

SUPERFICIALITY
AND

FELLOWS OF CONTEMPORARY ART
OTIS BEN MALTZ GALLERY

/ Curators /

CHRISTOPHER BEDFORD
KRISTINA NEWHOUSE
JENNIFER WULFFSON

SUPEREXCRESCENCE

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CONTENTS

- | 2 | SPONSOR'S FOREWORD BY HOMEIRA GOLDSTEIN
 - | 4 | DIRECTOR'S ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS BY MEG LINTON
-

ESSAYS

- | 5 | SUPERFICIALITY AND SUPEREXCRESCENCE BY CHRISTOPHER BEDFORD
 - | 17 | THE VIEWER AS SUPERFICIAL OCCUPIER BY KRISTINA NEWHOUSE
 - | 29 | UNCANNY VECTORS (AT WARP SPEED) BY JOHN WELCHMAN

 - | 45 | CATALOGUE OF THE EXHIBITION BY JENNIFER WULFFSON
 - | 93 | EXHIBITION CHECKLIST
 - | 97 | FELLOWS OF CONTEMPORARY ART
 - | 101 | OTIS COLLEGE OF ART AND DESIGN
 - | 103 | ARTIST INDEX
-



SPONSOR'S FOREWORD

IT IS WITH GREAT ENTHUSIASM THAT THE FELLOWS OF CONTEMPORARY ART (FOCA) SPONSOR OUR 36TH EXHIBITION, [SUPERFICIALITY & SUPEREXCRESCENCE](#), IN PARTNERSHIP WITH THE BEN MALTZ GALLERY AT OTIS COLLEGE OF ART AND DESIGN.

FOUNDED IN 1975, FOCA IS A PRIVATELY-FUNDED, NON-PROFIT ART ORGANIZATION WITH THE ENDURING MISSION TO SUPPORT AND SHOWCASE EMERGING AND MID-CAREER CALIFORNIA ARTISTS WORKING IN A VARIETY OF MEDIA. OVER THE LAST 33 YEARS FOCA HAS PLAYED A SIGNIFICANT ROLE IN THE ADVANCEMENT OF CONTEMPORARY ART IN CALIFORNIA THROUGH ITS CURATOR AWARD, WHICH INSTIGATES AND UNDERWRITES GROUP AND SOLO EXHIBITIONS, AND DOCUMENTS EACH SHOW WITH ERUDITE PUBLISHED CATALOGUES. IN ADDITION TO EXHIBITIONS, FOCA HAS EXPANDED ITS PROGRAMS TO INCLUDE THE FOC ICH BIENNIALY FUNDS THREE ARTISTS WITH UNRESTRICTED GRANTS, AND THE CURATOR'S LAB, WHICH SPONSORS SMALL EXHIBITS AT FOCA'S SPACE AT 970 NORTH BROADWAY IN LOS ANGELES.

LOOKING AT THE ART WORKS EXHIBITED IN THIS SHOW IS A HEARTENING AND HUMBLING EXPERIENCE. SEPARATELY, EACH PIECE SHOWS THE PASSION, TECHNIQUE AND SINGULARITY OF THE INDIVIDUAL ARTISTS. TAKEN TOGETHER THESE WORKS FORM A CRITICAL MASS WITH ALL THE HALLMARKS OF THE TYPE OF EXPERIENCE FOCA SETS ITS SIGHTS ON; IT IS FRESH, SURPRISING AND ENERGIZING.

OUR PARTNERSHIP WITH THE BEN MALTZ GALLERY PROVIDED THE PIONEERING ENERGY THAT ENSURED OUR TEAM OF CURATORS HAD THE SUPPORT TO DEVELOP AND REFINE A THEME THAT SEEMS TO HAVE ANTICIPATED THE SOCIAL AND ECONOMIC JOLT THAT OUR REGION AND THE WORLD IS CURRENTLY EXPERIENCING.

IT IS BECOMING EVIDENT THAT THE GLOBAL MELTDOWN MAY HAVE BEEN LONG IN THE MAKING—BASED ON YEARS OF OVER-EMPHASIS ON THE SURFACE, WITHOUT CONSIDERING WHAT, IF ANYTHING MAY LIE BENEATH. I CAN THINK OF NO ARTISTS MORE QUALIFIED TO CREATE WORK THAT COMMENTS UPON AND DECONSTRUCTS THIS SUPERFICIALITY THAN THOSE ARTISTS BORN AND RAISED IN THE FABLED "GOOD LIFE" OF CALIFORNIA, OR THOSE WHO WERE DRAWN TO IT.

IT TAKES THE FOCUS OF A GREAT MANY PEOPLE AND THEIR VARIOUS TALENTS AND PASSIONS TO BRING TOGETHER AN EXHIBITION OF THIS MAGNITUDE AND CALIBRE. ON BEHALF OF FOCA, FIRST

AND FOREMOST, I WOULD ALSO LIKE TO EXPRESS MY HEARTFELT THANKS TO OUR OUTSTANDING TEAM OF CURATORS, CHRISTOPHER BEDFORD, JENNIFER WULFFSON, AND KRISTINA NEWHOUSE FOR THEIR DEDICATION AND TIRELESS EFFORTS IN SELECTING AND WORKING WITH THE 13 ARTISTS PRESENTED IN THIS EXHIBIT, AS WELL AS TO ALL THE PARTICIPATING ARTISTS FOR CREATING SUCH PHENOMENAL WORK.

I WOULD ALSO LIKE TO RECOGNIZE BEN MALTZ GALLERY DIRECTOR MEG LINTON FOR HER CONTINUED AND ADVANCED STUDY OF TODAY'S CONTEMPORARY ART CONCERNS AND FOR HER READINESS, ENTHUSIASM AND MANAGEMENT OF THIS SHOW. IN THE SAME BREATH, GRATITUDE GOES TO OTIS FOR CREATING THE STAGE AND VENUE FOR SUCH EXPLORATORY FORUMS AS THIS TO TAKE PLACE.

MANY THANKS GO TO FOCA'S 2008 LONG RANGE PLANNING COMMITTEE, CHAIRED BY MICHAEL GOLD, WHICH BROUGHT LIFE TO THIS EXHIBIT, AS WELL AS TO 2009 LONG RANGE PLANNING CHAIR MARY CHABRE, EXHIBITION LIAISON LINDA MAGGARD, AND OUR EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR TOM MCKENZIE. MOST IMPORTANTLY, I HEARTILY ACKNOWLEDGE THE DEDICATED MEMBERS OF FOCA, WITHOUT WHOSE GENEROSITY AND MEMBERSHIP DUES OUR MISSION COULD NOT BE ACCOMPLISHED. THE COMMUNITY THAT CONTRIBUTED TO THIS SHOW AND CONTINUES TO CHART THE COURSE FORWARD AT FOCA HIGHLIGHTS HOW IMPORTANT, ENRICHING AND MEANINGFUL OUR SUPPORT OF THE ARTS IS—NOW PERHAPS MORE THAN EVER.

THE ARTS ENCOURAGE AND CHALLENGE US TO LEARN ABOUT OURSELVES AND TO BROADEN OUR VISION OF OTHER CULTURES. IN A WORLD THAT IS INCREASINGLY GLOBALIZED, BOTH IN ITS SUCCESSES AND ITS FAILURES, IT IS THIS UNDERSTANDING AND VISION THAT WILL REVEAL THE WAY FORWARD. IT IS ONLY THROUGH ART EDUCATION AND INVOLVEMENT THAT WE CAN ENSURE OUR SOCIETY WILL CONTINUE ITS TENDENCIES FOR WONDER, CURIOSITY AND CREATIVITY—WHICH ENLIVEN NOT ONLY OUR IMAGINATIONS, BUT OUR CAREERS, OUR COMMUNITIES, OUR CULTURE, OUR SOCIETY, AND PERHAPS NOW MORE THAN EVER, OUR SPIRITS.

SO, WITH THIS SHOW, LET US ACKNOWLEDGE THE CONTRIBUTION AND EXCELLENCE OF THE ARTISTS AND ART PRESENTED, AND ALSO REAFFIRM OUR COMMITMENT TO THE ARTS AS ONE OF THE PRIMARY MOTORS THAT CAN HELP REDEVELOP OUR MOMENTUM IN A MORE THOUGHTFUL, INTUITIVE, CRITICAL AND ROBUST MANNER.

HOMEIRA GOLDSTEIN

*/ Chair, Board of Directors /
Fellows of Contemporary Art*



DIRECTOR'S ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

SUPERFICIALITY AND SUPEREXCRESCENCE IS A RICHLY COMPLEX EXHIBITION FILLED WITH SURFACE, SEX AND SKIN. IT FEATURES THE WORK OF 13 DISTINGUISHED ARTISTS WHO LOOK TO THE EXTERIOR OR SUPERFICIAL EXPRESSION OF DAY-TO-DAY EXISTENCE AS THEIR SOURCE MATERIAL. THEY SEE SUBSTANCE IN SURFACE AND RELISH IN THE TENSION BETWEEN MATTER AND MEANING. CURATORS CHRISTOPHER BEDFORD, KRISTINA NEWHOUSE, AND JENNIFER WULFFSON HAVE CREATED A PROVOCATIVE AND POETIC GALLERY EXPERIENCE IN THEIR SELECTION OF WORK AND HAVE WRITTEN INTELLIGENTLY AND THOUGHTFULLY ABOUT THE ARTISTS AND THE LINEAGE OF ART MAKING IN SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA. IN ADDITION, JOHN WELCHMAN CONTRIBUTED THE COMPELLING ESSAY **UNCANNY VECTORS (AT WARP SPEED)**.

I WANT TO THANK KRISTINA NEWHOUSE, FOR BRINGING THIS PROJECT TO OTIS, AND THE FELLOWS OF CONTEMPORARY ART (FOCA), WHO INITIATED AND SPONSORED THIS EXHIBITION AND CATALOGUE. CONTRIBUTING WHOLEHEARTEDLY TO THE SUCCESS OF THIS ENDEAVOR HAS BEEN HOMEIRA GOLDSTEIN, CHAIR OF THE FOCA BOARD OF DIRECTORS ALONGSIDE MARY CHABRE, CHAIR OF LONG RANGE EXHIBITION PLANNING; LINDA MAGGARD, EXHIBITION LIAISON; AND TOM MCKENZIE, ADMINISTRATIVE DIRECTOR. ANNE SWETT, SENIOR GRAPHIC DESIGNER AT OTIS, IS TO BE COMMENDED FOR PRODUCING SUCH A STUNNING PUBLICATION AND ELIZABETH PULSINELLI FOR LENDING HER EXPERTISE IN EDITING ALL OF THE ARTIST CHARACTERIZATIONS AND ESSAYS.

FOR THEIR WILLINGNESS TO SHARE, I GRATEFULLY ACKNOWLEDGE ALL THE LENDERS TO THE EXHIBITION AND THOSE WHO ASSISTED IN THE PROCESS: DEAN ANES AT ACME, DCKT CONTEMPORARY, GAGOSIAN GALLERY, SIRJE AND MICHAEL GOLD, KERRY HANNAWELL AND MATTHEW IADAROLA, TIA AND DAVID HOBERMAN, DAVID KORDANSKY GALLERY, ELIZABETH EAST AT LA LOUVER, METRO PICTURES, PATRICK PAINTER, INC., THE PROJECT, DAVID RICHARDS AND GEOFF TUCK, JILL AND DENNIS ROACH, JANE AND BARTON SHALLAT, DAVID STEWART, AND DEAN VALENTINE AND AMY ADELSON. FOR THEIR NEVER-ENDING SUPPORT, DEDICATION, AND EXPERTISE IN MAKING EVERY EXHIBITION SHINE, I THANK THE BEN MALTZ GALLERY STAFF: JINGER HEFFNER, KATHY MACPHERSON, TRINIDAD RUIZ, AND PHIL WEIL.

FINALLY, I WANT TO THANK THE ARTISTS FOR ENRICHING OUR MINDS, BODIES, AND SOULS, AND THE AND THE CURATORS WHO GENEROUSLY GAVE THEIR IDEAS, ENERGY, AND PERSPIRATION TO GENERATE THIS EXHIBITION AND ITS CATALOGUE.

MEG LINTON

/ Director /

Ben Maltz Gallery

and Public Programs

Otis College of Art and Design

OTIS

CHRISTOPHER BEDFORD

SUPERFICIALITY
AND
SUPEREXCRESCENCE

SUPERFICIALITY AND SUPEREXCRESCENCE

In our everyday life we experience not solid and immediate facts but stereotypes of meaning... To quite small circles the appeal of modern art—notably painting and sculpture, but also of the crafts—lies in the fact that in an impersonal, a scheduled, a machined world, they represent the personal and the spontaneous. They are the opposite of the stereotyped and the banalized.
—C. Wright Mills, 1958¹

Since the start of its slow ascent to prominence as the other art capital in the early 1960s, Los Angeles, and by association the art produced there, has been plagued by an essentialist—and pejorative—characterization in a variety of cultural fields: art criticism, cultural theory, and the popular press, to name only a few of the most obvious forums. This familiar characterization is variously rooted in a few incontestable, quotidian facts: Los Angeles is the center of the entertainment industry and thus a hub of staggering wealth, which has given rise to a culture of glamour, exclusivity, and conspicuous consumption; it is a coastal settlement with a near-perfect climate that varies negligibly throughout the year, resulting in an unusual awareness of and investment in physical beauty; and it is a sprawling, mobile city with no discernable center, limited public transportation, and little or no pedestrian culture. This tripartite condition has spawned a society conditioned to appreciate the fleeting spectacle as witnessed at 50 miles per hour from the isolation chamber of an automobile. Writing in 1945, Jean Paul Sartre offered a characterization of L.A. that is startling in its prescience.

Los Angeles...is rather like a big earthworm that might be chopped into twenty pieces without being killed. If you go through this enormous urban cluster, probably the largest in the world, you come upon twenty juxtaposed cities, strictly identical, each with its poor section, its business streets, night-clubs and smart suburb, and you get the impression that a medium-sized urban center has schizogenetically reproduced itself twenty times.²

¹ / C. Wright Mills, "The Man in the Middle," *Industrial Design* 5 (November 1958), 70, 75. ² / Jean-Paul Sartre, "American Cities" (1945), *Literary and Philosophical Essays*, trans. Annette Michelson (New York: Collier Books, 1962), 121.

While Sartre's account resembles an explorer's notes on an alien society encountered for the first time—all hyperbole and awe with explicit value judgments withheld—writing almost fifty years later with acerbic precision and very little sentiment, cultural critic

3 / Fredric Jameson, *Postmodernism or, The Cultural Logic of Late Capitalism* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1991), 6. 4 / *Ibid.*, 12–13. 5 / *Ibid.*, 12. 6 / *Ibid.*, 16.

Frederic Jameson moves beyond questions of urban sprawl and social disconnection, to look at the very tissue of postmodern space. In his now-classic treatise *Postmodernism or, The Cultural Logic of Late Capitalism* (1991), Jameson uses the term “depthlessness” to describe the character of urban centers in the postmodern era, grounding his comments in an analysis of Los

Angeles.³ According to Jameson's thesis, depthlessness becomes manifest in culture as literal flatness, a phenomenon seen, for example, in the reflective surfaces of skyscrapers or in the preponderance of screens and billboards erected in urban centers for the purpose of advertising.

Discussing the Wells Fargo Court in downtown Los Angeles, for instance, Jameson notes,

Nor is this depthlessness merely metaphorical: it can be experienced physically and “literally” by anyone who, mounting what used to be Raymond Chandler's Bunker Hill from the great Chicano markets on Broadway and Fourth Street in downtown Los Angeles, suddenly confronts the great free-standing wall of Wells Fargo Court (Skidmore, Owings and Merrill)—a surface which seems to be unsupported by any volume, or whose putative volume (rectangular? trapezoidal?) is ocularly quite undecidable.⁴

All of this, for Jameson, signifies a move away from the Modernist commitment to interiority that subtended the Existentialist movement in philosophy, and the Abstract Expressionist movement in painting, leaning instead towards a postmodern cynicism. This cynicism is predicated on the assumption that we are no longer able to move beyond thin, superficial manifestations of ideology, or what Jameson calls the “false consciousness” of “multiple surfaces.”⁵ “Our daily life,” Jameson states, “our psychic experience, our cultural languages, are today dominated by categories of space rather than by categories of time, as in the preceding period of high modernism.”⁶

Wedded as Jameson is to the way cultural theory and practice are determined by economic currents, his work excludes (or at least neglects) the possibility that the primary aesthetic symptoms of late capitalism—depthlessness and superficiality—might move beyond the condition of negative symptom or bi-product of an economic situation to assume a more broad-ranging, positive potential in relation to questions of race, sexuality, and gender, all of which are vitally constituted through the manipulation of surfaces and by the way those surfaces are read by others. While depthlessness is, for Jameson, symptomatic of

a general cultural shift towards inauthenticity and, as he notes, “meaninglessness,” an exaggerated investment in surface signals something quite different for the artists included in *Superficiality and Superexcessiveness*. Jameson’s dialectic is a neat one: the Modern era is defined by a focus on interiority, while in the context of Postmodernism this myth is renounced, and depthlessness—the absence of a substantial interior life—assumes primacy. Conceived in opposition to this hard and fast interior/exterior dialectic, this exhibition examines the work of thirteen artists who are variously committed to the notion that meaning is neither out of reach nor absent, but rather inhabits—as code, nuance, and implication—the outer husk of the people and objects that populate our day-to-day lives, remaking superficiality not as a condition to be resisted, but rather one to be analyzed and manipulated. For these artists, surface and substance are not opposed properties, but co-present and co-constitutive.

