

arts

Genius, reality, and familiar revolutions



JASON MANDELLA (ABOVE)

Clockwise from top left: Todd Pavlisko's "The Operation for the Stone" features a portrait of Richard Pryor, Michael Wetzel's "Travel Club," Nahid Khaki's "Untitled #2" collage.

TODD PAVLISKO: All of Nothing
At: Samson, 450 Harrison Ave.,
through July 9. 617-357-7177,
www.samsonprojects.com

MICHAEL WETZEL: Sunny Today
At: LaMontagne Gallery,
555 East 2d St., South Boston,
through July 8. 617-464-4640,
www.lamontagnegallery.com

**NAHID KHAKE: A Home Forgotten,
30 Years Later:
A Personal Journey to Iran**
At: Khaki Gallery,
9 Crest Road, Wellesley,
through Aug.15. 781-237-1095,
www.khakigallery.net

shop, but the bongos are wilting. The artist questions whether genius isolates. Certainly, it's a burden as much as it is a gift.

Hypnotic ideas of reality

"I'm curious about the way in which paintings have the habit of becoming trophies," Michael Wetzel writes in his artist's statement for "Sunny Today," his

• exhibit at LaMontagne Gallery. His still-life paintings, with titles such as "Yacht Club" and "Hunting Club," depict a culture of privilege. Like the Dutch still lifes of the 16th and 17th centuries, they take vanitas as their theme: Everything passes. But Wetzel's paintings forego volume. Almost everything — stacked pyramids of champagne glasses, platters of lobster and finger sandwiches — appears to coalesce out of a rush of pattern and paint, and may just as readily dissolve.

"Travel Club" sets the glasses stacked poolside, casting blotted reflections in the green-blue water. Champagne overflows and drips deliciously. The background has abutting motifs: a floral pattern; the arc of a green plate; vertical ribbons of blue, topped with a saucy red-white squiggle. In the cleverly constructed "Gin," we're looking down at finger sandwiches, assorted in striped triangles on a striped plate edged with flowers. Paler triangles rotate over the placemat below, set on a red tile

surface. Wetzel cleverly shifts perspectives; as your eye moves up the canvas, you're looking out, not down.

Nothing in these pictures is solid. Their bricks are patterns; their mortar is paint. The patterns are hypnotic, but they also suggest psychological patterning that holds ideas of reality in place to maintain sanity — they don't necessarily represent reality. Wetzel tops off his still lifes with a handful of wonderfully creepy portraits, such as "White Dress," in which he builds flesh out of repeated filigrees, a delicate scaffolding of self, fragile as bone china.

Narrating her Persia

Nahid Khaki returned to her native Iran in 2008, after 30 years away. Her heartfelt photographic collages, on view at Khaki Gallery in Wellesley, shuffle images of her family (most of which she took, but including some old family photos) with her shots of rural and urban life in Iran. She assembles each collage