



Alan Artner | *In the Galleries*

Witkin's solo show filled with satisfying paintings

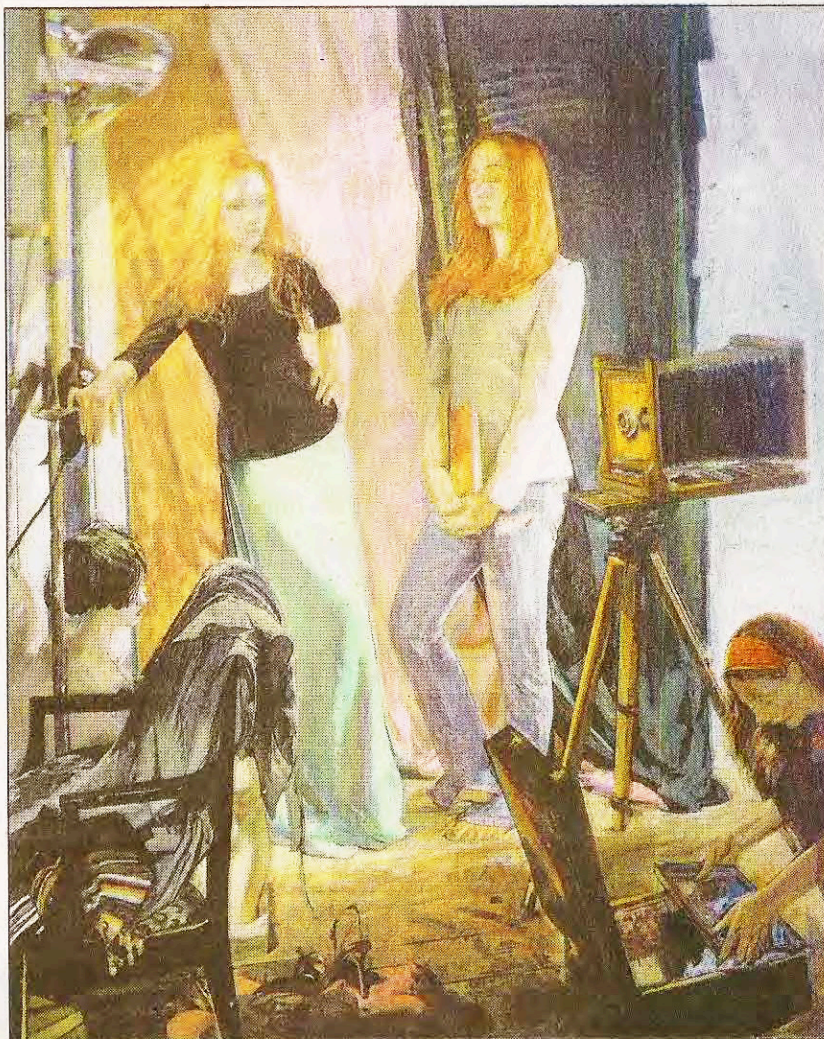
By Alan G. Artner
TRIBUNE CRITIC

The last time painter **Jerome Witkin** exhibited in Chicago it was with his brother, photographer Joel-Peter Witkin, whose sensational subject matter then seemed new to contemporary art and pretty much overshadowed the more orthodox fictions Jerome created in his studio.

Now, however, Madron Gallery has mounted Jerome Witkin's first solo exhibition in town, and its 27 paintings and drawings indicate a representational artist operating at full strength. There are portraits of friends, figure studies, self-portraits and even some allegories, most giving evidence of having been painted in an artist's studio that occasionally doubles as a cabinet of human anxiety.

Several of the drawings are preparatory for the paintings, which the gallery can then show in stages of development, sometimes with the artist's written annotations. I am partial to the large figure paintings, which are cluttered equally with props and possible meanings. But the directness of the portraits is equally admirable, not least when the artist turns his gaze and hand to himself. It's a pity the paintings' surfaces don't excite as much as their depictions, though that is a relatively small absence in a show otherwise most satisfying.

At 1000 W. North Ave., 3rd floor.
312-640-1302.



Jerome Witkin's large figure paintings, such as "Before the Camera" (1985, oil on canvas), are cluttered with props and possible meanings.

EXHIBITIONS

Jerome Witkin at Madron Gallery
through May 30