

## ARTS &amp; ENTERTAINMENT

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posing a painting from zero and strides forward. Inevitably, stumbles occur, but seeing the effort alone will give heart to fellow artists and everyone open to it.

**Wilson-Ryckman and Xie:** San Franciscan Pamela Wilson-Ryckman has for years produced watercolors that derive their composition and emotional tone from photographs and other recollections of conflict and disaster zones.

In recent work at Anglim, she moves from paper to canvas and to a degree of abstraction that we might read in two ways: as admissions of defeat or as true reports of a pervasive breakdown of trust in even the least tendentious images.

Some of Wilson-Ryckman's titles — "Cairo," "Berlin," "Arab Spring" — continue to reference events and places with unsettled legacies and futures that defy imagination.

But in the way they assert their own materiality, most of the paintings here hint that neither depiction nor pro-

**Ward Schumaker: Years of Pretty:** Paintings, sculpture and collage. Through Oct. 12. Jack Fischer Gallery, 311 Potrero Ave., S.F. (415) 956-1178, [www.jackfischergallery.com](http://www.jackfischergallery.com).

**Pamela Wilson-Ryckman: GPS:** Paintings; **Xiaozhe Xie: Transcience:** Paintings, a photograph and video. Through Oct. 5. Gallery Paule Anglim, 14 Geary St., S.F. (415) 433-2710, [www.gallerypauleanglim.com](http://www.gallerypauleanglim.com).

cess can truthfully evoke witness to events, or even response to distant reports of them. These works do not so much deny as lament the impossibility of abstract "history painting" — contemporary painting's incapacity to evolve visual idioms suited to its historical moment.

Far from leaving Wilson-Ryckman's paintings looking barren, this expression of crisis charges them with emotional power. Churning compositions such as "Arab Spring" and "Cyclist" (2013) seem to show us hand and mind trying to outrun one another in search of expressive means adequate to the tempo, ambiguity and impact of events.

Not even that losing race makes an adequate match for the position in which we find ourselves as consumers of crisis, but its failure strikes powerful emotional notes, even in a subdued piece such as "Berlin."

John Zurier, a fellow Anglim artist, must be



Gallery Paule Anglim

**"Arab Spring" (2012), an oil on linen work by Pamela Wilson-Ryckman — an expression of crisis charged with emotional power.**

surprised — as I am — to detect signs of his work's influence on an artist as assured as Wilson-Ryckman. But her work also shares something of the bitter detachment of Luc Tuymans — subject of a 2010 retrospective at the San Francisco Museum of Modern Art — who renders images lifted from the Internet, peering through veils of cynical mediation for clues

to the common culture's unconfessed fixations.

Wilson-Ryckman's show will stun and fascinate those who find themselves already on its wavelength and leave everyone else bored or mystified.

Stanford painter Xiaozhe Xie occupies the small room at Anglim, with several recent paintings and a video titled "Transcience," on

which he based them.

The color video, in slightly slow motion, shows books tossed into the air and falling against a depthless black ground. Hot light from below suggests a conflagration.

The titles, in several languages, including Chinese, name works of and about founding figures of modernist thought: Karl Marx,

Friedrich Nietzsche, Sigmund Freud, Jean-Paul Sartre and others.

The video calls to mind the book burnings — most notoriously the Nazis' — that have punctuated the modern age across the world, and the slow burn of obsolescence that the digital age may have ignited.

In paintings and photographs — a lavish photogravure here re-

sembles a tumbledown townscape — Xie has doted on books in an elegiac spirit. His latest work attempts, with mixed success, to clinch the book's symbolism of humanity or civilization.

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