FETISHISM UNDER THE SUN

The association of Los Angeles art and artists with the condition of superficiality is one with a rich and colorful historiographic record. The most obvious and interesting example, and the one I will emphasize here, is the so-called Finish Fetishist movement, and to a lesser extent, the artists associated with Light and Space. Abundant examples exist, but to illustrate this point, I will draw on two sources occupying opposite ends of the spectrum: popular journalism and academia. In a stock-taking article of sorts, written for the *New York Times* in 1969, critic Grace Glueck offers a snapshot of a reinvigorated Los Angeles art scene that “the New York art world patronizingly admits...has come to deserve its title of the Second Scene.” “One characteristic,” of art made in L.A., she notes, “is an emphasis on craftsmanship and finish, exemplified by the glossy sculpture of Craig Kauffman and John McCracken. It has been noted that the sensuous surfaces, glowing colors and ‘object’ quality of Los Angeles art mirror perfectly the affluence of California life.”

In the course of a few paragraphs, strategically excerpted here, Glueck manages to touch on each of the factors that have dogged the reception of art in Los Angeles: its status as poor stepchild to New York; its preoccupation with craft and finish, and concomitant lack of theoretical sophistication; its emphasis on the sensual and haptic over the intellectual and cerebral; its essential indebtedness to the climate and geography of California; and its complicity with a decadent culture of wealth and consumption. The term affluence in particular signifies strongly, tacitly associating Kauffman and McCracken with the impulse to create “glossy” salable goods for a buying public. Though Glueck’s article goes on to valorize the achievements of West Coast Minimalists and the Light and Space artists, she does so only with the caveats offered above, thus framing those artists as already compromised by leisure and commodity culture.

7 / Grace Glueck, “Los Angeles Regains Vigor as an Art Center,” *New York Times*, May 29, 1969, 42.



fig. 1



fig. 2

/ fig. 1 / Craig Kauffman
 Untitled, 1968
 Acrylic lacquer on vacuum
 formed plastic
 22 x 50 x 12 inches
 Courtesy of the Artist and Frank Lloyd
 Gallery, Private Collection
 / fig. 2 / Craig Kauffman
 Untitled, 1968 (Side view)

/ 8 / Rosalind Krauss, "Overcoming
 the Limits of Matter: On Revising
 Minimalism," *American Art of the
 1960s* (Studies in Modern Art, vol. 1)
 (New York: The Museum of Modern
 Art, 1991), 123. / 9 / Ibid.

Occupying the other end of the discursive spectrum, Rosalind Krauss, revisiting her experience of Minimalism in an essay published in 1991, wrote that she "came to the sixties late, and from out of town."⁸ Looking back with the benefit of hindsight, she is able to identify "another Minimalism" beyond the East Coast iteration of that phenomenon, one grounded not in an investigation of then-unorthodox, industrial materials and the conditions of artistic production, but rather in an concerted investigation of the "expanding, pulsing awareness of the visual process itself."⁹ Though she is alert to the prejudices that quite clearly informed the critical terms used to classify and differentiate the concerns of Minimalists in Los Angeles and New York, she nonetheless draws on an anecdote that encapsulates perfectly the prevailing assumption that the radiant climate of southern California was the conceptual motor for the Finish Fetish and Light and Space Movements. Making a case for Robert Irwin as the rightful heir to the pictorial sublimity of Ad Reinhardt's black squares, she offers the following analysis:

[Reinhardt's legacy] would be lodged in the late 1960s in California. It would be shaped by Robert Irwin's rides into the desert in his shiny Fleetwood convertible, the sun glinting equally off the Cadillac's chrome and the far shimmer of the sand, and Irwin taking the radiance in with, "It's cherry." Years later one can still hear this excitement in Irwin's voice, describing the sunset over the Nevada desert: "There's like a haze of green floating between the pink and orange layers in the sky just above the mountain to my left. The sun

dipped below the horizon about five minutes ago. The base of the mountain is purple already, and some of the canyons cutting into its face have just gone jet black, but this greenish hue—it's not smog, it's light—just seems to be hovering, floating there above the rim of the ridge."¹⁰

Though Irwin's vivid account of the atmospheric effects of a desert sunset illustrates perfectly the well-worn conceit that New York artists were still making objects, while he was "finding phenomena," Krauss's use of this anecdote in the context of a historiographic essay effectively instantiates the stereotype that shiny cars and good weather were two of the most important conceptual lynchpins for L.A. artists.¹¹ Both Krauss and Clueck, an eminent art historian and a prolific popular critic respectively, hew to an essentialist account of art made in Los Angeles, one based on the assumption that the topographic and environmental conditions of the city, and the "affluence" of life in California, in large part determined the character of the work produced there.

As Krauss notes astutely, the critical reception of Minimalism during the 1960s was at odds with the way the artists conceived of their practice: "In the 1960s, even as the artists themselves were making their hostility to what they called 'idealist aesthetics' as clear as humanly possible, Minimalism was being defended by most of its critic supporters on the grounds of this very idealism. It was described as having plunged to the heart of the matter and to have found the crystalline essence of form."¹² No one disavowed this idealist position as vigorously as Robert Irwin: "[My art] starts to challenge the idea of transcendence, which is a very beautiful idea, but basically in our lives there's nothing that's really transcendent."¹³ So while critical accounts relied on the simple visual parity between, for example, an expanse of blue sky over the Pacific Ocean and the ineffable glow of a James Turrell Space Division

/ 10 / Ibid., 124. / 11 / Howard N. Fox makes a similar point in his essay "SoCal Content: The Big Picture," in Catherine Grenier, *Los Angeles 1955–1985: Birth of an Art Capital* (Paris: Editions du Centre Pompidou, 2006), 37.

/ 12 / Ibid., 138. / 13 / Robert Irwin, Barbara Isenberg, "Conversation with Robert Irwin," in Barbara Isenberg, *State of the Arts: California Artists talk about Their Work* (New York: William Morrow, HarperCollins, 2000), 354.



fig. 3

/ fig. 3 / Robert Irwin
Untitled, 1967–1968
Acrylic lacquer on formed acrylic plastic (with central band)
54 inches diameter
Collection Norton Simon Museum
Pasadena, CA
Museum Purchase,
Fellows Acquisition Fund

/ 14 / Catherine Grenier, "Experimental City," *Los Angeles 1955–1985: Birth of an Art Capital* (Paris: Editions du Centre Pompidou, 2006), 19. / 15 / Krauss, 136.

Construction to render a critical reading, West Coast Minimalist practices were always more broadly and subtly indexical than such one-to-one essentialist equations would suggest. According to Catherine Grenier, "The Angeleno artists injected color and luster into their Minimalist sculpture and painting as elements of impurity and seduction. In the work of Billy Al Bengston, for example, Pop Art colors and some of its forms were summoned into the geometrical purity of field and module typical of Minimalism. Like a touch of sex appeal appended to Minimalist Puritanism, color gave the object a quasi-organic dimension, a reminder of the eye's sensual subjugation to the gestalt."¹⁴ Though the most commonly accorded interpretations of Irwin, Turrell, Douglas Wheeler, McCracken, and Kauffman exalt in their formal finesse and ability to set the mind "free of matter,"¹⁵ the artists all identified a more quotidian, terrestrial dimension to their practice that assumed the presence of an embodied spectator, with all the social dimensions such an encounter might imply.

THE TYMPANUM

That slick, hard surfaces and high-key colors could signify beyond their formal extremes was not lost on the English artist David Hockney, who lived in Los Angeles full-time from 1963 to 1968. Though he occupies a space on the formal continuum well removed from Kauffman or Irwin, Hockney invests his depictions of Los Angeles with all the slavish attention to finish one sees in the dense, obdurate surface of a McCracken plank. As Cécile Whiting has noted, "in Los Angeles [Hockney] developed an aesthetic of surfaces...

/ 16 / Cécile Whiting, *Pop L.A.: Art and the City in the 1960s* (Berkeley, Los Angeles, London: University of California Press, 2006), 109.

/ 17 / Valerie Wade, "The Annual David Hockney Interview," *Andy Warhol's Interview* 3 (July 1973), 20.

bringing attention simultaneously to the surface of the canvas and the urban facades of "the city."¹⁶ Hockney left London in the swinging '60s to live in Los Angeles because London was, in his own words, "too straight for me."¹⁷ In Los Angeles he found the kind of open and easy sexual freedom denied a gay man in London, and developed a style of painting to attest to that liberty. He reduced depiction to its very rudiments, rejecting the basic tenets of mimesis—volumetric modeling and conventional perspectival space—in favor of a stubbornly flat paint application. His imagery assumed a forthright, almost crude, graphic quality. Works such as *Peter Getting Out of Nick's Pool* (1966) are not explicit in their treatment of sexuality and desire; they do not record sex acts or even flirtation. Rather, Hockney proposes sexuality as an effect of light and color, and desire as part and parcel of gazing and imagining. These paintings are all superficiality and superexcess (the accumulation of superfluous details). In *Peter Getting Out of Nick's Pool*, the artist's pleasure in his subject is clearly visible in his careful but playful rendering of repeated



fig. 4

- / fig. 4 / David Hockney
Peter Getting Out of Nick's Pool, 1966
 Acrylic on Canvas
 84 x 84 inches
 © David Hockney
- / fig. 5 / Kurt Kauper
Rodrique, 2004
 Oil on birch panel
 31 x 23 3/4 inches
 Collection Jill and Dennis Roach,
 Beverly Hills
- / fig. 6 / Elliott Hundley
Landslide, 2003
 Mixed media on foam core
 5 panels: 84 x 24 inches each,
 84 x 120 inches overall
 Collection Dean Valentine and
 Amy Adelson, Beverly Hills

ripples on the flat surface of the pool, and in his self-consciously primitive modeling of Peter's body as he hauls himself out of the water. Hockney's emphasis on surface, then, is a form of unveiling; it's a way to trace the contours of his own desire in paint, and an invitation to the spectator to commune with him, sharing his sensual pleasure in the surfaces he has crafted. As Whiting notes, "Hockney's surface artifice, so reminiscent of the fashionable flourish with which the artist defined himself in public...engaged mid-twentieth-century modernism with a queer eye."¹⁸ The capriciously embellished, forthrightly flat, superficial surface of these paintings was, for Hockney, the very mark of his subjectivity; in other words, both the form and the content of his work.

In Hockney's work, we see Jameson's "depthlessness" and what John Coplans characterized as "Finish Fetishism" reconciled and harnessed as critical tools, and made to embody a complex, radical subjectivity. The very thinness—the virtual transparency—of his tympanic surfaces binds author and spectator, collapsing interior and exterior, surface and depth into a single gesture. No narrative information is required; the viewer needs only the superficial details to understand the depth of the work. The essential concern of these touchstone



fig. 5

paintings is also the central theme of this exhibition, which is to examine how superficiality and superexcess shape the way we read and interpret the surfaces that surround us, both animate and inanimate. Heirs to the traditions of superficiality and affect variously mined in preceding decades by Hockney and the Finish Fetishists, among others, the artists in *Superficiality and Superexcess* together embody an investment in surfaces as code, speaking through hint, wink, and implication to a range of social conditions and identities—chiefly race, class, gender, and sexuality.

In paintings by Amy Adler, Marcelino Gonçalves, Salomón Huerta, Kurt Kauper and Rebecca Campbell, thin, slick membranes predominate, sealing off the interior world of their subjects and the opaque narrative environments they occupy, yet also disclosing just enough detail to make them legible and ignite the imagination. Kauper's, *Rodrique* (2004), for example, is a precious, devotional painting of a hockey star, rendered in glistening oil that seems to sit atop the birch panel that is the painting's support. Three-quarter bust portraits of athletes are standard cultural fare even in 2009, appearing with monotonous regularity on television and in print, and this painting hews in many respects to those conventions. *Rodrique* is stolid and impassive, very obviously posed, and discloses nothing to the viewer; as his uniform and countenance denote, he is a hockey player and no more. But Kauper's scrupulously rendered portrait—his careful attention to *Rodrique*'s porcelain-like skin, manicured hair, rosebud mouth, and soft eyes—invites a kind of reverence for this hockey



fig. 6

player that exceeds the normative limits of sports fandom, a possibility opened up subtly but decisively by Kauper's technique. The artist's loving treatment of surface in tandem with the ovalar format of this portrait gives the work an intimate, even erotic, quality, made less for the trained eye of the hockey enthusiast than for a rather more desiring one.

Lia Halloran, Elliott Hundley, and Catherine Sullivan, on the other hand, have a more baroque sensibility, trading in profusion, embellishment, and the steady accretion of surface details to produce meaning. Hundley's *Landslide* (2003) is comprised of five vertical panels that reference the planks indelibly associated with the work of John McCracken. However, where McCracken erased all signs of human facture from his work by building up layer upon layer of paint to create dense, impenetrable surfaces that reflect the presence of the viewer but deny the hand of the maker, Hundley works in the opposite direction, inscribing his planks with the unmistakable subjectivity of

the artist. Mindful of the persistent association between the flat, high-key, monochrome aesthetic of West Coast Minimalism and the machismo of surfing and car culture, Hundley introduces to his planks a far broader material vocabulary. Replacing layers of paint with messy webs of pins, fabric, polystyrene and photographic fragments, he emphasizes the capacity of materials and surface to mark non-normative identity.

Finally, Elad Lassry, Blue McRight, Joel Morrison, Tia Pulitzer, and Kori Newkirk expose a range of unexpected subjects to the lustrous, shimmering surfaces of the West Coast



fig. 7

Minimalist tradition, radically expanding the viewer's field of possible associations. Pulitzer's arresting and disquieting work in clay, *It's Not Me, It's You* (2007), shows a lithe, young deer sprawled on a glossy white pedestal. The animal is strangely diminutive—roughly half life-size—and extremely delicate, giving it the appearance of vulnerability, innocence and naivety. Finished with a high-luster automotive lacquer and nail polish, the sculpture also has a fetishistic quality rooted in a historical association with Meissen porcelain collectibles on one hand and the California Finish Fetish tradition on the other. The oddity of these formal decisions is amplified by the fact that this childlike beast is neither fully buck nor doe: the full rack obviously denotes a male, but the animal's coyly crossed hindquarters reveal engorged female genitalia. This camp-celestial, hermaphroditic deer embodies a quiet but insistent investment in sexual difference, the glossy surface elevating Pulitzer's statement to the level of elusory, countercultural icon.

/ fig. 7 / Tia Pulitzer
It's Not Me, It's You, 2007
Clay, automotive finish, MDF, lacquer
24 x 45 x 32 inches (including pedestal)
Collection Sirje and Michael Gold,
Los Angeles

Each of the artists in *Superficiality and Superexcrecence* focuses on what is latent over what is manifest, on implication over demonstration, and on faint whispers over loud, declarative statements, not with the aim of privileging appearance over essence, but rather to suggest that appearance and essence commingle in the surfaces that surround us to generate day-to-day cultural meaning. This model does not rest on the binary of inside and outside posed by Jameson, but insists that such binaries are outmoded and should be dismantled and reworked. Since the 1960s, artists living and working in and around Los Angeles have addressed this project with escalating vigor. This exhibition surveys some of the most provocative recent statements in this arena. In an interview with David Sylvester in 1965,

/ 19 / "Interview with David Sylvester" (1965), John P. O'Neill, ed. *Barnett Newman: Selected Writings and Interviews* (New York: Knopf, 1990), 257–58.

Barnett Newman stated, "I hope that my painting has the impact of giving someone, as it did me, the feeling of...his connection...to others...I think you can only feel others if you have some sense of your own being."¹⁹ The urgency and earnestness of Newman's aspiration emerge from the Existentialist commitment that his work embody the pouring forth of his authentic interior self. While the artists in *Superficiality and Superexcrescence* all depart fundamentally in philosophy and practice from this mid-century model, like Newman their practice is predicated on connection and communion; not a communion of authentic, interior "being," but rather a social transaction that takes place via the most mundane connective tissue that surrounds us every day.

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THE VIEWER
AS
SUPERFICIAL OCCUPIER

KRISTINA NEWHOUSE

THE VIEWER
AS
SUPERFICIAL OCCUPIER

In insisting on a blind spot in critical interpretations of his art...Hockney invited a biographical interpretation of his Los Angeles paintings...[W]e can see both salubrious and deleterious effects in this conflation of the paintings with the artist and place...Some writers, seeing in his representations of Los Angeles only damning stereotypes by a swank artist, questioned his seriousness of purpose... they assumed that the paintings and the artist himself were shallow.¹

In "The Erotics of the Built Environment" in *Pop L.A.: Art and City in the 1960s*, Cécile Whiting describes challenges with which viewers were presented in the abstract, figurative paintings made by David Hockney soon after his arrival in Southern California. Hockney must have been aware of the position in which he was putting his critics. Repeatedly, he resisted a "Pop" label and claimed conscious involvement, "if only peripherally" with the Modernist movement.²⁻³ Moreover, his paintings of the period were conceived utilizing the conventions of mid-20th century abstraction. Indeed, as Whiting describes the formal aspects of these works, she could be talking about any number of painters and paintings of that era:

The acrylic paint applied evenly on the canvas, the unfinished and flattened bodies, the decorative patterns—all bring attention to the canvas as a two-dimensional surface while the framing device of unprimed canvas insists on the paintings' representational status.⁴

/ 1 / Cécile Whiting, "The Erotics of the Built Environment," *Pop L.A.: Art and City in the 1960s* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 2006), 116. / 2 / *Ibid.*, 113. See note 19, 227. / 3 / *Ibid.*, 135. See note 64, 230. / 4 / *Ibid.*, 136.

