotaur. Conversely, the men in Golub's paintings seem enamored of their own physical attributes and more aware of the viewer than of any potential paramour.

Not Bad, Huh? showcases an unclad, balding beefcake, cocking a leg as he frames and gauges his own sex by hand. In contrast to the hot-orange siren resting a clawlike hand on an impastoed white skull in *He Was a Worthy Man*, Golub's droll nude males and satyrs seem bemused and harmless. In *Stop Rushing Me!*, a big blonde, described with a jagged black-ink contour and a slash of cadmium yellow hair, scowls at us as she lifts her white shift, exposing her nakedness. Ablaze in a magenta pink corona, she invites and challenges on her own terms.

Golub's consequential life and work is a reproach to the idea of compromise. With these bawdy 11th-hour works, the artist continues to brush aside expectations and considers instead the disputed ground of sexual politics.

—Roger Boyce