

## ART/VILLAGE

**Lawrence Berzon**

*Bratton*

328 E 11<sup>th</sup> St 5/4-29

Lawrence Berzon paints strange scenes as if from horror films: in "Medusa Barbershop," snakes grow from people's heads while being cut off by enthusiastic barbers. Berzon paints mostly in grey tones, with strategic use of brown, and the effects are the same from work to work. We forget these are paintings and become captivated immediately by the odd subject matter, the cast of sleazy or sinister characters that he draws on, and the little details placed to surprise us. In "Blinders" a nude woman is reading the paper while a fully-clothed man perched on the couch above her pretends (for us?) to be reading the paper while he's actually leering at her. He hangs on to a nearby aquarium for balance. Then we notice that the scene out the window – a man running from a car – matches exactly the photograph on the front of the newspaper in the woman's arms. While the couple is absorbed in their newspaper-reading game, we see what's really going on: we have become complicitous, and are no longer innocent bystanders. But we are still left with the mystery of the simultaneity of the newspaper with the scene out the window. It's like watching "The Twilight Zone" – we get a thrill out of it, and extended reflection heightens the effect. One gets the feeling that these paintings are best seen together so they can be read, like a comic book, one after the other, not contemplated alone on a wall. Berzon is trying to capture the "Blue Velvet" side of life – the weirdness that lurks just below the surface – for those who dare to abandon the safety of their everyday boring routine to look. Some may be aroused to horror. – S.C.



*Pigeon Killer*, 1988, oil on linen