At first glance, Hockney's paintings must have appeared familiar enough to audiences because of their close adherence to formalist conventions. However, his other creative choices seemingly stopped viewers short. Many simply could not see past his pastel palette, predilection for bourgeois *mise en scène*, and appropriation of titillating imagery of naked young men. Although the expressionist tenets of Modernism were dissipating, they were

still weighty in the early 1960s. Viewers of that era took for granted that they would be presented with an opportunity for empathetic identification. Many could not identify the critical depth of ideas that Hockney was presenting and therefore felt impelled to read transgressions against Modernism into his canvasses.

/ 5 / *The Compact Edition of the Oxford English Dictionary* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1971) 745 (431).

As viewers, when we focus on the exterior of an object in an aesthetically conceived viewing experience, we commonly anticipate that some "interiority" and correspondingly deeper meaning will be revealed to us. Naturally, we wish to discover the object's subject matter, be it commemorative, allegorical, expressionistic, or perceptual. However, often we are after something else as well. Some of the earliest known connotations of the verb "discover" relate to the activity of disclosing or exposing to view that which has been hidden or previously unseen. It also refers to secrets or identities revealed and, hence, to betrayal.⁵ Such nuances comprise the task of interpretation, as we sense and seek to identify the presence of something (or equally significantly, *somebody*) else in an artwork.

/ fig. 8 / David Hockney
Portrait of Nick Wilder, 1966
Acrylic on canvas
72 x 72 inches
© David Hockney



fig. 8

Second generation cognitive scientists and linguists now understand that all cognitive processes are inherently “embodied”—that is, our meaning-making patterns (called “image schemas”) are derived from bodily engagements with our surroundings. Fundamentally, the size, shape and function of our bodies, as well as our physical responses to such phenomena as gravity, inform the metaphors with which we make sense of our perceptions and actions. By utilizing such patterns as “verticality, front-back, right-left, near-far,” we project these patterns onto “people, objects, and space.”⁶

The first and most influential of image schemas is the “center-periphery.” A newborn child must quickly become aware that whatever occupies the “center of the perceptual horizon” is far more critical to survival than that which is peripheral.⁷ Taking cues from all of its sensory modes, the infant develops a cognitive schematic structure consisting of “a focal center surrounded by a horizon that fades off into an indeterminate periphery.”⁸ As the child’s cognitive skills expand, the center-periphery schema provides a framework for establishment of other schematic structures. One such structure is the “container” schema, derived from our experience of body as container. According to linguist George Lakoff and philosopher Mark Johnson:

A container schema has the following structure: an inside, a boundary, and an outside. This is a gestalt structure, in the sense that the parts make no sense without the whole. There is no inside without a boundary and an outside, no outside without a boundary and an inside, no boundaries without sides.⁹

So deeply embedded in cognition that it is summoned without our awareness from the unconscious, the container schema makes use of the body’s experiences of inside and outside to create metaphors and, from them, meaning. It is applied as readily to the development and organization of abstract concepts as it is to cognizance of concrete objects in our environment. Given the immense conceptual overlay between the center-periphery and container schemas, whatever is inside, at the center, is likely to be perceived as being of primary importance. Correspondingly, what is perceived to be at a distance from the center or outside the core boundary—at the surface—may be devalued or even rejected. (Our reaction to an antonymic pairing such as “deep/shallow” makes this point abundantly evident.)

All metaphoric permutations of inside and outside are brought to a viewing experience in which the surface of an art object serves as boundary between it and the outside world. Throughout art history, the surface has displayed varying degrees of permeability and transparency. At times, it has been made to disappear in deference to the illusionary space of representation. At other times, skepticism brought about by perceptual and metaphysical

/ 6 / Mark Johnson, “Perspectives: Meaning and the body,” *New Scientist* online, 12 January 2008, 2638, <http://www.newscientist.com/article/mg19726382.100-perspectives-meaning-and-the-body.htm>. / 7 / Mark Johnson, “Image-Schematic Bases of Meaning,” *RSSI: Semiotic Inquiry*, 1989, 9:1-3, 112. / 8 / Ibid. / 9 / George Lakoff and Mark Johnson, *Philosophy in the Flesh: The Embodied Mind and Its Challenge to Western Thought* (New York: Basic Books, 1999), 32.

failures of naturalism has stoked artists' desire to emphasize the surface's literal presence. Back and forth, the viewer has been invited to see into artwork and then been barricaded at the threshold.

Coincident with conceptions of "modernity" in the 19th century, the surface arose as a popular preoccupation for artists. In *The Painting of Modern Life*, T.J. Clark makes clear that the "notorious history of modernism's concern for 'flatness'" cannot be reduced to a single event or cause.¹⁰ Flatness was made to "stand for something: some particular and substantial set of qualities which took their place in a picture of the world."¹¹ In Clark's assessment, several different and often contradictory agendas were deployed in the period from 1860 to 1918:

...[F]latness was imagined to be some kind of analogue of the "Popular"...
[A painting] was therefore made as plain, workmanlike, and emphatic as the painter could manage...Or flatness could signify modernity, with the surface meant to conjure up the mere two dimensions of posters, labels, fashion prints, and photographs. There were painters who took those same two dimensions, in what might seem a more straightforwardly modernist way, to represent the simple fact of Art, from which other meanings were excluded. But during this period that too was most often an argument about the world and art's relation to it...Painting would replace or displace the Real, accordingly, for reasons having to do with the nature of subjectivity, or city life, or the truths revealed by higher mathematics. And finally, unbrokenness of surface could be seen... as standing for the evenness of seeing itself, the actual form of our knowledge of things.¹²

/ 10 / T.J. Clark, *The Painting of Modern Life: Paris in the Art of Manet and His Followers* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1984), 12.
/ 11 / Ibid., 13. / 12 / Ibid. / 13 / Ibid.

However artists in the extended period of Modernist development made their way to the surface, we know from accounts of the rising avant-garde that flatness was taken as an affront to art's audience. As Clark states succinctly, "Flatness was construed as a barrier put up against the viewer's normal wish to enter a picture and dream, to have it be a space apart from life in which the mind would be free to make its own connections."¹³

While surface remained a priority in Modernist art making after the movement's formative period, its status as a barrier proved to be neither permanent nor insurmountable. In part, this relates to a shift in the production of artistic meaning begun in 19th century Romanticism. Romantic artists consciously embraced an expressive mode of art making, correspondingly invoking inner spirituality as means to defy modernity and the industrial/capitalist way of life.

As defined by Elizabeth Grosz in "Signs, Meaning, and Matter in Abstract Art," an artwork is expressive if it externalizes some "inner feeling, some mental or emotional state."¹⁴ Moreover, an expressive work makes manifest "something that is inherently internal and private to the subject (whether artist, viewer, or both)."¹⁵ It is commonly believed that there is a correspondence between the artwork and the subject's interior; these correspondences, says Grosz, are judged philosophically in terms of "their accuracy or truth" and aesthetically in terms of their "poignancy, style, or artistic sensibility."¹⁶

As Modernism fluctuated between dispassionate formalist and emotive expressionist poles during its expansion into the 20th century, viewers were allowed lesser or greater degrees of access to an art object's interior. In his influential essay, "Notes on Surface: Toward a Genealogy of Flatness," David Joselit examines critical junctures where the terms of surface have been renegotiated. He focuses first upon the effect of "flattening out" of interiority that particularly characterizes formalist Modernism as expounded by Clement Greenberg.¹⁷ To make abstract paintings more fully self-referential, Greenberg believed any vestige of illusionist space had to be utterly denied. This would be accomplished by a compression of optical depth and lateral expansion of the picture plane to monumental scale. The kind of flatness that Greenberg advocated marked a "transformation in spectatorship in which mimetic identification with the picture is displaced by the private kinesthetic experience of the viewer."¹⁸

/ 14 / Elizabeth Grosz, "Signs, Meaning, and Matter in Abstract Art," *Cadences: Icon and Abstraction in Context*, exhibition catalogue (New York: New Museum of Contemporary Art, 1991), 49. / 15 / Ibid. / 16 / Ibid., 50. / 17 / David Joselit, "Notes on Surface: Toward a Genealogy of Flatness," *Art History*, March 2000, 23:1. / 18 / Ibid., 20. / 19 / Ibid. / 20 / Ibid., 22. / 21 / Ibid.

In Joselit's reading, deep down Greenberg understood that he could not entirely banish viewers' desire for an experience of a painting's interiority. This can be parsed from the various strategies developed over time by Greenberg in which "depth" is "encoded, displaced, or signified within the shallow surface."¹⁹ In part, this encoding was satisfactorily achieved by a variety of transference in which optical flatness would be validated by "psychological depth."²⁰ For abstraction to gain legitimacy, the unconscious of artists such as Jackson Pollock had to be "mortgaged to form."²¹

In the second half of his essay, Joselit addresses subsequent decades in which the universalizing assumptions inherent within Modernism became ripe for criticism. Interestingly, rather than being rejected outright, the idea of flattened psychological depth—assigned to the artist but encoded in the shallow surfaces of the artwork—seems to have been carried over from late Modernism to Postmodernism. The ways in which it was expressed, however, were radically different. Joselit cites the body prints of David Hammons and cut paper silhouettes of Kara Walker to reveal how, for some artists, identity can be

flattened into a "culturally conditioned play of stereotype."²² Joselit goes on to explain how a reliance on stereotype, the "repetition and re-framing of normative images" that came to characterize early Postmodernism, could be "regularly regarded as political acts—as subversion."²³

Drawing upon themes from political theory, Joselit brings attention to an understanding of identity politics as being "lateral in that it arises from a differential economy of coexisting subject positions rather than emerging from an essential human depth."²⁴ To his mind, this "shift from a model of subjectivity founded in interiority to one in which the self is constituted through a play of surfaces" results in what Joselit designates as "psychological flatness."²⁵ Certainly, Hockney's subversive figurative paintings of the 1960s—abstracted, visually compressed, and "out," but lacking any semblance of emotional depth in its subjects that might redeem them from stereotyping—could be interpreted as an early manifestation of this tendency.

During the late-20th-century period in which Joselit was developing his "genealogy of flatness," other thinkers were re-assessing the surface in art. Some borrowed terms from the doctrine of Structuralism in which an artistic image was assigned the same position as the linguistic "sign"—that is, a representative image, icon, or word.²⁶ (Tellingly, one semiotician, Kyong Liong Kim, refers to the sign as the "surface or skin" of reality.)²⁷ Underlying the sign is a two-part framework of language (the signifier) and what it purports

to embody (the signified). Post-structuralist critics pointed to a gap between the signifier and signified where meaning can fail. Under such conditions, signs break free of their moorings and are set adrift in culture, where they become vulnerable to perversion or even mutation. While beyond the scope of this essay, it is important to note here how this epistemological "loss of face" was cause for celebration in some artists, who utilized it to critique or play with the conventions of identity and cultural systems.

As a specific attribute of Postmodernism identified by Joselit, among others, a decade ago or more, flattening has now been so overly analyzed that it is arguably passé as an active concern for artistic engagement. Nonetheless, the affect of "psychological flatness" is still found in some contemporary artworks, although the meaning of its adoption by newer generations of artists has most certainly shifted. The first flush of social or political critique, on one end of the continuum, and nihilism on the other, appears to have drained away entirely from artworks, while the features of the surface itself remain impassive.

/ 22 / Ibid., 20. / 23 / Ibid., 29.
/ 24 / Ibid., 32. / 25 / Ibid.
/ 26 / Marcel Danesi, "Introduction: Thomas A. Sebeok and the Science of Signs" in Thomas A Sebeok, *Signs: An Introduction to Semiotics* (Toronto and Buffalo: University of Toronto Press, 1994), xii. / 27 / Kyong Liong Kim, *Caged in Our Own Signs: A Book About Semiotics* (Advances in Discourse Processes, v. 55) (Norwood: Ablex Publishing, 1996), 108.

Having come of age, as it were, under the conditions of the Post-structuralist “crisis of the image/sign,” perhaps the artists who make such works today are positioned to accept rather than resist their circumstances. It may well be that they have other priorities. One of the acknowledged (yet partially unintended) outcomes of Postmodernist thought has been a breaking wide open of formal constraints that previously contained artistic genres. Martha Buskirk has charted this event in *The Contingent Object of Contemporary Art*. The historian explains:

The daunting situation faced by the artist of the early twenty-first century is one in which all choices seem possible. If art from the early phase of postmodernism in the 1960s and 1970s could still be understood according to certain movements and categories, a second phase predominant in the 1980s and 1990s has been characterized by artists who have felt free to pick and choose among the entire range of possibilities established since the late 1950s, pulling apart and recombining elements associated with many different movements.²⁸

Circumstances described by Buskirk have continued relevance today. Contemporary appropriations, however, do not stop at choices of media, execution, or subject matter. One may infer that philosophical ideas underlying various art movements are all up for grabs again as well.

/ 28 / Martha Buskirk, *The Contingent Object of Contemporary Art* (Cambridge and London: Massachusetts Institute of Technology Press, 2003), 11.
/ 29 / *The Compact Edition of the Oxford English Dictionary*, 1742 (230).
/ 30 / *Ibid.*, 1743 (231).

One such set of ideas has to do with materialism. The term delineates a philosophical belief that phenomena of consciousness and will are wholly due to the operation of material agencies—and along with this assumption comes the rejection of spiritual causes that it implies.²⁹ Its secondary meaning is well known in late capitalist society, having to do with a devotion to material needs or desires, to the point of neglecting spiritual matters.³⁰ Diminished fascination with materialism of the second sort may have given over to the embrace of materialism of the first sort.

Admittedly, new and different containers for the ideas embodied in contemporary artwork may have yet to be fully formed by consensus. Nonetheless, among younger artists one often finds a marked trust in materials. A revalorization of the strategies of the most literal and materialist of the late Modernists—the Minimalists—can also be seen. (In this respect, it does not seem happenstance that two artists in *Superficiality and Superexcess* make direct quotations of Minimalist works.)

For much of its development and early history, Minimalism was an outcast in the realm of Modernism. Its first proponents, particularly Donald Judd, stood accused of taking

Clement Greenberg's edict for flattening too far. In his essay "The Crux of Minimalism," Hal Foster attributes Judd's violation of the understood boundaries between painting and sculpture to being a case of "excessive devotion" to formalism. Judd processed misgivings held by Greenberg about some paintings by concluding that the flat, rectangular format of painting—its "definitional essence"—was a "conventional limit, literally a frame to exceed."³¹ As Foster puts it, "...Judd reads the putatively Greenbergian call for an objective painting so literally as to exceed painting altogether in the creation of objects."³²

/ 31 / Hal Foster, "The Crux of Minimalism," *The Return of the Real* (Cambridge and London: Massachusetts Institute of Technology Press, 1996), 44. / 32 / Ibid. / 33 / See David Clarke, "The Gaze and the Glance: Competing Understandings of Visuality in the Theory and Practice of Late Modernist Art," *Art History*, March 1992, 15:1, 86-87. / 34 / While dismissing her dualistic approach as itself "idealist," Foster presents a notion of "opaqueness" as promulgated by Rosalind Krauss: when a work is materialist, its meaning is opaque, "carried on the surface," whereas the meaning of idealist works purports to be "transparent to its structure." See Foster, 243. / 35 / Minimalists renounced the "anthropomorphic gestures" of Modernist artwork, although they stood accused by Michael Fried of exactly that in "Art and Objecthood." To W. J. Thomas Mitchell, the most interesting thing about the debate is not "which side is right, but why the charge of anthropomorphism was so easily available to both sides." See W. J. Thomas Mitchell, *What Do Pictures Want? The Lives and Loves of Images* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2005), 149. / 36 / *The Compact Edition of the Oxford English Dictionary*, 3160 (178). / 37 / Michael Fried, "Art and Objecthood," *Aesthetics Today*, revised edition, ed. Morris Philipson and Paul J. Gudel (New York and Scarborough: New American Library, 1980), 218. / 38 / Ibid. / 39 / Ibid., 222. / 40 / Briony Fer, "Objects Beyond Objecthood" in Jason Gaiger and Paul Wood, ed., *Art of the Twentieth Century: A Reader* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2003), 280. / 41 / Ibid. / 42 / Fried, 222.

In material-oriented and volumetric artworks that he called "Specific Objects" rather than sculpture, Judd demanded even more extreme compression of the shallow surface mandated by Greenberg—so much so that it became simultaneously more "skin-like"³³ and "opaque."³⁴ Although Judd would have rebutted such a characterization,³⁵ the exterior boundaries of his artwork can be understood as becoming like superficies, that is, the outermost part of the body "apparent to the eye."³⁶ In such a thin layer, little room for even the most "flattened out" of subjects would be available.

Perhaps Minimalism's appeal to younger artists has to do with its insistence upon an articulation of the superficies, which can be layered quite snugly over what might be a familiar understanding about the "skin-like" image/sign relation of Postmodernism. But there is potentially something else.

