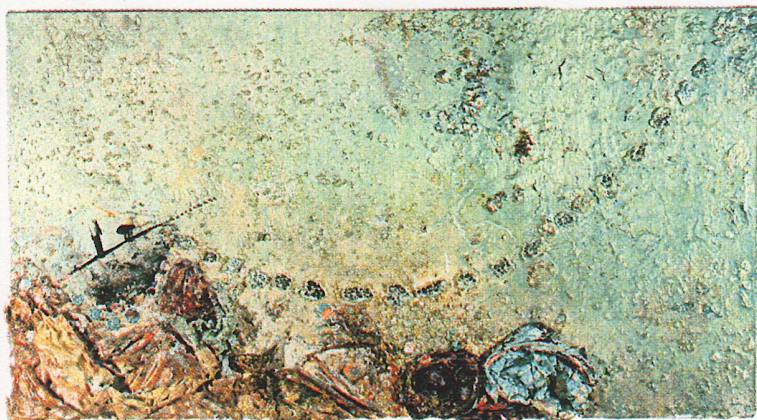


Art in America

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Sandy Slone: *The Skin Room*, 1994, mixed mediums on canvas, 21 by 34 by 4 inches; at the Jersey City Museum. (Review on page 107.)

Sandi Slone at the Jersey City Museum

This selection of 13 of Sandi Slone's paintings was a good opportunity to catch up with the recent output of a New York-based painter who has been showing since the 1970s. Slone began her career under the influence of Color Field painting, but this show of canvases from 1991-95 demonstrated how far she has come from those origins. In her richly textured works, which often seem to swirl like eddies in a turbulent river, Slone transforms the pour and stain techniques of her mentors by the inclusion of elements such as mica, volcanic stone, plastic beads and large wafers of dried paint. She also introduces explicit subject matter by collaging photographs and pages of printed text onto her canvases. In a painting titled

Mary (1993) the swirling composition is centered on several such elements: a portrait of Mary Shelley, two pages torn out of her novel *Frankenstein* and a film still from a movie of the book. The roiling energy of the abstract forms, whose colors shift from dried blood to charcoal black, is a good match for the dark, Romantic tale. Also noteworthy is how Slone deftly lets the monster's extended arm in the film still seem to direct the flow of the upper half of the canvas.

The most compelling works in the show belong to an ongoing series of paintings structured around a collaged image of a little girl on the beach. It's actually a photograph taken of the artist at the age of eight. As she bends over to draw in the sand, an adult male is standing a few feet away, dressed in oddly formal clothes. Around this image Slone creates paintings that seem, at first impression, less the result of deliberate composition than of tidal and geologic processes. The surface of *The Skin Room* (1994), a long horizontal canvas mounted on 4-inch-thick stretcher bars, is delicately cracked and puckered. Embedded in it are bits of volcanic stone, crumpled circles of dried paint skin (from open paint cans) and a curving line of small fragments from a shattered mirror. The color subtly modulates from a rusty orange at one edge to a pale green. Off to one side of the painting, anchoring the whole canvas, is a small version of the girl-on-the-beach image.

Slone's success, in works like this, in combining photographic images and abstract painting is achieved by joining the two in a coherent visual narrative. Slone invites us to imagine her eight-year-old self creating the paintings she is embedded in. This rather fanciful notion is carried by Slone's assured control of the materials of her resplendently gritty paintings.

—Raphael Rubinstein