

The New York Times

What to See in New York Art Galleries This Week

by Roberta Smith

Through Jan. 20. Andrew Edlin Gallery, 212 Bowery, Manhattan; 212-206-9723, edlingallery.com.



Ionel Talpazan's "Spiritual Technology — Special Design," 2003, mixed media on paper.

The title of this engaging four-artist show at Andrew Edlin — “April 14, 1561” — is the date of one of the earliest reported mass sightings of possible U.F.O. activity above Nuremberg, Germany. As might be expected alien spacecraft figure, or seem to, in every work on view. And all the artists had, or have, reasons to believe.

Ionel Talpazan (1955-2015) claimed that when he was a child in Romania, a U.F.O. flew near him, enveloping him in a blue light. He devoted the rest of his life, half of it spent in New York City, to rendering brightly colored spaceships whose revealed interior structures make them resemble elaborately cut gems. Similarly Paulina Peavy (1901-1999), a West Coast artist who encountered a spirit she called Lacamo when she was 31, ascribed all her subsequent, extremely varied artworks to the directions of this spirit muse. The abstractions

representing Ms. Peavy here suggest brightly colored embryos or sleek flying saucers drifting among amniotic fluids or intergalactic ethers.

The remaining two artists were subject to parental influence. The father of Karla Knight (born 1958) wrote about U.F.O.s and ESP: Her large beautifully textured drawings in graphite and colored pencil resemble mysterious codes and alphabets— or a spaceship’s complex control panel. Finally Esther Pearl Watson (born 1973), whose father devoted a great deal of energy trying to build a working flying saucer, bases her small detailed panel paintings on family experiences. They show space modules bolted together from gleaming panels (aluminum foil, actually) hovering above longhorn cattle, police cars and rolling fields, or occasionally touching down.

Depicted in a style best described as New Age Grandma Moses, the images have captions like “NASA doesn’t seem to understand this” or “There’s a magnetic field collaps (sic), and we’re out of milk.” Ms. Watson excels at night skies. In “You Are Welcome to Visit (Us Anytime You Want),” clouds line up like a legion of dirigibles to greet a visiting U.F.O.