For art critic Michael Fried, the Minimalist artwork is uncomfortably close to "non-art," manifesting what he calls "objecthood."³⁷ In his influential essay, "Art and Objecthood," he scoffs at the idea that a status of objecthood "alone can, in the present circumstances, secure something's identity."³⁸ Moreover, in noting that the "apparent hollowness of most literalist work" led to an assumption that they are possessed of "an inside," he charged they are "almost blatantly anthropomorphic."³⁹ In the 1960s, anthropomorphism was a commonly used term signifying the "bodily empathies and identifications" typically associated with sculpture.⁴⁰ According to art historian Briony Fer, in Fried's reading of Minimalist objects, it seems he was less concerned with the "residual connotations of bodily form" than in the "looming presence of objects which appear as actors might on a stage."⁴¹ Within this context of "objects as actors" Fried complains, "It is, as numerous commentators have remarked approvingly, as though the work in question has an inner, even secret, life."⁴²

At issue here is, according to W. J. Thomas Mitchell in *What Do Pictures Want? The Lives and Loves of Images*, that the “personified” Minimalist object occasions “deep anxiety and disavowal in aesthetics.”⁴³ Mitchell makes the point, “We want works of art to have ‘lives of their own,’ but we also want to contain and regulate that life, to avoid taking it literally.”⁴⁴ It is in the difficulty of “containing the lives of images” that Mitchell encounters the “object as Other.”⁴⁵ He is certainly not alone, however, in making this observation. In “Art Among the Objects,” Rudolf Arnheim discusses the “Other-like” behavior of objects. While he calls manmade things, and art in particular, the “most obedient,”⁴⁶ Arnheim notes:

Although we can influence the percepts of objects by handling them or by changing our position in relation to them, we soon learn that they have an obstinacy of their own. They cling to their place or move at their own initiative. It is the recalcitrance of the perceptual object's behavior that makes us experience the world as existing independently of ourselves.⁴⁷

We notice objects when they do not behave as anticipated—and it is at this point that “objects” often become “things.” In the following observations about the idea of “things,” literary critic Bill Brown leads us back to the present discussion about the expectations that we hold about the interiority and meaning of objects:

We look through objects because there are codes by which our interpretive attention makes them meaningful, because there is a discourse of objectivity that allows us to use them as facts. A *thing*, in contrast, can hardly function as a window. We begin to confront the thingness of objects when they stop working for us: when the drill breaks, when the car stalls, when the windows get filthy, when their flow within the circuits of production and distribution, consumption and exhibition, has been arrested, however momentarily.⁴⁸

As observed by another literary critic, John Plotz, the source of problems we have with things is not actually located in the thing itself but is rather at the “vexed boundary between self and world, where we are forced to articulate what kind of knowledge about the world exists only within people and what knowledge is actually latent in the world, waiting to be brought out.”⁴⁹ It is here also that we are confronted with deeply held assumptions about the activity of identification and of identity as a construct. To return to the “genealogy of flatness,” Joselit describes this juncture in light of the critical term “visuality,” which refers to “articulations of visual form with extra-aesthetic determinants such as cultural institutions and psychic formations.”⁵⁰ Visuality is “neither arbitrary nor inevitable,” however it does suggest that any approach to a viewing experience involves a “historically specific link between form and emotion.”⁵¹ Similarly, Brown comments, “however materially stable objects may seem, they are, let us say, different things in different scenes.”⁵²

/ 43 / Mitchell, 149. / 44 / Ibid.
/ 45 / Ibid. / 46 / Rudolf Arnheim, “Art Among the Objects,” *To the Rescue of Art: Twenty-Six Essays* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1992), 8–9. / 47 / Arnheim, 8.
/ 48 / Bill Brown, “Thing Theory,” *Things*, ed. Bill Brown (Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 2004), 4. / 49 / John Plotz, “Can the Sofa Speak? A Look at Thing Theory,” *Criticism*, Winter 2005, 47:1, 114.
/ 50 / Joselit, 22. / 51 / Ibid., 23.
/ 52 / Brown, 9.

Contemporary artists are well aware of an unbridgeable gap between theoretical conceptions of the subject in art and more conventional expectations for viewing held by the audience and held over from expressive, Modernist periods of art making. Almost without exception, it comes to bear in any public encounter with an art object. The yearning of viewers to discover and identify/*identify with* some essence is deeply embedded and resistant to change.

With an understanding that objects are “different things in different scenes,” artists may continue to utilize the kinds of strategies described by Joselit in which notions of the “self” are constituted through “a play of surfaces” within an artwork. Such an approach sustains opportunity for subversion and potentially allows for a recuperative redefinition of the terms of “inside” and “outside.” Perhaps artists intend for us to read identity as “image” resting on the surface of an object. What is more, the objects themselves are artistically conceived to induce awareness of their material construct and constraints. Identity then should be construed as one of many available and coexisting subject positions in the viewing encounter.

A reading of surface in light of visibility serves to reveal the complexity and contradictions of the circumstances in which art is now being made. By acknowledging differing subject positions within the viewing encounter, we allow the object to have a life of its own, distinct from the subjectivity of its maker. Moreover, this reading makes allowances too for artists—regardless of their stance towards the issue of identity, political or otherwise—to separate from the object and to have their own “secret inner lives” to which viewers are not necessarily privy.

Cognitively speaking, we cannot help but look for the artist as subject at the center of a contemporary art object—even when the artwork is patently characterized (literally or conceptually) as being “flat,” “glossy,” “skin-like,” “opaque,” or otherwise “superficially” disposed. However, by now we should understand that our desire shall most likely be thwarted. In our search for the artist, we instead encounter the object. In its more arcane usage, the term “superficial” is related to the matter of property rights, most particularly in relation to a tenant’s right to “enjoy” the surface of land. In this scenario, we start out any informed engagement with an art object from such a similarly compromised position. Our relationship to an artwork cannot be more than superficial, as we are enjoined by contemporary conventions to occupy its surfaces only. We would do well to remember that an art object’s recesses are not our territory to claim. Meaning may be enjoyed in such an encounter but is not to be mastered or possessed.

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JOHN C. WELCHMAN

UNCANNY VECTORS (AT WAARP SPEED)

Surfaces and their imbrication in histories and theories of both art and the wider culture have been over-elaborated—and probably over-valorized—in the Modernist tradition and the criticism that sustained it; and then hard done by in aspects of the Postmodern reaction, where they lost out to various conceptions of social depth and counter-universalist thickness. Conversely, they were once again overemphasized—and probably miscomprehended—in that strand of poststructuralist reckoning routed through the writings of Jean Baudrillard with which the 1980s New York art world, in particular, took up so avidly. On the one hand, then, theories of form were relentlessly associated with effects of the surface that were, in the pejorative sense, superficial; on the other hand surfaces, smooth spaces, flatness as a dispensation—and their ultra-refracted, mirror-like declensions—became emblematic of the remorseless dependence of social relations, burgeoning techno-culture and even public life on the pervasively thin membranes of an almost self-generating image culture. While the Modernist move to and through the surfaces of material practices, whether their medium was language, paint or other re-purposed matter, was clearly a radical gesture when measured against the academicizing aesthetics of the early 19th century, the clamorous affirmation of surface articulation, set in the twin contexts of autonomy and self-reference, was almost from the start overwhelmed by the depthless attenuation it championed.

One of central propositions of Postmodernism contends that “the milieux into which our postmodern bodies are then inserted can best be described through the concept of superficiality. In buildings, commodities, the arts, and the very practice of everyday life, not depths but surfaces dominate; surfaces that, unlike the mass-bounding architecture of Mies [van der Rohe] and Le Corbusier, the solid chrome hulk of the Cadillac, the seductive dream-scapes of painterly Surrealism, the depth-portending style of the Joycean or

Proustian sentence, or the fluvial immensity of the Parisian boulevard, have peeled free from their cumbersome depths.”¹ Prompted by the Potemkin megalopolis of Los Angeles

/1 / Julian Murphet, “Postmodernism and Space” *The Cambridge Companion to Postmodernism*, ed. Steven Connor (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), 118. /2 / *Ibid.*, 119, 46.

itself, Frederic Jameson emerges as the leading prophet of such impenetrable refractions, “present[ing] spatial superficiality as an ineluctable property of all culture today”; while the whole “world become[s] image, pervaded by its own superficiality and thus rendered meaningless.”²

I want to advance another argument here, founded on a non-polarizing re-arbitration of the relations between surface and depth (in which most of the artists in this exhibition participate) that does not depend on critical revisionism of the concept of “surface” any more than it cheerleads some revivalist clamor for the refurbishment of the superficial. What is center stage for the younger Los Angeles artists in the present exhibition is the question of their negotiation with surface as it is already supplied with various intimations of depth, so that what they make and the major decisions informing their processes are unfathomable outside of a dialectic between the skin or the first term of visibility (or tactility), and the materials and conditions of internality. For them the shape and structure of surfaces are already indicative of the properties that lie below them; or, they are not always or necessarily separate from the pressures and formats of the “underneath.” Surface is thus supplied with thickness, and depth with a crucial dimension of the thin.

Although the term has endured a slide into the pejorative, the shift in the address to the surface should not be aligned with some general rehabilitation of the superficial. What interests me here are situations in which constructs of surface and superficiality are worked through and within their antitheses, beginning with a number of non-canonical and counter-cultural formations proposed during the Modern period and re-reflected thereafter. Paul Valéry makes a series of annotations in the *Cahiers (Notebooks)* that furnish one point of commencement for a para-existential reflection on the skin, substance and depth of the human body and its analogues with linguistic and other experience that was crucial to mid-20th-century phenomenology: “Man is man only on his surface. Lift off the skin, dissect; here the machinery begins. And soon you lose your bearings in an inexplicable substance, foreign to all you know and yet the basic stuff of the man you are dissecting. It’s the same thing with your desires, your feelings, and your thought. The familiarity and the human aspects of these things vanish on examination. And when, after lifting off the

/3 / Paul Valéry, *Cahiers (Notebooks)*, cited by Paul Kaiser in “On the Example Set by Paul Valéry,” *The OpenEnded Group*, November 2008, <http://www.openendedgroup.com/index.php/2008/11/24/valery>

skin of language, I try to look beneath it, what I see bewilders me.”³ While Valéry defines the human body through the construction of its surfaces, and conjures up a scene of radical dispersal when corporeal (or linguistic) skins are invaded by consciousness or subject to examination, for Maurice Merleau-

Ponty and others the physical surface of the body as it is laid open to the world constitutes a privileged site “where self meets what is other than self”—even though the “surface body” is continually subject to certain forms of perceptual “self-effacement.”⁴

More recent inflections of the complex relation between surface and depth, and the critical modifications of the former term they often embrace, can be found in accounts of fashion and identity, especially those formed in relation to non-Western contexts, which contend against the idea, advanced even in aspects of cultural studies, “that a preoccupation with transient self-presentation is somehow an expression of [a] superficiality” symptomatic of “a loss of authenticity under the conditions of late-capitalism.” This “new superficiality” resists the derogatory association of women with cosmetic and costumed surfaces; points to ethnic hair styles as sites in which social symbolizations come to “appear as the more profound the more [their] superficiality as aesthetic is granted”; and argues through the implications of a situation in which “turning oneself into an object for display has no connotations of superficiality.”⁵ In another context, the critical work of Jacques Rancière is based in part on a refusal of the false dichotomies between structural surfaces and underlying depth, as proposed for the operationality of language by Ferdinand de Saussure and later proponents of structuralist linguistics.⁶

/ 4 / Drew Leder, *The Absent Body* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1990), 11, 25. / 5 / Jonathan Friedman, *Fashion and Self-fashioning: Consumption and Identity* (New York and London: Routledge, 1994), 18, 71, 83, 91. Reference points for Postmodern theories that fetishize the surface include Doug Harvey (1989) and Frederic Jameson (1991). / 6 / See e.g. Luka Arsenjuk, “On Jacques Rancière,” *Eurozine*, 1 March, 2007; <http://hydrarchy.blogspot.com/2008/05/on-jacques-ranciere.html>. See also, Jacques Rancière, *Disagreement: Politics and Philosophy*, trans. Julie Rose (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1999).

To be effective—and radical—this reaffirmation of the surface has to engage with the more polarizing models it displaces, and be made known through them. The surface effects of language and other material practices are reconnected to social articulation not by a gesture of revisionist assertion, but through the various processes, pressures and releases involved in working back to the surface. What appears on the surface bears not just the impress of what lies below it, but is actually defined by the movements of signification and materials for which it is the visible culmination. The surface, then, is not just a location on which we might search for symptomatic interiority—as with one of the medical engagements with the human skin, or the specious, reflexive moralism of physiognomy. Instead, the conditions of internality are co-present in the surface, as part of its constitution and becoming.

Looking to the art world for some indication of where this turn commenced, we could point to the photographs of Cindy Sherman, which submit the formation of costumed selfhood to a *mise-en-abîme* of situational variegation. But the masquerade of continuously deferred self-identity to which her photographs give rise is predicated on a perverse form of authorial continuity, as she is both subject and producer, the taker and the taken. Social

and sexual difference thicken here only on the surface of the costumes she temporarily adopts, so that their social identifications are deferred to the constructing consciousness of the viewer, rather than produced in dialogue with interior pressures. In the contemporary photographic practice of James Welling, however, we can discern a more directed intervention in the question of the surface, prompted by the artist's interest in the relational fields opened up between photograph and object, flatness and palpability, and technology and apparatus. This is especially apparent in the photographs he made in the later 1970s and 1980s of things that are already predisposed towards flatness, and, thus, as it were, largely constituted by surfaces. As Walter Benn Michaels noted in a catalogue essay that addressed these concerns quite precisely, while "all photographs of objects are photographs of the

/ 7 / Walter Benn Michaels, "The Photographic Surface," *James Welling: Photographs 1977-90* (Berne: Kunsthalle, 1990), 104.
/ 8 / Ibid.

surfaces of those objects...many of the objects Welling photographs—aluminum foil, a piece of cloth, paper—not only (like all objects) have surfaces but also (unlike most objects) consist mainly of the surfaces they have."⁷ The point underlined by Welling's work is not that the end product of the photograph simply replicates the intrinsic thinness of a sheet of paper, for example, so

that photography and its subject share a structural similarity. Instead, the photograph and object photographed share a certain kind material convergence that combines with formal non-resemblance. As Benn Michaels puts it: "Even when the objects photographed most resemble the photograph itself (in pictures of paper, for example) their appearance in the photograph doesn't at all resemble the photograph itself. The foil is crumpled in a way that the photograph isn't; the cloth is folded and the paper is bent or curved."⁸

/ fig 9 / James Welling
Wayfarer B80, 1980
Vintage gelatin silver print mounted
on archival paper
3 7/8 x 4 3/4 inches
Courtesy David Zwirner, New York



fig. 9

What Welling does with these photographs is, in effect, to locate—and reflect upon—a maximum aperture for the move to and from the object of representation. Even though he takes up with flat objects and subjects them to thin representation, Welling underscores the dissident “thingness” of paper or foil, the pressures exerted in and on them that result in striations, crinkles and curvature. His images point to how they are uplifted into a dissent from flatness and the way that this becomes visible at the confluence of two surfaces—the object’s and photograph’s. Of course, the limit-term for all this is the photographic process itself. Welling is mobilizing a technology that has effectively vanquished the notion of the handmade original and which, according to standard Postmodernist accounts, at the same time supplies that infinitely profligate data-bank for the “image-world” through which social superficiality is conducted. It is for this reason, in large part, that the preferred media for the artists in this exhibition is not photography, but objects and materials themselves.

The sculptures of Joel Morrison demonstrate most clearly, perhaps, how and why this shift to the object is necessary, and at the same time how it would have been almost impossible without digesting and recasting the lessons of Postmodern photography. Both Welling and Morrison work with everyday found objects, and both are concerned not just with their representation but the impingement of the objects they take or appropriate into the surface of the work that results. For Morrison, however, the scene of this permissive yet recalcitrant encroachment is pluralized (by virtue of his recourse to an assemblage of different objects), literalized (we actually bear witness to the stretching of the surface by the various volumes that lie beneath it), and reflexively allegorized (the corrugation and disturbance of his surfaces are invested with socially—and often humorously—charged commentary on possible points of origin for their own emergence). In a recent work, *I Still Thoroughly Enjoy Living Inside the Great Satan* (2008) (not in the exhibition), Morrison uses the darkly metaphoric humor of the title to open up a relay of relational exchanges between the inside and the outside of his sculpture, which declares its existence as a suggestively irruptive object at the interface of various material and imaginative projections. The title itself is deliciously, almost deliriously, suggestive. The “I” that leads it might be the artist himself, or some surrogate; or it could be a projection of the pseudo-subjective interiority of the piece it governs. But whoever it is announces the sheer pleasure derived from a type of interior “living” whose location is both shocking and absurd, for the enjoyable dwelling place of this speculative subject is “inside the Great Satan.” Every detail of the titular phrase is telling, for by dropping in the adverbial “still” we are reminded of the process, duration and continuity of this declaration of pleasurable in-dwelling. Morrison has fused both historical and contemporary references, along with the unstable alliance between good and evil on to which they open, into a sculptural disquisition on the fate of being swallowed,

/ fig. 10 / Joel Morrison
*I Still Thoroughly Enjoy Living Inside
the Great Satan*, 2008
Fiberglas and car paint over
found objects
96 x 48 x 40 inches



fig. 10

digested, or consumed by the colossal embrace of temptation. The found objects bound up in, suffocated by, and protruding through the indented Fiberglas surface painted with car paint thus become engorged with unknowable meanings in a process of contrarian enfabulation.

