

MAUTLOA, Pat

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8 The Star Tonight, Thursday September 8, 1994

## Artist's vision has the subtlety of a sledgehammer

**D**iane Victor is driven by demons both from outside and within her own head. In the past her obsessions have been articulated with virtuoso, frenzied skill.

But brilliant technique could not always compensate for cluttered and overworked pictures whose surfaces seemed to sag under their own self-significance.

In this show, images of violence – both sexual and psychological – continue to infuse her work and the bleakness of her vision strikes you with the subtlety of a sledgehammer. But here is a significant shift in her work. It is as though she no longer takes herself too seriously for an artist of her intensity this is no small feat. Her imagery is sparser, cleaner, her forms bold and – with a few exceptions – unfettered by excessive narrative detail. She also experiments with silkscreen and linear overlaps which break the usual somberness of her images.

Most importantly, she has attempted to refine her imagery, to explore it critically and control the urge to make meaning and metaphors explode from every angle.

**ART: HAZEL FRIEDMAN**  
**EXHIBITION:** Diane Victor,  
 Pat Mautloa at the  
 Goodman Gallery (till  
 September 13)

But the predilection for the grotesque remains evoked through mug shots of mass murderers, lobotomised brains and corrupted bodies, reveal the hidden perversions beneath surface respectability. In all her works, sex is equated with violation as in "The Undertaker" and the chilling depiction of family sexual abuse called "Sugar and Spice". In "Give a Dog a Bad Name" she depicts the stark image of a stoney-eyed woman in a crimplene dressing gown squeezing her breast and displaying an ugly pelvic suture caused by childbirth. The surface of her body is superimposed with the silhouette of dog licking rapaciously at her breast – a grotesque parody of woman as symbol of fertility and nature.

Her small etchings provide some light relief with sprinklings of Hogarthian humour permeating the visual melodrama. And while she is obviously still

wrestling with her own virtuosity and the desire to let it all hang out at the expense of conceptual clarity, Victor seems at last to be finding her way out of a self-imposed impasse.

Violence is also one of the driving forces behind Kagiso Pat Mautloa's work. But unlike Victor's visceral depictions, his conceptual works are more detached, and offer glimpses of hope in the face of destruction. They are comprised of banal scraps such as flour sacks, metal and corrugated iron fragments – shelters for the dispossessed – which are stuck together in crude, rough edged collages.

Located in South Africa's sociopolitical landscape, they evoke the effects of political and state violence on everyday life. The works are without irony, offering hope and prayer as solutions.

They are also, in parts, uneven, with works such as "Unlocking", far surpassing the unfocused visual clutter of "Brazierie". Mautloa is also clearly feeling his way; but he has moved beyond stereotypical township illustrations into exciting, and in many ways, uncharted conceptual terrain.

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