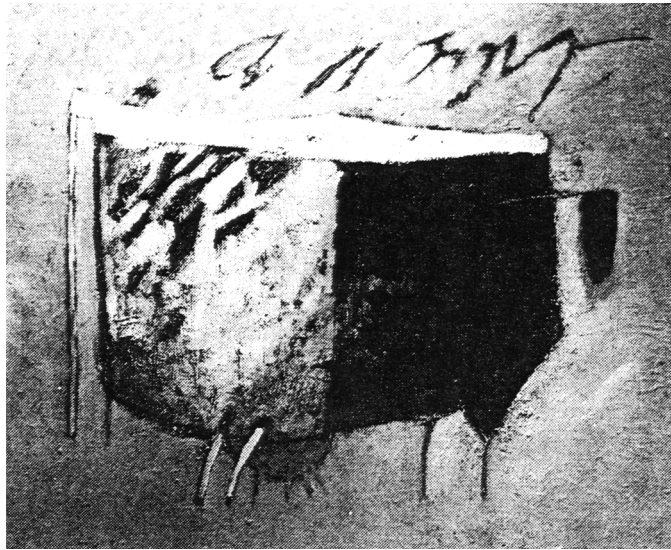


# Women Artists News

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*Valentina DuBasky,  
Split Cow in Pink  
Circumference, 1980*

**Valentina Dubasky, Paintings**  
Semaphore Gallery,  
462 West Broadway, NYC  
December 2-31

The four-legged animals of Valentina Dubasky's large paintings are bovines that visually affirm the esthetics and intent of the artist. The heat-treatment process offers a burned-in permanence, making these works in encaustic and oil stand as roughly hewn touchstones of Dubasky's preoccupation with surface texture.

The subject is cows, but the process is the major area of interest. Once you have noted that the outlined figures are those of the familiar barnyard creature, you see that the canvas itself has been beautifully treated, emerging as the primary concern. The grain is prominent. The cuts and slashes in the background seen at first to be rough calligraphy, but they take on emotional strength. The cow-forms are less rectangles than gently tortured,

soft-cornered, quadrilinear shapes, and the encaustic application unifies the composition.

Dubasky's heifers range from easily recognizable ones, like "Cow in Blue Field," and "Split Cow in Pink Circumference," to four-sided distortions with wispy legs and faintly painted heads that almost disappear into the surrounding color field. In "Black About Face" the animal abandons the more commonly used side view and looms at you aggressively with its head, a rough triangle of roofing-paper collage, butting into the world beyond the framed space. The artist reports that she is currently experimenting with stuck-on materials like tarpaper, tiles, and glitter mixed with encaustic.

Dubasky's choice of materials and of a legendary subject place her in the ranks of those who, in the words of Eleanor Munro, are offering a "diversity of look, medium, and implication" and "serve to bind up

past and present to render the figures, moods, and moments of the past immortal" ("Originals: American Women Artists", New York: Simon and Shuster, 1979, page 392.)

Paleolithic cave partings—the "moments of the past"—are brought to mind by the encausticized cows. And the cow has a long history of being associated in legend with the earth and the moon, when lunar goddesses wore cow horns for head ornaments. IN ancient Egypt, the animal was allied with the concept of vital her (the encaustic process!) and "vac"—the female aspect of Brahma, in the East—was the cow of abundance, nourishing earth with milk from the astral dust of the Milky Way.

Dubasky's choice of a classic subject sets deep roots. Her use of volatile, modern techniques—glitter, encaustic, collage with tarpaper and tile—gives us a promise of future riches.

—John Arthur Shanks