While deliberately exaggerated in *The Great Satan*, most of Morrison's work is founded on an analogous dialectic, activated by similar rounds of desire and temptation, between shape, form and allusive internality. In both *Rhine River Thought Bubble* (2004) and *Thunderbird Blue Bird (A Head)* (2002), the roughly spherical shape of the sculptural masses allude to the volumes of the human head, and can thus be read, in the first instance, as a detached enclosure housing thought, and in the second, as a cranial superstructure—though clearly a bird brain. By proffering these allusions, Morrison addresses one of the foremost discourses purporting to regulate the relation between exterior form and internal disposition: physiognomy. From its establishment in the ancient and classical

worlds, when it was allied to practices of divination and cosmological reckoning in which the features of the face, like the lines on the palm of the hand, were counted as divine or astral inscriptions, through to its heyday as a pseudo-science in the aftermath of its greatest promulgator, Johann Caspar Lavater (1741–1801) in the 18th and 19th centuries, physiognomy became a privileged methodology for the deduction of moral disposition and characterological worth by measuring and interpreting the shape and surface configuration of the face. In phrenology the technique was even more literal (and outlandish), for here the bumps and protrusions on the surface of the skull were held to correlate with pressures arriving from various seats of the emotions read from a sectorial map of the human brain—jealousy might be above the left ear, loyalty in the center of the forehead and so on, ad absurdum. Lampooned by Honoré Daumier in a caricature captioned “Le cranoscope-phrénologistocope,” published in *Le Charivari* (March 14, 1836), and roundly parodied by Gustave Flaubert in his unfinished satirical novel *Bouvard et Pécuchet* (1881), these protrusions are the palpable tokens of superexcrecence raised to a flash point of hermeneutic fantasy.

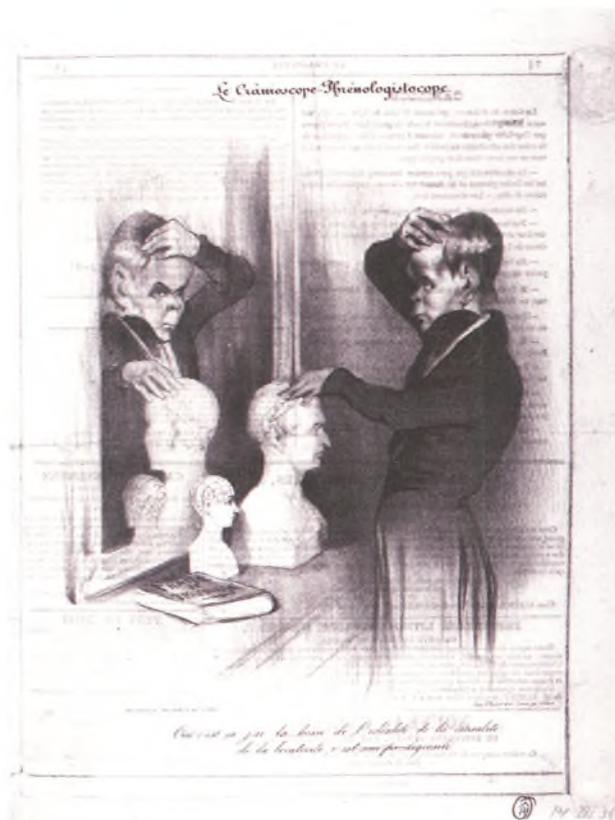


fig. 12

/ fig. 12 / Honoré Daumier
*Le Cranoscope-
 Phrénologistocope*, 1836
 Published in *Le Charivari*
 (March 14, 1836)
 Robert D. Farber University Archives
 & Special Collections Department,
 Brandeis University
 / fig. 13 / Rebecca Campbell
Salt Palace, 2005
 Oil on canvas
 96 x 144 inches
 Private collection, Courtesy
 LA Louver, Venice, CA

/ 9 / Karl Marx, Friedrich Engels,
*Capital: A Critique of Political
Economy (Das Kapital)*,
Vol. III (London: Lawrence &
Wishart, 1974), 797.

Karl Marx pointed out in *Das Kapital* that “all science would be superfluous if the outward appearance and the essence of things directly coincided.”⁹ We might add that art—in some of its formulations at least—might perish too were this coincidence ever observed—or rather that it already has. Two of the most enduring aesthetic regimens—realism and formalism—worked to promote such continuity. Realism—or, better, naturalism—championed the overlay and matching of fastidious detail and fidelity of design with the object or subject represented; formalism advanced the correspondence between the material constituents of an aesthetic practice (for painting, color, shape, texture, framing, etc.) with the signifying outcome of the work. Morrison, however, has left these old-order debates in his wake, at the same time trumping the Postmodern articulations which largely replaced them. In the two works in the exhibition, he has created what amounts to a meta-commentary on the set-up and outcomes of physiognomic accountancy. For while the head is made over as a “thunderbird” in one—as that which contains and gives rise to an ever-rumbling, sky-bound discourse, the other addresses the very action of projecting inner thought onto the outside of the body, where the unseen can be read by the erstwhile unknowing. Although word balloons containing speech emanating from protagonists first appeared in political graphics in the 18th century, the “thought bubble” encapsulates the response of twentieth century, popular graphic culture to the impingement of unconscious or interiorized psychic processes into the external world, serving at the same time as a highly effective vehicle for complicating the plot and action of adventure, detective, superhero or potboiler narratives. In the Western comic tradition, the thought bubble is conventionally formed in a cloud-like shape with a “tail” of incrementally smaller circles descending to the figure whose thoughts are rendered. The resultant puffy shape has become one of the most iterated and recognizable forms of biomorphic representation in the Modern era; the allusions to cloud morphology it bears connect both the form of the device and its normally invisible contents back to the domain of the supernatural and the ultra-mutable.

For Rebecca Campbell, the troublesome three-ply strata of substructure, surface and protrusion are reordered at the intersection of personal history, body image and emotional

projection. *Salt Palace* (2005) from the series “Crush” takes us to the shifting center of these overlays, as we look from a raking, low angle at the back of a young girl in shorts and a pink camisole standing on the deck of a generic, ‘60s-style house, who is surveyed in turn by a perspectively diminished male figure leaning on the rails of an upstairs balcony. Genealogically, this painting glimpses unmistakably at *Sugar House* (2002), with its bumblebee—the state emblem of the



fig. 13

artist's native Utah—trapped under a glass dome, which featured in her solo exhibition *Thin Skin* at LA Louver in Venice, California. For Campbell, the rapacious vulnerability of adolescent life couples with a haunting relinquishment of the Mormonism that pervaded and distorted her everyday world for nearly two decades. She transforms the aftermath of this experience into an enigmatic game of consequences played out in a menacingly reflective hall of mirrors. In an interview, Campbell points to the constellation of effects—pictorial, social, personal, literal and metaphoric—that converge in the orientation of her work toward experiences that are skin-like and purportedly superficial. “If a person has a thin skin,” she suggests, “it is assumed that they thereby have little protection from the outside world. Somehow the skin doesn’t have a tight enough weave to keep things on the outside from getting inside. I am curious about this transformation from boundary to membrane where things liquefy—the experience of saturation.”¹⁰ Surface and excrescence are locked together in this challenging formulation, so that their meeting point—and mutual dissolve—gives rise to a kind of experiential liquefaction in which poignant events, histories, and memories flow into one another, suddenly filling up the reservoir of sensation to the point of saturation. The resultant super-saturation arises, then, when the gap between surface and excrescence is reduced to a minimum, when inside and outside, surface and depth, cleave together through their mutual permeability. Campbell's paintings address the traumatic site of this conjunction in adolescence, at that moment when the sprouting physical excrescences of the body over-determine the subject's relation to past and present, and when the submerged symbolic operating systems through which subjects are produced (including complex “programs” such as Mormonism or patriarchy) are questioned, relinquished or affirmed, sublimated or liquefied. What results is a new compound of fear and liberation, loss and perseverance, and a concomitant transformation of thinness (both epidermal and existential) from inordinate vulnerability to some form of emergent self-possession.

/ 10 / Rebecca Campbell, cited in Jody Zellen, “Rebecca Campbell: L.A. Louver Gallery,” *Art Press*, No. 289, April 2003.

While sharing Campbell's signal preoccupation with female adolescence, Amy Adler intensifies the autobiographical subtext by generating her figures from the shape and features of her younger selves (and others who resemble her). At the same time, she offers an outlet into social abstraction, as she interrogates the recursive layering between her personal archive—and former body—and the genres of representation, especially drawing and photography, through which they are regenerated and reviewed. Extending Adler's investigation into the construction of adolescent sexualities inaugurated with *The Problem Child* (1998), the Cibachrome photographs in the exhibition, *Once In Love With Amy* (1997) and *Centerfold #3* (2003), also evidence a subtle yet critical dialogue with the development of Postmodern appropriation with which Adler has been engaged from the very beginning

/ fig. 14 / Amy Adler
Centerfold #3, 2003
 Cibachrome on aluminum
 48 x 68 inches
 Collection David Stewart,
 Los Angeles



fig. 14

/ fig. 15 / Kurt Kauper
Diva Fiction #7, 1998
 Oil on birch panel
 70 x 54 inches
 Collection Tia and David
 Hoberman, Los Angeles



fig. 15

of her career (e.g. *After Sherrie Levine*, 1994), as well as with the emergence of her unique inflection of the point of view of the avant-garde photograph, termed “The Directorial Mode” by A.D. Coleman in 1976.¹¹ By locating her identity in a series of transactions

/ 11 / A.D. Coleman, “The Directorial Mode,” *Artforum*, September 1976.
 / 12 / Linda Yablonsky, “Amy Adler,” *Time Out New York*, September 25, 1997. / 13 / Cay Sophie Rabinowitz, “Amy Adler: A Provocatively Futile Negotiation,” *Amy Adler, Young Photographer* (Santa Fe: Twin Palms Publishers, 2005), np.

between memory, fantasy and nostalgia, and subjecting her subjectivity to generic equivocation between two representational types (photograph and drawing), Adler produces what has been termed “self-portraiture by role-reversal.”¹² As with Campbell, and differently with Morrison, the hinge between the imagined and constructed self turns on the skin and textures of the body and their reemergence on the surface of the image. It is here that all the almost homely immediacy and disarming naturalism of Adler’s images becomes disquieting and on these now turbulent sites that “Adler compulsively flaunts a sense of being foreign in her own skin.”¹³

Kurt Kauper’s *Diva Fictions* and recalcitrant ice hockey heroes, Salomón Huerta’s paintings of Mexican wrestling masks, and Marcelino Gonçalves’s graphite and oil panel paintings, which are based on found objects from the 1970s of a gay Los Angeles couple, deliver another round of equivocations between surface, identity and appearance. Unlike the unraveling selves of Adler and Campbell, Kauper’s *Diva Fictions* (including *Number 4*, 1998, and *Number 7*, 1998) are imaginary constructs of charismatic otherness, subtending a palpable diversity of age, race, and body type while at the same time conjuring up the highly particularized but always imaginary auras of operatic celebrity. Like the differently formatted work of Portuguese artist Vasco Araújo, they thrive on the operational articulation of artifice and projection, sonic virtuosity and characterological caprice that

round out the mythology of the female opera singer.¹⁴ As Walter Benjamin famously suggested, aura depends—and thrives—on the singularity and specificity of that which is somehow larger-than-life. But Kauper's divas drive a wedge between luminous personalities and their social and aesthetic effects, so that they deliver something like a deviant version of "exhibition" value—which arises not as a consequence of serial reproduction, as Benjamin contends, but in the face of multiple fictions. With the hockey players, such as *Rodrique* (2004), which images former New York Rangers forward Rod Gilbert, Kauper achieves a similarly eerie effect by deploying this psychology in reverse. Starting with persons and features that are household names in sports circles, and known, at least in passing or in part, by the wider culture, Kauper dismantles their historically coded, all-action celebrity. To this end he employs a series of gestures and devices—the tondo form, based on cigarette cards from the 1950s, subtle forms of equivocation with the formal manliness of the protagonists, and a mildly nostalgic graphic style combining comic book simplification and mid-twentieth century mannerism—that quite disarm the gritty heroism of the sports star. These paintings drain away the media-assisted surfaces of the hockey hulk, leaving in their wake something close to the bareness of the man underneath them. Yet this declaration is itself equivocal; as we are reminded by the cross-gendered version of the uncanny disposition of the divas, anything glimpsed as intrinsic or essential in these newly represented manhoods is, in fact, confected and imaginary.

/ 14 / On Vasco Araujo's work with the performativities of the diva figure in *Diva, A Portrait* (2000), *Duettino* (2001), *La Stupenda* (2001), *Recital* (2002) and *Sabine/Brunhilde* (2003), among other projects, see John C. Welchman, *Vasco Araujo* (Lisbon: ADIAC, 2006).

Huerta also turns to the sporting body as a site of performative dissimulation (e.g., *Untitled Wrestler [Spiral Mask]*, 2007). Working at the end of a century-long Mexican tradition, his luchador masks are in dialogue with the production of a new surface skin that partly effaces the features of the wrestler who wears it, while at the same time accentuating the facial part-objects that protrude from the head—nose, mouth, eyes. These defining aspects of identity are, of course, both excrement and porous—that is, they stand-out from the face while at the same time being apertures punctured into it allowing for the influx



fig. 16

/ fig. 16 / Salamón Huerta
Untitled Wrestler (Spiral Mask), 2007
Oil on canvas on panel
61 x 48 inches
Courtesy of the artist and Patrick
Painter, Inc., Santa Monica, CA
/ fig. 17 / Marcelino Gonçalves
Dirty Sneakers, 2007
Oil and graphite on panel
40 x 48 inches
Collection of the artist

of air, liquids and comestibles, as well as the experience of light, shape and movement. But Heurta's painted (and companion bronze-cast) masks are also fetish objects, surfaces rendering stretched surfaces that enclose and disguise the volume of the head. If Morrison questions physiognomic accountancy at the level of shape and surface contusion, Huerta suggests its recalibration through the supplementarity and effacements of the mask. And while Kauper cordons off our access to sporting or operatic identity with feats of willful invention, Huerta covers over the specificities of the individual with the signs of a collective and national identity.

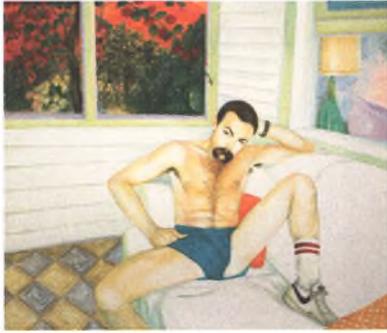


fig. 17

Gonçalves, on the other hand, leads us backwards from the ethos of professional sports or celebrity performance to the vernacular and the commonplace. But while the attire of his protagonists has none of the allure and rarefaction of Huerta's masks or Kauper's team stripes and fancy costumes—and is, in one case at least, explicitly soiled—the artist deems it of sufficient significance to title his images, as in *Dirty Sneakers* (2007). Similarly, the glass table that titles *Glass Top* (2007)—and the floor-to-ceiling mirror set at a right angle behind it—offer emblems for these salient

diminishments: they are smooth, flat, but reflective surfaces that fastidiously devour the activities transacted in their purview, so that the shifts and turns of the everyday itself become a never-ending atlas of shapes and forms corraling the superexcrecence of life itself.

Most of the other artists in the exhibition work at the material interface between objects, surfaces, and projections rather than with the allegorical flatness of painting, photography, or drawing. Elliott Hundley, for example, takes on the after-burn profusion of the collage tradition, turning it towards overabundance and material evanescence. The five panels of *Landslide* (2003) offer a sfumato larding of oil paint, paper, photographs, plastic, pins, extruded polystyrene, and thread, so that the work bears a metonymic relation to its title, becoming a kind of artslide, a moment of frozen arrest in the passage of these substances into, onto, and—under the influence of gravity supplied by its orientation on the wall—down the canvas support. Hundley's engorged surfaces have been referred back to the site of the body—and once more to the infiltration of its outer layers, so that their effects are “redolent of tattooed skin” as one critic put it.¹⁵ They are also the product of a daring extrusion, as parts and particles from what the artist refers to as the vast “mulch pit” of his studio are

gathered up, reallocated and variously cathected in the profligate delimitation of a momentarily circumscribed work. If Campbell imagines the permeability

¹⁵ / Roberta Smith, “In Galleries, A Nerve Opening Volley,” *New York Times*, November 30, 2007, 33.



fig. 18

/ fig. 18 / Blue McRight
Swarm, 2007

Enamel paint on resin
Dimensions variable
Collection of the Artist

/ fig. 19 / Lia Halloran
Dark Skate/LA River Bridge, 2007
Chromogenic print
48 x 48 inches

Courtesy DCKT Contemporary, New York

/ fig. 20 / Catherine Sullivan
Lulu oder Wozu braucht die Bourgeoisie die Verzweiflung, 2007
16 mm film, discontinued super 8mm film and digital media mastered to digital media, black and white, no sound
30 minutes
Courtesy Metro Pictures, New York

that dispenses with distinctions between inside and out vertically through the metaphor of a membrane, Hundley is committed to a more lateral, self-perpetuating form of permutational infinity, marked in *Landslide* by its multipart format, which could re-vector the work in a thousand directions as "any piece could be configured into another composition."¹⁶

/ 16 / Elliott Hundley, cited in Kevin West, "Assembly Required," *W Magazine*, June 2007, 108.

