

ZACH FEUER GALLERY (LFL)

The New York Times
ON THE WEB

Holly Coulis
Dana Schutz
LFL Gallery
531 West 26th Street, Chelsea
Through Feb. 16

Holly Coulis and Dana Schutz are promising young painters with almost nothing in common except their chosen medium. Each could use a little of what the other has, that is, Ms. Schutz could do with a bit of Ms. Coulis's refinement, while Ms. Coulis might benefit from some of Ms. Schutz's robustness. But never mind. For the moment they're doing quite well on their own and the gap between them makes this an exciting joint debut.

Working in acrylic on large sheets of paper, Ms. Coulis depicts scenes from the life of Napoleon with Peytonesque delicacy, concentrating on moments of alienation. She shows Napoleon in the wake of a brutal massacre carried out on his orders; out of sync with his love, Josephine (whose awkwardly placed foot speaks volumes); or bare-chested and being sprayed with perfume.

It makes existential sense that the figures tend to be dwarfed by their surroundings, which are gorgeously appointed and lovingly rendered with careful attention to sky, water, wallpaper and carpet. In "Josephine After Prud'hon," culture and nature meet in the form of a mysterious swath of dark blue sea.

Ms. Schutz's oil paintings record passing moments devoid of history, including cartoonish portraits of women in the midst of image-obliterating coughs and sneezes, and still lifes of awkward undergraduate sculptures. The latter have a bit of Jörg Immendorf in them, which is nothing to be ashamed of.

The portraits, which also include an albino woman and a worried swimmer, are more original. As much sculptured as painted, their built-up surfaces can bring to mind the early reliefs of Eva Hesse, also an interesting point of departure.

ROBERTA SMITH

Smith, Roberta. "Art in Review: Holly Coulis/Dana Schutz", The New York Times, 2/8/02, E35