

Review Magazine, March 1, 1997. "Dominique Nahas on: 'On Air'" (excerpt)

"On Air" is the first group exhibition held at St. Peter's Church, designed in 1977 by Skidmore, Owings and Merrill, an institution long devoted to showing strong contemporary solo exhibits since the late sixties when pastor Ralph Peterson had the original church basement refinished and made the walls available to artists. The Church boasts perhaps the single most beautiful interior space in Manhattan; it's white chapel by Louise Nevelson.

"On Air" is curated by Paul Villinski, whose own "Consolation (For My Father)," 1996, a sculpture suspended by 14 wire cords attached to a hundred leather gloves creating a ten foot span of wings, takes a shopworn theme and comes up with an affecting work which is a straightforward and elegiac and singularly affecting piece. It is hanging in the Stairwell Gallery, and has a forlorn heroic quality. The shape of the flight suit gives off the feel of form and formlessness, of seeming valor, dejectedness, right down to the thread hanging from one of the flight suit's pant cuffs.

...In spite of its topical associations with the man-angel (Wings of Desire, Michael, etc.), perhaps the worn utilitarian aspects of the clothes and gloves reminded me not so much of aspects of hope or redemption, as much as those of futility and nobility on the emotional level of Tatlin's "Letatlin" flying machine of 1929-32.

"On Air" starts a new round of such exhibits at St. Peter's devoted primarily to emerging artists. And while there are mixed results, "On Air" predictably enough, with its inbuilt theme of transcendence, is a typically safe church-y theme. But Villinski has ably left the theme open enough so that some of the artists can use the traditional associations of air: weightlessness, transcendence, flight and contemplation, while subverting them in gentle, fresh ways.