The implications of contagion, multiplication and profligacy—introduced by Hundley—also take center stage in the work of Blue McRight and Lia Halloran. This is figured most literally—yet sparsely—in McRight's *Swarm* (2007), made from cast-resin lawn ornaments, finished with red, metal-flake car paint and bolted to a vertical surface. Produced in apposition to the painting series *Untitled (On the Lawn)*, which addresses the conjunction of social and topographic thinness represented by the confected grassy surfaces of the suburban garden, *Swarm* offers a new dimension for the department of an improbable congregation of simulated fauna. Its menagerie of scarlet bunnies and squirrels are shifted by a right-angle twist from the ground level extrusions of the backyard layout and thus made over as palpable, and slightly menacing, superexcrecences.

For Halloran, the experience of multiplicities is channeled through the relational force fields that govern our perception of temporality, mass, attraction and movement. Starting with her own experience of skateboard transit across urban—and backyard—surfaces that are as deliberately inflected with ramps and outcroppings as McRight's lawns are with ornaments, Halloran's time-lapse photographs, including *Frantic MIA* (2008) and *Dark Skate/LA River Bridge* (2007), trace her passage as a series of elegant loops and scribbles

scored by the bicycle lights she wears on her head or arms. Working at the intersection of energy physics, street aesthetics and urban recreation, Halloran provides graphic notations for the play of forces—gravity, speed, balance, twists, spirals and knots—that generate relations between the superficial and the implicit, the smooth and the extruded.

The prone deer in Tia Pulitzer's ceramic sculpture *It's Not Me, It's You* (2007)—which, like McRight's smaller monochrome fauna, is given an "automotive finish"—responds to the relational conundrum of exteriority and interiority by holding their differential in suspension. For not only does the artist all but eliminate the formal difference between base and sculpture, but she responds to the legacy of sentimentalizing, anthropomorphic animal representation, epitomized by Edwin Henry Landseer's torridly noble Highland deer in paintings such as *Monarch of the Glen* (1851), by draining out all the brownness, boniness and furriness that define the sublime object of the chase, and replacing it with slight morphological distortions and an eerily blanched textural uniformity.

Related to an ambitious live performance with the Berlin Symphony Orchestra in collaboration with conductor Christian Von Borries at the Volksbühne in Berlin in December 2007, Catherine Sullivan's film *Lulu oder Wozu braucht die Bourgeoisie die Verzweiflung* (2007) uses the visual and sonic intertexts of G.W. Pabst's silent film *Pandora's Box* (Germany, 1929), starring Louise Brooks (the former Ziegfeld Follies girl who read Arthur Schopenhauer between takes) as Lulu, and the opera *Lulu* by Alban Berg (first performed by the Zurich Opera in its incomplete state in 1937). While the brief celebrity of Brooks in the 1920s and early '30s forms a crucial context, Sullivan is more interested in the subsequent fall of the actress into near destitution and her rehabilitation in the 1950s following the publication of a remarkable essay by British theater critic Kenneth Tynan, and their subsequent relationship.



fig. 19



fig. 20

By looking beyond the Postmodern reduction of surfaces to social superficiality, Sullivan's move exemplifies the consequential re-engagement with the new vectoring of surface and depth taken on by the artists in this exhibition. She moves from the flattened social awareness of Brooks' Lulu, beset by innocent vivacity and precipitous allure, to a later life built on its excrescent ruins. Sullivan correlates the exchanges between surface and depth with the larger questions of sexuality, gender, and death, aligning them, finally, with their widest allegorical horizons in the contradictory formation of bourgeois experience at the troubled intersection of capital and pleasure. The uncanny collisions negotiated here sound a death knell for that old-order reckoning with "the surface of things" in such a way that "their 'look,' and the knowledge surrounding the details of their construction, appeared not to matter, as long as they were explained by a content that could be re-written over and over again."¹⁷ She—and the others present here—have helped clear the way for a certain redemption brought about in the look of objects, subjects and places.

/ 17 / Alain Pottage and Martha Mundy, *Law, Anthropology, and the Constitution of the Social: Making Persons and Things* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), 235. The authors refer to the theory of the "projectionist fallacy" advanced by Whitney Davis in "The Origin of Image Making," *Current Anthropology*, Vol. 27, No. 3 (June 1986), 193–215.

Let's call an end, then, to the over-and-over-again of depth analysis predicated only on the false positives of inference and predisposition.

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JENNIFER WULFFSON

CATALOGUE OF THE EXHIBITION

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THE FORMER SENIOR EDITOR OF THE BIBLIOGRAPHY OF THE
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Born 1966, New York, New York
Lives and works in Los Angeles, California

While Amy Adler's practice has changed during the course of her career, what binds different phases and series together is a proclivity for extension and collaboration. Adler often extends the formal potentials of one medium with the help of another medium, in effect to see if the two can cooperate long enough to be productive. Likewise, her practice is peppered with examples of her collaboration with others (e.g., Joni Mitchell, Amy Cook and Urs Fischer), who often hail from other fields.

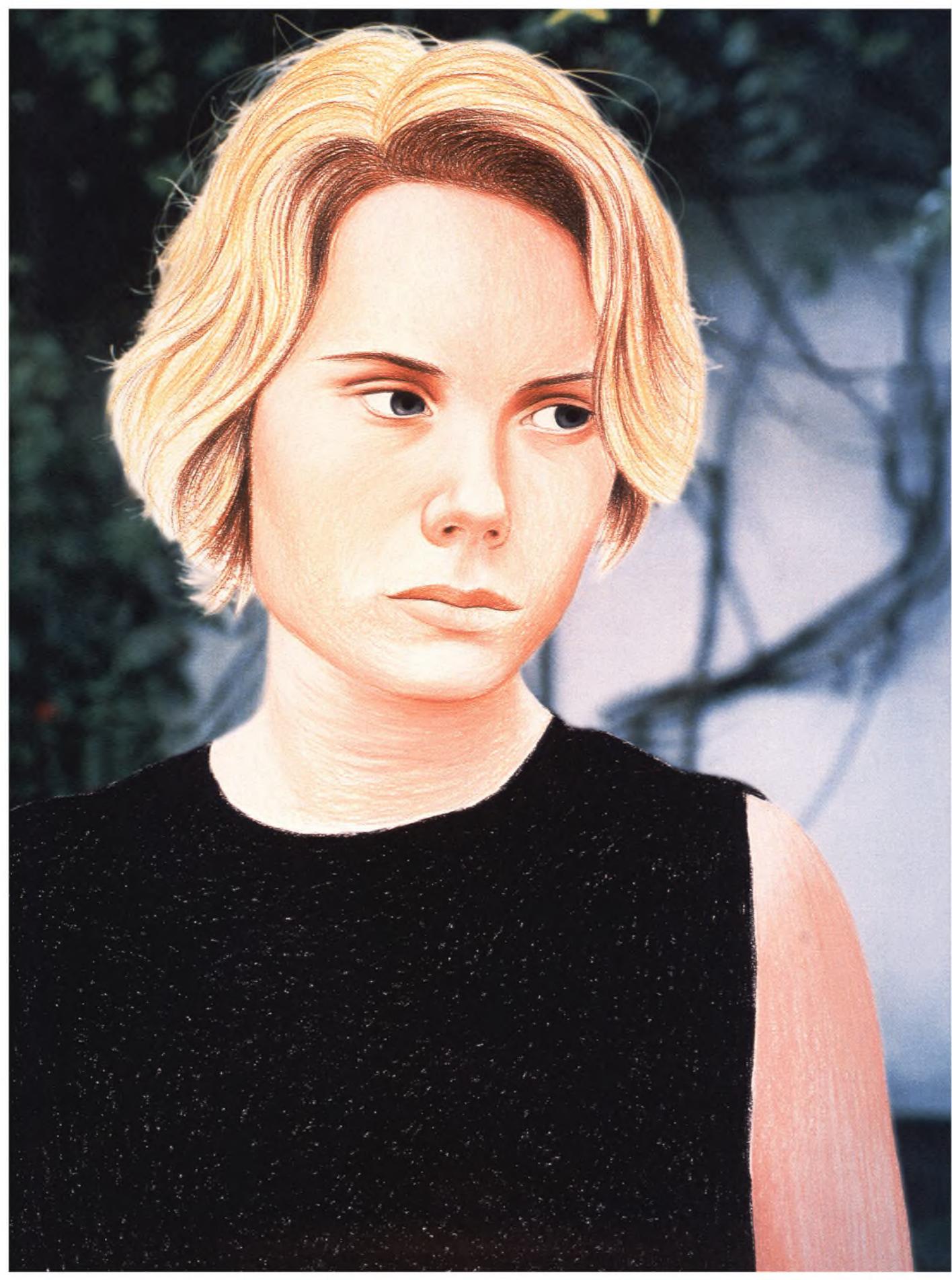
For much of her earlier career, Adler made drawings from photographs that were in turn photographed. About the process she has said that she often attempts to hold at bay the "aggressive" nature of photography in its tendency to multiply. While she worked on a drawing, she was aware of its "impending fate—its imprisonment" in the photograph. This process called for the drawing to be destroyed, as would be the negative of the photographed drawing after a print was made. "Out of respect" for her drawings, which are by nature singular, she did not create multiple editions of the resultant photographs.¹ Adler seeks a productive reconciliation—a meeting point—between two different media, with one ultimately sacrificed for the sake of the final product.

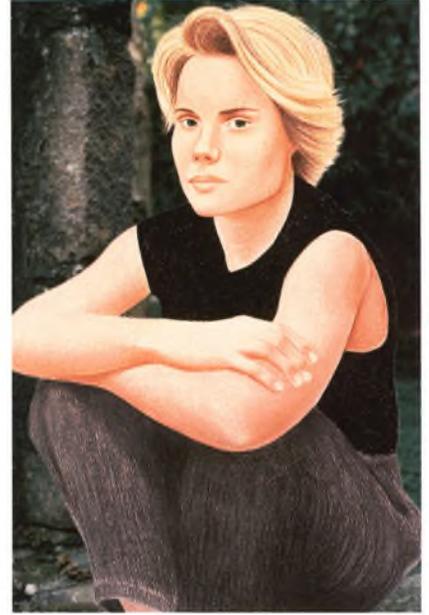
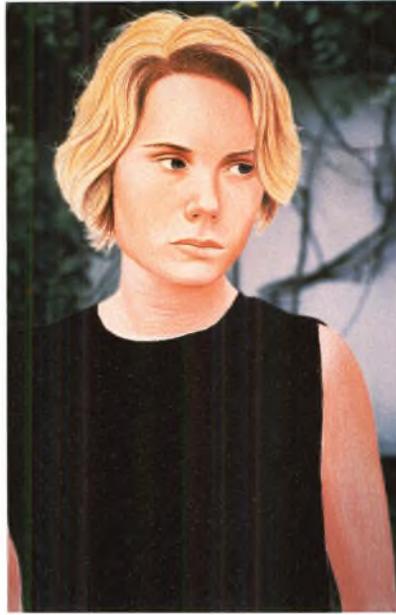
While Adler uses pre-existing images in some cases, she is more often the author of her photographic source material. For an earlier series called *Nervous Character* (1999), Adler took pictures of herself "directed" by herself in performance, transforming her image into the "actor-writer-director,"ⁱⁱ that creative amalgam to which many in Los Angeles aspire. She has also said that she doesn't view the works that depict her likeness as self-portraits, but instead as evidence of masquerade or role-playing. The psychological distinction that she makes between these various roles harkens back to her core investment in interdisciplinary and interpersonal collaboration, and also speaks to the artist's fascination with her own professional identity, and that of others. Adler admits that she is drawn to subjects with some amount of physical affinity to her. Performed identity is Adler's primary concern in a series of images of Leonardo diCaprio, another of gay porn stars, and a series based on photographs of her niece. The latter series, entitled *The Rainbow Hour* (2005–06), is arguably her most poignant in addressing the guises available to and sought after by girls and women. In it, we see the larger-than-life child, who bears a close

ⁱ / "A Thousand Words: Amy Adler talks about 'Nervous character,'" *Artforum*, April 1999, 111. ⁱⁱ / *Ibid.*

¹ / Amy Adler *Once in Love with Amy*, 1997 (detail)
Cibachrome print
3 panels, 50 x 34 inches each
Collection Sirje and Michael, Los Angeles

AMY
ADLER



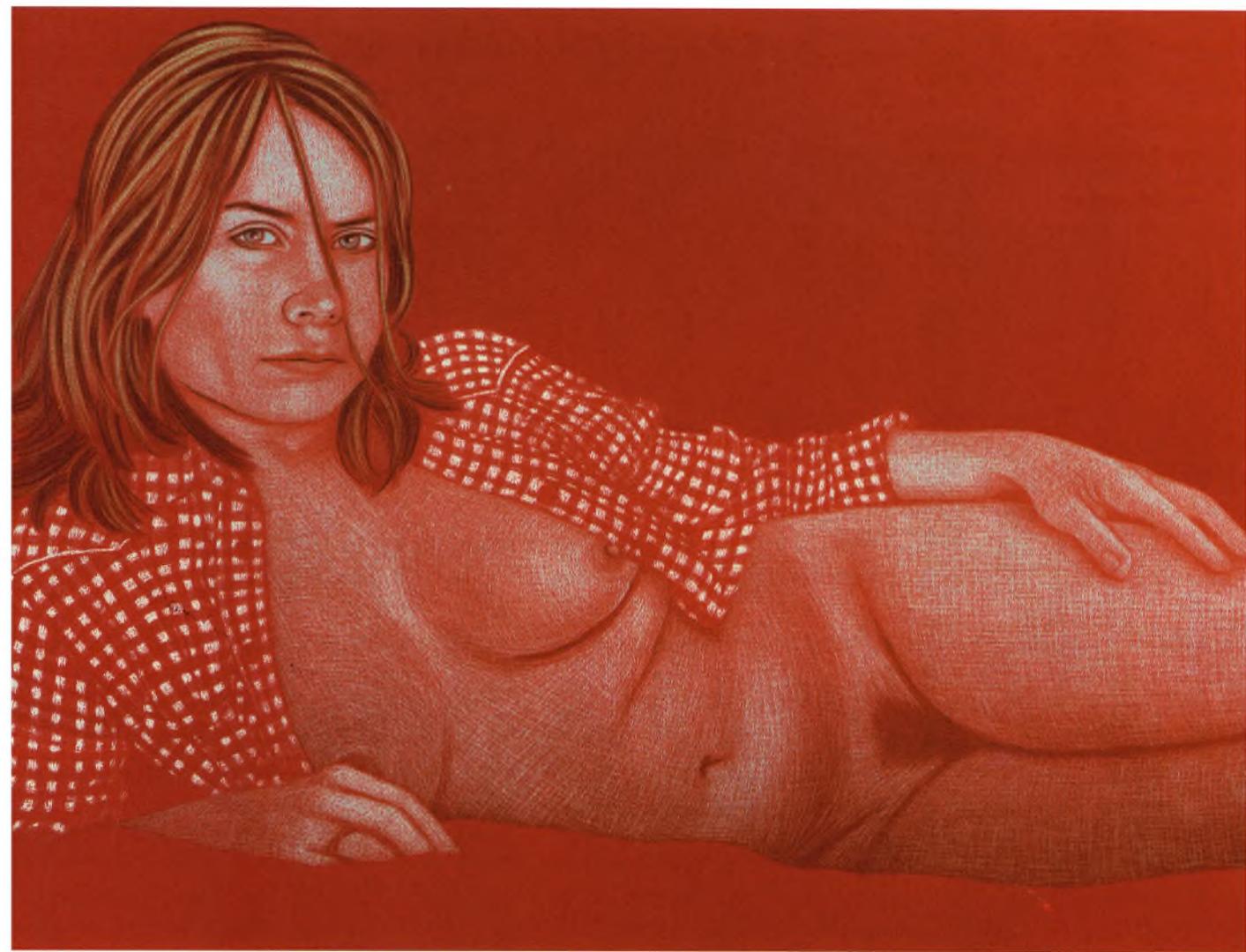


2

resemblance to the artist, in various acts of pretend play that are, for such a short while, the simple, unfraught pleasures of a child.

