

ARTFORUM

VALENTINA DUBASKY

RUTH SIEGEL GALLERY

Without the slightest hint of overt pedagogy, Valentina DuBasky, an artist known for her evocative magical realist style featuring totemic animal images and lushly colored surfaces, has succeeded in conveying the critical need to preserve the tenuous ecological balances that guarantee the survival of life. Consider the collage-like structure that serves to bind content and form in paintings such as *Rainforest*, 1990, *Indonesia*, 1990, *Nature and T Cells*, 1991, and *White Meander*, 1991, recalling ancient Egyptian painting as well as Persian manuscripts, the organization into flat interlocking sections gives the compositions an almost rebuslike appearance. However decorative the dark and light contrasts in *Rainforest* or the fluent rhythmical passages of blues reds and greens in *Indonesia*, the constructive handling of scale and opacity produce a decidedly enigmatic atmosphere. There is something wonderfully provocative about the different degrees to which the birds in the painting *Indonesia* are depicted as “being there,” ranging in handling from a transparent void to, in the case of the large blue crane, a flaking solid. This effect of fading in and out help to create a vivid sensation of movement, suggesting a cyclical condition wherein time and place vary, but the processes of birth and rebirth remain constant.



Valentina DuBasky, *Indonesia*, 1990, oil on canvas, 72" x 66"

Both in the bird paintings and those in which a variegated flora is highlighted, the viewers witness an organic evolution. Paintings like *Nature and T Cells* and *Blue Meander*, both of which contain the cellular symbol for drugs manufactured from plants farmed from the world's tropical rain forests by the pharmaceutical industry, invite viewers to take on a participatory role to the extent that the information – here the fact that life-saving drugs come from the rain forests promotes the heightened awareness, and heightened awareness, in turn, promotes action.

– Ronny Cohen