

ART IN REVIEW

'Private Worlds'

Art in General
79 Walker Street
TriBeCa
Through July 8

Giving earthy as well as other-worldly glimpses of the human condition, this show of narrative paintings by 20 current artists — most not well known, as yet — sometimes offers more than you want to know.

Assembled by a two-person curatorial team, the painters Joan Semmel and Arnold Mesches, the works range from surreal, as in Julie Hefernan's highly accomplished "Self-Portrait as Snake Charmer," an old-masterish fantasy of twin girls joined by a ring of fire around their waists, to Hopperesque, like Tom Birkner's "Girl Waiting," a lone anticipatory figure standing (expecting a bus, or a lover?) by an old house near a country crossroads.

Often the "plots" are bizarre, or at least intense. Mark Greenwold's small gouaches concern what look like highly dysfunctional family groups, involving crippled men, grimacing children, nude women, dogs with human heads and, in "Fate Unraveled," a man plunging a knife into another's chest. In David Ivie's tiny, spooky painting, "Memorial," a nude male figure lies atop a tombstone in the snowy front yard of a small manor house, desultorily attended by a male and a female mourner.

Domesticity, not always felicitous, has its innings here, too. A baby, having spilled the milk from his cup, screams lustily at his infant table in Dennis Kardon's exuberantly colored "Attention Getter." By contrast, Joan Linder's "Thanksgiving," a near-photo-

graphic portrayal, in cyanotic blue, of her relatives gives a melancholy account of the aging process.

Group shows have an innate thrust toward unevenness, and this one has as much as most. But the approach is refreshingly offbeat.

GRACE GLUECK