Adler's richly colored, hot backgrounds in such works as *The Rainbow Hour* and the earlier series *Centerfold* (2003) seem on the verge of consuming or "melting" the marks of the drawing. Her technique of building up light forms on a darker background results in a rendering of skin that appears to have been pre-molded and applied to the flat background color. It also makes the human form seem more vulnerable. In others, such as her *Director* series of pastels (2006), it is not the heat of the background color but rather its cool white that threatens the faint image. What continually

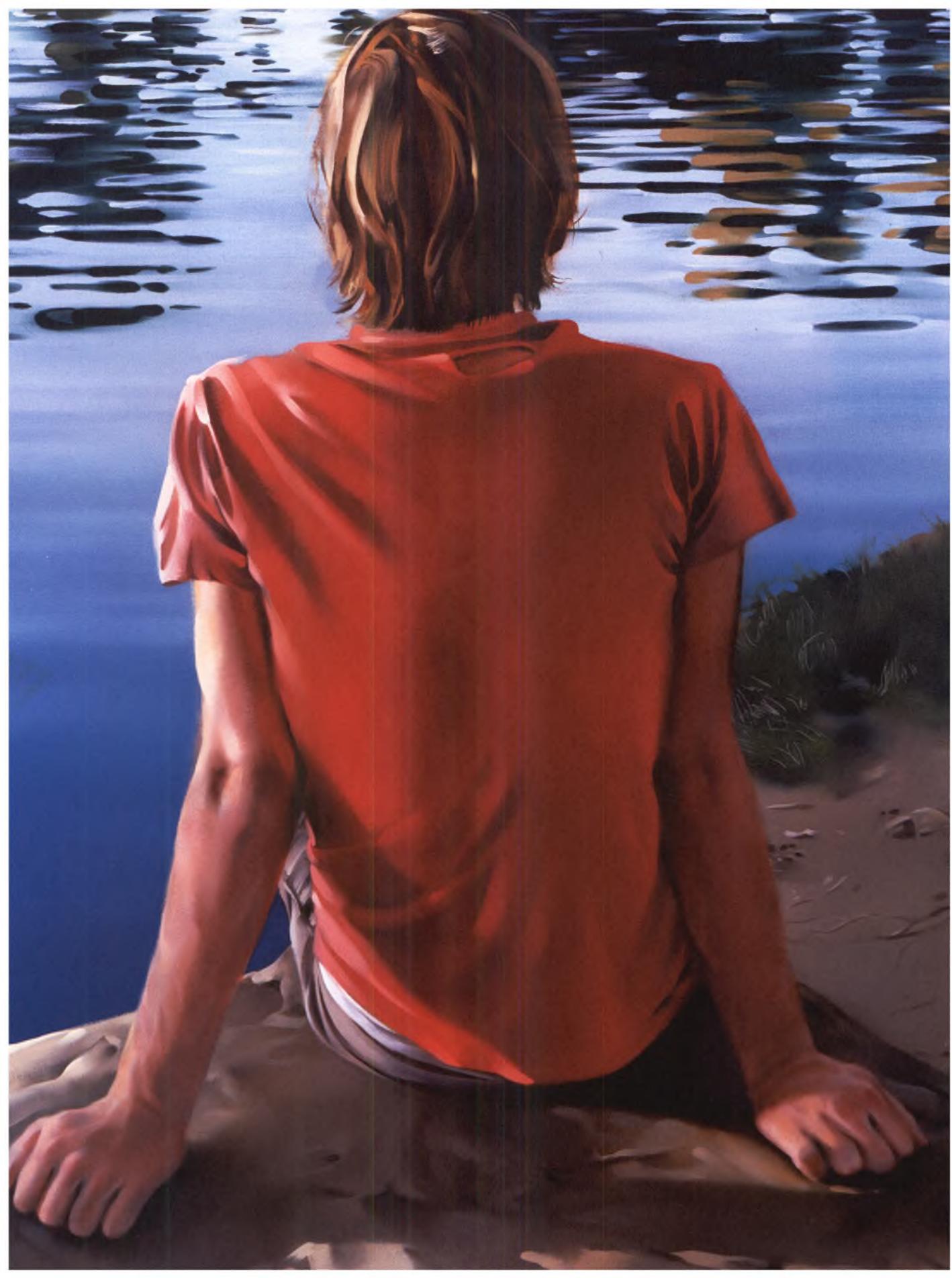
gives strength to Adler's images is the insistent layering of meaning, angles, techniques, collaborators, and potential or imagined identities. All combine to provide glimpses of what constitute superficial identities, regardless of whether or not they are fragmented or temporary. They all, nevertheless, have some truth to them.



3

/ 2 / Amy Adler *Once In Love with Amy*, 1997
Cibachrome print
3 panels, 50 x 34 inches each
Collection Sirje and Michael, Los Angeles

/ 3 / Amy Adler *Centerfold #3*, 2003
Cibachrome on aluminum
48 x 68 inches
Collection David Stewart, Los Angeles



/ 4 / Rebecca Campbell *Hot Jesus*, 2007
Oil on canvas
60 x 43 1/2 inches
Collection Jane and Barton Shallat, New York

Rebecca Campbell's large, narrative paintings tow a mysterious line between touching bittersweetness and a palpable sense of foreboding. *Catch* (2003) depicts a little girl in a pink sweater swinging around a lamp pole in front of her house with her head down, perhaps to better view her swirling skirt. The joy of the child contrasts with the twilight sky, sinister trees, and the dangers of the street just out of view. In *Counting* (2003), Campbell paints a little girl in a fancy dress looking away from her birthday cake. Instead of reveling in the glow of six candles, she looks straight ahead, maybe to future years. Again, darkness threatens the innocence of the scene. Campbell's more recent paintings of teenage girls and young women are brighter, but the subjects' gazes are equally significant. Almost all look away, and many of the figures exhibit explicit wariness. In *The*

Highwayman (2006), from the recent *Xanadu* series, a teenage girl stands next to a pink bed she has clearly outgrown. Looking up and away, she teeters between childhood and adulthood. The nonage of her beribboned braids and slight frame is coincident with her thoughts that seem to turn to the night landscape outside her window and the appeal of leaving the pink room behind, perhaps with a horseback figure such as the one on her t-shirt.

The mystery of *Salt Palace* (2005), from the series *Crush*, is more subtle than that of earlier works, but there is a similar and familiar tension in the picture. A young woman wearing skimpy clothing stands with her back to the viewer, facing an older man who looks down at her from a balcony. The viewer can infer from the title of the series, but it is unclear who has the "crush," or if anything untoward is about to happen. The emotional charge of the composition comes from the fact that the narrative is not made explicit. The title is evocative for the artist and the audience. "Salt" references the city in which Campbell grew up and salt is both "delicious and deadly," able to make one magically float in the lake but also creating an environment in which little

Born 1971, Salt Lake City, Utah
Lives and works in Los Angeles,
California

REBECCA
CAMPBELL

can survive. Campbell associates the word "palace" with "fantasy, kings, power, the historic, the exotic and science fiction."ⁱ Unlike the foreboding landscapes of some of her earlier paintings, the lush landscape here, rendered in more gestural, abstract brushstrokes, seems a safe haven compared to the sharp, dark corners of the house. Identity and frame of mind are likewise kept from the viewer in *Hot Jesus* (2007), which depicts the back of a young man lounging by the water's edge. Here, the adolescent boy seems completely at ease. He might be contemplating his own reflection in the water or his thoughts might be far away. The remarkable title, once again complicating an already opaque narrative, evokes the possibility of salvation for a young woman in the guise of an attractive young man.

"Seeing is a decisive act and ultimately places the maker and viewer on the same level."ⁱⁱ The isolated moments Campbell captures in her paintings are not in themselves decisive; their ambiguity, awkwardness and often voyeuristic vantage points all contribute to their

disquieting emotional impact. Instead, the decisive act is in the seeing and in the consequent act of engaging one's imagination and remembering one's childhood and adolescence. Campbell's background growing up in a strict Mormon community certainly informs her work; she also anticipates that the viewer will bring his or her own history to the exchange. It perhaps comes as little surprise to learn that, for clarity's sake, she usually makes a series of self-portraits before embarking on a new body of work. Past and present, Campbell and the viewer, act in collusion, collaboration, and partnership.

ⁱ / Email correspondence with the artist, January 2009. ⁱⁱ / Gerhard Richter, "Interview with Sabine Schutz," *Journal of Contemporary Art*, vol. 3, no.2, Los Angeles, 1990.



5

/ 5 / *Rebecca Campbell Salt Palace, 2005*
Oil on canvas
96 x 144 inches
Private Collection, Courtesy LA Louver, Venice, CA

MARCELINO GONÇALVES

Born 1969, San Diego, California
Lives and works in Los Angeles,
California

Through happenstance, Marcelino Gonçalves came across an album of snapshots that had ended up in a rummage sale. The snapshots captured the domestic life of a gay couple living in Los Angeles in the late 1970s or thereabouts. The images are replete with arranged interiors, coordinated outfits, matching mustaches, pets, home improvement projects, drug use, and scenes of both staged and actual leisure. To gain possession of strangers' personal photographs, with identities and fates left a mystery, is an awkward yet mesmerizing thing. In Gonçalves's hands, the story of the photographs gains a new chapter. His objective was never to excavate or explicate the lives of these men. Rather, the painter uses them as found objects for his own purposes, taking license where desired while respecting the individuality and memories—if not privacy—of the people depicted.

Dirty Sneakers (2007) is a painting that depicts one of the anonymous men in a somewhat stilted pose that was probably intended to simulate erotic repose and signal for the knowing viewer his sexual identity. The man in the portrait wears short shorts and sits shirtless on a white sofa, legs spread and eyes looking down and away. The setting is an equal preoccupation for Gonçalves. Painted largely in thin, pastel colored paint, he takes liberties with the perspectival space of the room and creates ambiguity with the adjacent spaces. A lamp is viewed over the man's left shoulder, but is the space it occupies, seen through what looks like a window frame, another room? Through another window directly behind the solitary figure is a verdant garden whose space, like wallpaper, is visually impenetrable. The flat, bright colors of the garden stand out against the softer tones that dominate the rest of the painting.

Gonçalves uses such saturated colors, especially red, in another otherwise pastel composition



6

/ 6 / Marcelino Gonçalves *Dirty Sneakers*, 2007
Oil and graphite on panel
40 x 48 inches
Collection of the artist



from this series: *Glass Top* (2007). Here, one of the two men sits at a glass-top table with a friend, an elegantly dressed and coiffed Asian woman who recurs in a number of the original photographs. The red of her dress, nails, and lips matches the small, red blur in a picture of a bullfighter on the wall. Unusual colors and color juxtapositions are part of the atmosphere Gonçalves creates, for example, in the red dress against a lime shirt and the repeated use of lilac. As Bruce Hainley has commented, "Gayness becomes an atmosphere, even a quality of light" in Gonçalves's paintings, and the atmosphere and light itself are something

/ i / Bruce Hainley, "Reviews: Los Angeles, Marcelino Gonçalves" *Artforum*, December 2002.

"still being negotiated."⁴ The woman in the painting intimately leans in to her male friend, obscuring his mouth and the secret or kiss it might be bestowing. The perspective and reflective surfaces are intentionally ambiguous; a reflection of the back of the man's head is reminiscent of Édouard Manet's riddle *A Bar at the Folies-Bergère* (1882).

Gonçalves's earlier paintings similarly used found images—often staged or performed images—as starting points, including, for example, a 1970s brochure for a boy's summer

camp and snapshots by and of young soldiers. The resultant works take as their subject the very medium of painting as much as the potential narrative of the masculine experiences so often depicted. Identity is left implied and both scenes of camaraderie and solitude have equal capacity to feel wistful. Another aspect of Gonçalves's oeuvre is comprised of unpeopled scenes such as *Jacaranda* (2006) and *Untitled (Wolf)* (2006), which are similarly sumptuous in color and romantic in spirit. In these, he demonstrates his range of abilities and interests, and the possibilities of a kind of formal nostalgia that can tie together a lilac painting of a beautiful jacaranda tree with a lost snapshot of a man posing in the privacy of his home—a man of unknown fate who had, at least for some time, a life both real and imagined.

/ 7 / Marcelino Gonçalves *Glass Top*, 2007
Oil and graphite on panel
48 x 40 inches
Collection of the artist

/ 8 / Lia Halloran *Dark Skate/LA River Bridge*, 2007
Chromogenic print
48 x 48 inches
Courtesy DCKT Contemporary, New York



8

Born 1977, Chicago, Illinois
Lives and works in Los Angeles, California

Lia Halloran grew up spending much of her free time skateboarding and surfing, and she recalls her father teaching her how to watch and wait for the right wave and to be keenly aware of her body as it relates to the natural forces around it. These lessons have carried over into her artistic practice. Previously working primarily as a painter and draftsman, Halloran recently began an ongoing project entitled *Dark Skate* (2007-present) that combines drawing, performance, and photography. Halloran scouts urban skateboarding locations at which she can skate and photograph late at night. Usually with the assistance of another photographer (*Dark Skate Miami* was done in collaboration with photographer William Mackenzie-Smith; Meredyth Wilson has worked with Halloran in Los Angeles), Halloran then takes long-exposure photographs of herself skateboarding while wearing a light on her helmet and wrist. Due to the length of the exposure and the low light, Halloran's physical form disappears and only the twisting lines of light—sparse or frenetic—remain visible in the nightscape.

Rather than being about skateboarding per se, Halloran sees her *Dark Skate* project as an act of self-portraiture and, more broadly, about the interaction of one person with her surrounding space. Halloran has a long-standing interest in physics; in her mind the laws of physics can be a personal, non-didactic way of understanding the world. But she did not think that her interests in skateboarding, physics, and art would—or could—intersect. While a graduate student at Yale, she received a research grant to go to a lab in Chile. There she was able to take images of moving starlight using some of the world's largest telescopes. This experience with astrophotography eventually led to *Dark Skate*.

Halloran has said that it is important to her to represent Los Angeles, and most of the *Dark Skate* series thus far is set in various nooks and crannies of the city that are conducive to her project. The titles of the photographs name specific locations in and around the city, for example, *Dark Skate, Duarte* and *Dark Skate, Griffith Park* (both 2007). Some of these are places rarely frequented during the day, let alone in the middle of the night. However, the dark, concrete, urban jungles are surprisingly not frightening with glowing calligraphic lines illuminating and enlivening the scenes. Although Halloran is occasionally chased

LIA
HALLORAN





away from an off-limits location, *Dark Skate* documents enjoyable, fugitive movement, and the trace left behind by an improvised, non-vandalizing personal mark. *Dark Skate/ LA River Bridge* (2007) is a particularly stunning example, with the soft shadows and light of twilight reflected on the underpass wall of the bridge and the small stream of water below, which contrast with the damp, leafy foreground and the brilliance of the light streaming through the passageway.

Female life experience is the subject of a more recent body of work in which Halloran paints portraits of lesbian couples with whom she is acquainted. These portraits are based on photographs by Halloran in which she recorded moments of simultaneous connection and isolation. Rendered in blue ink on vellum, they depict quiet, private moments. In *Clea and Cam* (2008), the bench that the two women presumably sit upon is absent, and the two figures float in the moment. The woman on the right reaches out to grace her companion's knee, while the other woman appears to be leaning slightly back, indicating a physical and emotional give and take. Connectivity, magnetism, and dissipation are made personal and tangible, just as Halloran's energetic, fleeting encounters with particular places in *Dark Skate* are captured, even if her physical body is rendered as a trail of light.

/ 9 / Lia Halloran *Frantic MIA*, 2008
Cibachrome print
4 panels, 47 1/2 x 59 1/2 inches each
95 x 119 inches overall
Courtesy DCKT Contemporary, New York

Born 1965, Tijuana, Mexico
Lives and works in Los Angeles, California

SALOMÓN HUERTA

The age-old genre of portraiture is arguably still the most fascinating form of representation. Artists have consistently returned to and reinvigorated this art form, the specificity of portraits consistently beguiling current and later generations. Salomón Huerta has achieved such a revitalization in his ongoing exploration of portraiture. His early portraits are like pastel mug shots, but with the sitter's back to the viewer. With the face concealed, the viewer is forced to reconsider what can be expected from portraiture, and what can be expected from this individual. The typical, mostly one-sided relationship that occurs between a viewer and the subject of a portrait—bestowal of judgment, awe, desire—is stymied. The honorific capacity of portraiture is latent, but the portraits remain resolutely mysterious, despite their relative simplicity. The hair and skin of the backs of the heads are the only surfaces available for visual scrutiny. In some of the reverse portraits, more of the body is seen, whether seated or standing, but the posture of the subjects is left open to interpretation; it seems neutral but is, somehow, unnervingly tense.

As a self-identified Chicano artist who grew up in East Los Angeles, Huerta takes as his subject Latino political and social identity. At the same time, his dismay if labeled too

narrowly as a Chicano artist manifests itself in the detachment and indeterminacy that is consistent throughout his artistic practice.

Huerta's strategies are informed by, but far removed from, the public murals painted by Chicano activist artists that he

grew up looking at. He has stated that he wants "to make work that makes the viewer question his own identity. That, in itself, is political."¹

Huerta's full frontal paintings of modest houses, which feature the colorful, empty backgrounds of the reverse portraits, are no less ambiguous. A house can be a façade, and a means of self-presentation connected to a sense of place or community identity; at the same time, a neighborhood can become a stereotype. There is a strong tradition of depicting domestic architecture in Southern California, with Judy Fiskin, Bill Owens, and Catherine Opie being examples of artists who have used photography to create—and

¹ / Elizabeth Ferrer, "Mirror/Image: Paintings by Salomón Huerta," *Salomón Huerta Paintings*, (Austin: Austin Museum of Art, 2001), 13.

¹⁰ / Salomón Huerta *Untitled Wrestler (Spiral Mask)*, 2007
Oil on canvas on panel
61 x 48 inches
Courtesy of the artist and Patrick Painter, Inc.,
Santa Monica, CA



complicate—such seemingly straightforward imagery. Rendered in oil paint using radically simplified forms and flat, pretty colors, Huerta veils his subjects and complicates their specificity. Huerta's paintings of houses have been interpreted as expressions "of oppressive tedium that is often associated with the American suburbs."ⁱⁱ However, for many living in lower class neighborhoods, the banality of such an image would be superceded by its sweet attractions.

Recently, Huerta turned his attention to the subject of Mexican luchadores wrestlers and their traditional masks. While they are portraits of specific wrestlers wearing their masks, the subjects are not identifiable because the masks obscure their facial features. Instead, an alternate identity—even the masquerade itself—is foregrounded. In a painting such as *Untitled Wrestler (Spiral Mask)* (2007), the masks and unrevealingly neutral backgrounds place responsibility of interpretation on the viewer, suggesting that an individual's identity—or rather, identities—cannot and should not be so easily comprehended.

