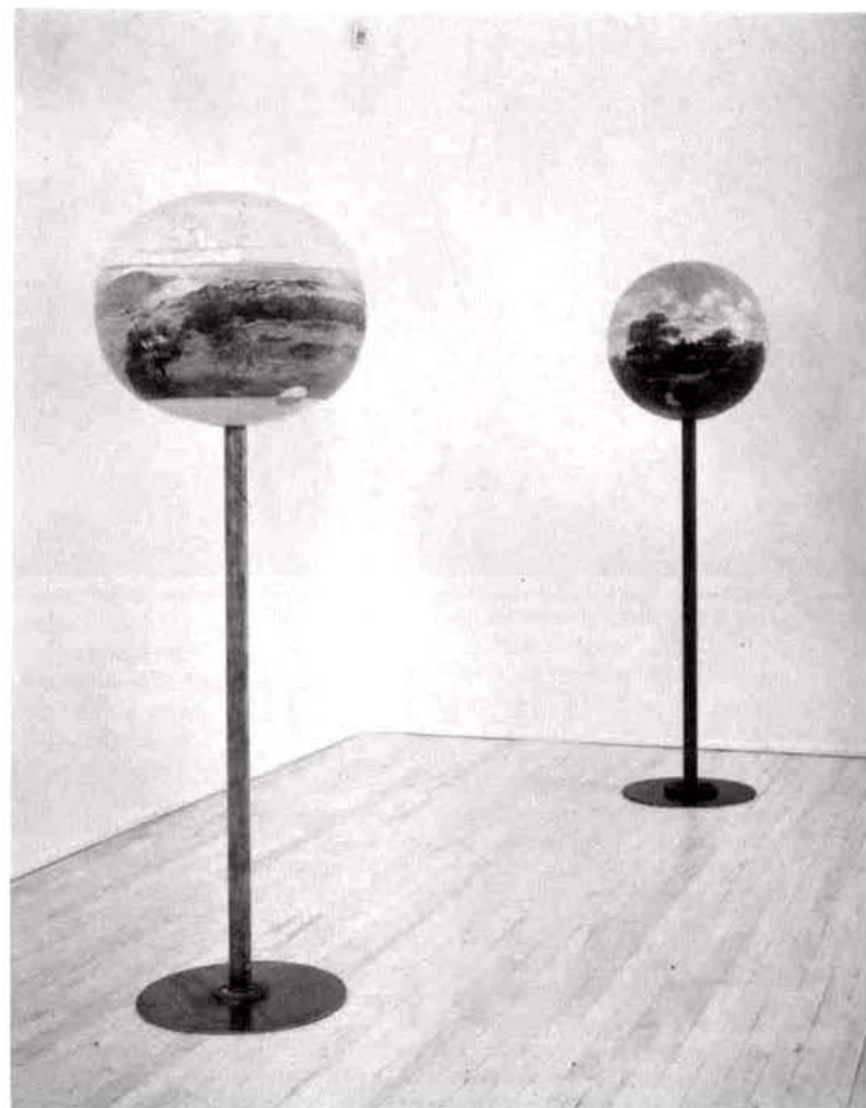


Yishai Jusidman

In his new work the young Mexican-born painter Yishai Jusidman has once again curved back the edges of the frame with his celestial spheres. The most conspicuous feature of the *Astronomer* series is its preoccupation with classical perspective and the way it has legislated the history of Western painting since the Renaissance. By wrapping landscapes around 360-degree wooden surfaces, Jusidman destabilizes the omnipotent Albertian eye (the vision of God) and adapts the image to the natural process of vision. The image is no longer subordinated to the masterful "I" of the viewer, who is now decentered and obliged to revolve around its surface.

Though Jusidman's landscapes still bow to the flatness of paint, his objects penetrate the three-dimensionality of the sculptural domain. Unlike the hermetic and self-contained qualities of minimalism, however, his embrace of realist painting and semi-scientific discourse makes the pieces more open and outwardly referential: they have a relationship to themselves but also to history. Instead of resting materially dormant on the ground, erected on firm metal poles, the spheres seem to hail themselves as signs, each one a tribute to a "Father Topographer." (That one piece should honor Constable is not surprising since the whole series is about the disciplined study and contemplation of the natural world.) And, unlike his earlier *Geographer* series, which rendered the orbs entirely abstract, Jusidman inverts the Borgesian scene, depicting a map decaying atop the surface of the earth by melting a terrestrial representation on top of the globe.



Yishai Jusidman, Installation view, 1990. Left: *Astronomer XXXIII*, 1990, Oil and encaustic on wood, 22" x 25" ellipse, 69" high; Right: *Astronomer XXVII*, 1990, Oil and encaustic on wood, 23" sphere, 72" high. Courtesy Jack Shainman Gallery.

The secretions of translucent geometrical shapes that float along the surface, then, do not symbolize the inception of modernism that arrived once Albertian perspective became inadequate. Rather, they transpose a visual discourse that was existent in other disciplines atop the method of seeing that largely dominated the history of art. The formal worship of abstraction did not originate with Cézanne but dates back to Plato, for whom geometrical shapes *were* the universe and realistic objects their secondary and impure doubles. Astronomy mapped a mathematical fiction of the universe as much as painting rendered the landscape illusory, and

so each numbered *Astronomer* refers to its respective artist. When Jusidman co-ordinates the pigment of his formal shapes with the landscapes that they stain, he suggests that the relationship between abstraction and realism is merely one of focus.

The spacing of the spheres extends the series into a time-space narrative, with the physical gaps effecting a play of difference between each Master. This is a series that is not only historically and semiotically relevant but visually striking as well, without resorting to vulgarity or shock to achieve it. (*Jack Shainman, July 24–August 17*)

Meg O'Rourke