

On Art

Freilicher, Fish, Dinnerstein, Petersen, Baber

John Gruen

SIMON DINNERSTEIN (Stampli, 47 E. 77th):

A cruel realism attends these paintings and drawings by a New York artist in his first one-man show. Dinnerstein does not idealize reality, but dips it in acid, giving it a fiercely emotional resonance—one that never yields to the slightest vagueness of feeling or appearance. Whether approaching the portrait, the still-life or the landscape, a terse and uncompromising strictness of detail makes

itself felt, and we are spared nothing. The veins that cross the swollen breasts of a pregnant nude are as realistically depicted as are the upholstery nails that line the easy-chair she sits in. An old woman, rigid in age and emotion, stands as if paralyzed within the equally inert and frozen paraphernalia of her room. The contents of a kitchen-sink cabinet stands in obsessive cluster, as if terror-stricken. A momentary softness enters Dinnerstein's most ambitious work, a large triptych depicting the artist's work-room, the landscape outside two windows, and, in the two side panels, the portrait of his wife and child, and a self-portrait. Here, the rough-hewn realism, while no

less stark and unsparing, gives way to a less chilling imagery. The feeling of "home" is created by the presence of a wall upon which old-master postcards, a child's drawings, lists, and photographs have been tacked-up. The view from the windows is thoroughly picturesque, while the three figures look out at the spectator with a certain reserved friendliness. Only the large work-table, with its obsessively arranged tools, re-establishes the general ambiance of stern impassivity that marks the entire show. Dinnerstein has a cold and riveting talent.