Huerta's heroic, intensely colored wrestler mask paintings are complemented by a group of bronze masks painted with vibrant, iridescent automotive paint. Replete with tears and real laces, these objects on pedestals remind the viewer of the physical—and psychological—process of donning a mask and the physical harm a wrestler will face. Without the person with which they could be singularly identified, the mask sculptures seem melancholic or even sinister.ⁱⁱⁱ Huerta's work is revelatory yet reserved, due in large part to his attraction to both flamboyant and understated subject matter, and perhaps in some cases, both at the same time.

/ ii / Ibid., 12. / iii / Huerta's exhibition entitled Mask was installed at Patrick Painter Gallery, Santa Monica, April 5 – May 10, 2008. It is noteworthy that the bronze masks were originally installed in a very separate gallery; the paintings were in the west gallery and the sculptures a short walk away in the east gallery.

ELLIOTT HUNDLEY

Of David Hockney and his milieu, Lawrence Alloway once remarked that they traded in the "aesthetics of plenty."¹ The straightforward optimism of this characterization is complicated in the case of Elliott Hundley, about whose assemblage-type work that encompasses sculpture, painting, and wall installation we might apply the same words but also ask, "Plenty of what?" In the plethora of material on offer, whether pleasing or displeasing to the eye, the implied horror—and wonder—of the mundane is given form and identity.

As in one of Joel Morrison's contributions to *Superficiality and Superexcesscence*, Hundley intellectually and aesthetically revisits the artwork of John McCracken in *Landslide* (2003). The five-panel piece combines oil on canvas, photographs, pieces of paper and plastic, pins, polystyrene, and thread. According to Hundley, the work is comprised of five upholstered and landscaped versions of a McCracken "plank" piece.² While certainly an homage in one

sense, *Landslide* also expands and embellishes upon an icon of California Minimalism, adding texture, the frenetic-ness of assemblage, and the multiplicity of five panels. Hundley is a legatee of Robert Rauschenberg in the obvious sense that their work is about the accretion of meaning via arranged, layered media and thus re-contextualized social materials. But Hundley also had in mind Tony Berlant, whose nailed collages of painted factory tin similarly bristle on their surfaces and in their pictorial illusion. For instance, in Hundley's *Cave* (2003) and *Fire* (2006), perspectival space is crafted out of a dense and arranged choice of materials.

When Hundley begins a new work, it germinates from a seed of an idea, but there is no set plan or goal; instead, meaning comes into being as the work progresses. He uses not only found material but also laboriously creates material (e.g., photo shoots, paintings, etc.) which he then fragments for the purposes of the work. On the occasion of Hundley's first solo gallery exhibition, gallerist Andrea Rosen wrote an unusually revealing and

¹ / [David Robbins](#), *The Independent Group: Postwar Britain and the Aesthetics of Plenty* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1990), 49. ² / [Email](#) correspondence from artist, November 2008.

Born 1966, New York, New York
Lives and works in Los Angeles,
California

considered press release: "Hundley seems to free himself through his process, whereby vast amounts of information, content, and labor become inscribed in the raw material itself. This practice of transforming made objects into found objects acts as a kind of reverse alchemy, transforming the artist's own drawings and paintings as well as a vast assortment of everyday items into material charged with potential."ⁱⁱⁱ

This "reverse alchemy" is related, in part, to Hundley's keen interest in not only art history, but also mythology, literature, music, and the performing arts, and particularly how they have overlapped, and can be made to overlap further. This is evinced in the literary strategies Hundley employs in the works themselves, as well as in his deft touch with titles. Like many artists in the exhibition, he typically uses titles to provide a rich and imaginative point of access to his work and a verbal—often narrative—appurtenance. Titles such as *After Medea's Craft* (2005) and *The Hanging Garden, The Invention of Drawing* (2005) signal the longevity of cultural mythmaking and the fruitfulness of returning to ancient stories in the present.

Given the weight of meaning and the sheer number of elements used, it might be surprising how delicate Hundley's works often look. Delicacy and fragility are in part conveyed through the use of pins to hold some of the pieces together. While almost infinitely variegated, Hundley's discretion is vivid and apparent in every gestural accumulation, calculated dispersal, and elaboration on a theme. These works can be overwhelming, and intentionally so. There is possible horror and possible beauty. In fact, there is possibly plenty of both.

ⁱⁱⁱ / http://www.andreareosengallery.com/exhibitions/2007_3_elliott-hundley/?view=pressrelease

/ 11 / Elliott Hundley *Landslide*, 2003
Mixed media on foam core
Five panels: 84 x 24 inches each;
84 x 120 inches overall
Collection Dean Valentine and Amy Adelson,
Beverly Hills



Born 1966, Indianapolis, Indiana
Lives and works in New York, New York

Kurt Kauper's painting practice is distinguished by a stubborn investment in figuration and verisimilitude, cut by a camp sensibility that gives his portraits an unexpectedly critical edge. His style of painting may appear retrograde or conservative next to figurative work by peers such as Dana Schutz, whose highly gestural, narrative paintings evince a more obvious brand of formal invention. However, Kauper characterizes his taste for classicism and his concomitant rejection of overt formal invention and contemporary autography as a gesture of perverseness, "as a kind of rebellion."ⁱ In fact, distinction is not his aim; quite to the contrary, he recalls: "I had a facility for representational painting. I liked Holbein and Ingres. I wanted to paint like them."ⁱⁱ Taking his cues from the ways in which the Old Masters modeled form, handled light, and rendered perspective, Kauper has explored—with painstaking precision—the modern applications of their style of painting. In a sense, then, Kauper is a medium or conduit, resuscitating and channeling outmoded formal strategies; in effect, he uses obsolescence to enliven and complicate topical, contemporary subject matter.

Kauper first garnered broad critical attention with his *Diva* paintings, initiated in 1996 when he left California for New York City, and

showcased most notably in the 2000 Whitney Biennial. Two of these works are included in this exhibition. The debt to Ingres and his virtuostic handling of oil to render graceful, iridescent fabrics is plain here, but unlike the French artist who painted the gentry and elite in their own opulent attire, Kauper dressed everyday people in the extravagant gowns of opera stars, allowing them to inhabit the role of Soprano, just as he assumed the role of his eminent forebear.

Kauper's interest in the way social identities are constructed is obvious from the masquerade trope that is the basis of this project, but the same interest is also evident in his use of materials. Rendered in oil on unforgiving birch panel, the brushstrokes that compose these paintings are so slight and delicate as to be virtually invisible, dissolving completely into a modulated totality of color. Canvas is an absorbent material that becomes saturated and dense when paint is applied to its surface, giving the appearance of thickness and weight. When applied to birch, oil paint appears as varnish, sitting atop the support as if a discrete layer. Consequently, paintings

ⁱ / Kurt Kauper quoted in Pepe Karmel, "Unimpeachable Masculinity," *Kurt Kauper: Paintings 2001–2007* (New York: Deitch Projects, 2007), 17 / ⁱⁱ / *Ibid.*, 17.

KURT
KAUPER



12



13

/ 12 / Kurt Kauper *Diva Fiction #4*, 1997
Oil on birch panel
82 x 48 inches
Collection Kerry Hannawell and Matthew Iadarola, Los Angeles

/ 13 / Kurt Kauper *Diva Fiction #7*, 1998
Oil on birch panel
70 x 54 inches
Collection Tia and David Hoberman, Los Angeles



14

such as *Diva Fiction #4* (1997) are slavish in their attention to detail and modeling, and meticulous in finish. At the same time, they achieve an unnerving plasticity and artificiality that belies the myth of unimpeachable social identity.

Perhaps more radical is Kauper's application of the same painting style to the subject of iconic male athletes. Drawing on a long tradition of heroic male representation rooted in the Greek conventions of nude sculpture, and elaborated by neoclassical painters such as Jacques-Louis David, who produced images of overdetermined masculinity including *The Oath of the Horatii* (1784), Kauper has to date focused on iconic hockey players from the past. The most comedic, farcical and challenging of these are full-length nude portraits such as *Derek* (2005). As Kauper notes: "I wanted to use the nude figure in a way that would challenge the

/ iii / Ibid., 18.

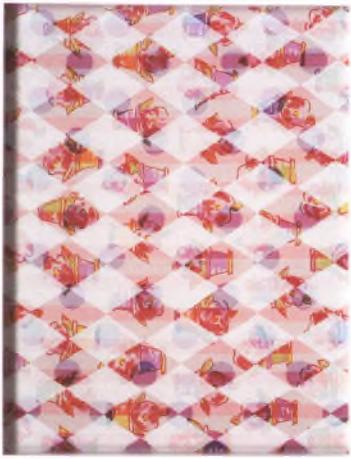
representation of desire as it is usually understood."ⁱⁱⁱ The effect

of this and similar paintings is to denaturalize the experience of the male icon, quite literally unveiling the subject to reveal the possibility of desire beyond the bounds of conventional homosocial desire. More subtle are portrait busts such as *Rodrique* (2004), of former New York Rangers forward Rod Gilbert, which is

presented in an obliquely camp oval format that draws on the intimate character of 18th- and 19th-century portraits created as cherished keepsakes for lockets. Through surface effects and format choice, these highly polished paintings, almost devotional in character, transform their subjects into objects of desire. In these, as in all of his work, Kauper uses deft technique and sly art historical references to establish the contingency of identity in representation.

—Christopher Bedford

/14 / Kurt Kauper *Rodrique*, 2004
Oil on birch panel
31 x 23 3/4 inches
Collection Jill and Dennis Roach, Beverly Hills



15



16



17

Elad Lassry approaches photography as if it is infrangible, assuming that when broken into parts, the medium can productively turn in on itself. Lassry brings curiosity and intellect to "looking" and to the appropriation of existing images, displaying an unusually subtle yet purposeful intentionality. To the largely anonymous pictures he "rescues" from such sources as old magazines, textbooks, and stock footage, Lassry adds traces of his own artistic identity and presence, much like the prevenient figure of Hans-Peter Feldmann, the German artist who, beginning in the 1960s, made editions of small booklets of typically uncaptioned, found images such as posters, postcards, and magazine clippings. Feldmann categorized his enormous "picture archive" according to a personal, idiosyncratic system. Lassry's aim is to "reconsider histories of building images and making pictures."

ELAD LASSRY

He has stated: "My research starts from a place that acknowledges the problems with pictures, on many different levels."¹

¹ Sarah Lehrer-Graiwer, "Studio Visit," FlashArtonline.com, November 18, 2008.

Lassry has an immigrant's vantage point on American culture, having been aware of American pop culture imagery while growing up in Israel, and then deciding to move to the United States to attend art school. He is drawn to a mid-century aesthetic, as found in photo essays in

Born 1977, Tel-Aviv, Israel
Lives and works in Los Angeles, California



18



19



20

publications such as *LIFE* magazine that have a temporal remove from the present that renders them both foreign and oddly comforting. Sometimes Lassry leaves an image in a relatively straightforward form, such as in *Burmese Mother, Kittens* (2008), where a double-take occurs only after the viewer notices the kittens' strange, puppy-like character. Lassry's authorship is more explicit in *Green Plinth, Her, Blue Neon Tube* (2008). Here, Lassry constructs his work from various parts: a cropped picture of a woman demonstrating exercise techniques, a barely recognizable "passport portrait" of a

neon tube, and a shadowy plinth. The image of the woman comes from an obscure 1970s book made by a husband-and-wife team for women about building muscle. The angled line of the blue neon tube meets the ankles of the stretching woman, creating a wide V-shape atop the dark plinth. With the context and circulation of its constituent parts reformulated, *Green Plinth, Her, Blue Neon Tube* demonstrates the distinction between what Lassry calls a "cooked" versus a "raw" image.

Pictures generated by the movie industry, including production stills and head shots of aspiring actors, are another treasure trove for Lassry. In *Red Cross* (2008), a gaudy publicity shot of Ann Margaret decked out in feathered boa and spangled dress is overlaid with a red foil cross. The cross maps out the pose of her body in a strategy of re-objectification, and the

/ 15 / *Elad Lassry Wall*, 2008
C-print, 14 x 11 inches

/ 16 / *Persian Cucumbers*,
Shuk Hakarmel, 2008
C-print, 9 1/2 x 11 inches

/ 17 / *Portrait, Black & White*, 2008
Silver gelatin print
10 x 8 inches

/ 18 / *Burmese Mother, Kittens*, 2008
C-print, 11 1/2 x 14 1/2 inches

/ 19 / *Untitled*, 2008
Foil on magazine paper
14 1/2 x 11 inches

/ 20 / *Untitled (Red Cabbage 1)*, 2008
C-print, 14 1/2 x 11 1/2 inches

All images courtesy David Kordansky Gallery, Los Angeles



foil makes the image, originally produced for mass distribution, a unique work of art. The cross also reinvigorates the surfaces—sequins, feathers, and flesh—captured in the original image.

Lassry's interest in the means and reasons for the production and display of pictures is carried into the framing. He often uses metal frames, the type that are available in every color of the rainbow and are often used for inexpensive posters. Each is carefully color-coordinated with the picture, with the resulting objects sometimes flirting with tackiness and absurdity. In *Untitled (Red Cabbage 2)* (2008), a slick and uncanny picture of halved red cabbages displayed on colored, mirrored pedestals, the dominant color, a hot lavender, is repeated in

the frame. In contrast is Lassry's *Hollywood Bowl, Fog* (2007), a misty panorama with the Los Angeles landmark in the foreground, which is beautiful, accessible, and modestly framed.

Both in his recognizable and more ambiguous pictures, Lassry poses a variety of aesthetic and theoretical questions. What does it mean to be represented pictorially and, relatedly, how is something thus captured representative of its kind? Most vitally, he asks, what does a picture reveal, intentionally or otherwise, about its maker's personal and artistic identity?

/ 21 / Elad Lassry *Untitled (Baguette, Challa, Croissant)*, 2008
C-print
14 x 1/2 x 11 1/2 inches
Courtesy David Kordanasky Gallery, Los Angeles

BLUE MCRIGHT

The tension between nature and culture is an ongoing preoccupation for Blue McRight. Her highly varied bodies of work take on aspects of these two forces, for instance a series of paintings called *Cars With Animal Names*. As the tension between nature and culture has grown more acute in the world at large, McRight's treatment of this dialectic has become more complex, nuanced, and, at times, autobiographical.

As an intersection between nature and culture, suburbia is fertile territory for the artist, who looks particularly at American suburban life and the controlled role of nature in that environment. For instance, *On the Lawn* is a large series of small-scale paintings that take as their subject the perfect green lawn and what that site can either host or exclude. In McRight's hands the lawn is hardly the pristine sites of one's imagination and memory. Difficult questions of emotional life and social identity are at the fore in the majority of the *On the Lawn* paintings. Take, for instance, *Untitled (Preppy Dilemma)* (2006) and *Untitled (Bob)* (2006) in which the lawn becomes a private stage on which to act (or act out) rather than an inviting, open, and communal space.

Some of the *On the Lawn* paintings feature trailers of various sorts that point the way to a current sculptural project. *Holly Mascot* (2009) began for the artist as an "absurd sculpture": an actual vintage trailer that has been reduced in size to an uncomfortable, humorous "slice of toast" of its former self. The aisle is a tight squeeze and the table is barely wide enough for an ashtray. Once inside, a person wears the trailer more than inhabits it. As a form, it evokes old notions of travel, particularly in the "wide-open" American West, and attendant escapist fantasies. As a compromised space, the possibility of travel is subverted and we are reminded of the fact that such trailers spend more time collecting dust in suburban driveways than moving through the wilderness and open road. As *Holly Mascot* developed, the American economy worsened and McRight came to see the trailer's spatial constriction as corresponding to a contraction of the economy and the correspondingly decreasing ability to indulge in flights of fancy.

Born 1956, Wilmington, Delaware
Lives and works in Los Angeles,
California

/ 22 / Blue McRight *Swarm*, 2007
Enamel paint on resin
Dimensions variable
Collection of the Artist



Flock (2008-2009), a recent installation work, had its genesis in a memory of model songbird kits that the artist collected as a child. She began collecting them anew by finding them on eBay. McRight became especially interested in the ones that were broken, partially assembled, or painted oddly and counter to the painstaking directions, as these birds carried more "residue" from the people who once owned them. The antiquated bird-making hobby relates to the meeting between culture and wildlife. It also speaks, from our current vantage point, to ecological and environmental concerns—in particular, the growing dominance of crows that now threaten such songbirds. For her installation, McRight chose to mask the identifying colors of the songbirds with black elastic bandages and bound them with trailing black thread. Monochromatic, mute, and immobile, the birds were perched or suspended unnaturally. Massed together, they were disquieting and elegiac in effect.

In *Superficiality and Superexcrecence*, McRight exhibits her sculptural installation *Swarm* (2007), which consists of cast-resin rabbit and squirrel lawn ornaments painted with a

metal-flake car paint in a ghastly red. As in *Flock*, the animals have been transformed into a specter of their feral selves, their identity as wild things suburbanized. The creatures awkwardly swarm their new location—a gallery's walls—which is far removed from the lawn they were created to decorate. In their profusion and altered surfaces, their presence as a symbol of natural innocence is masked and they become indeterminately menacing, even demonic. But the menace lies in the meddling hands of humans—lawn lovers, drivers, suburbanites, and even artists. They seem to suggest that people are the source of their own discomfort, and perhaps undoing.

/ 23 / Blue McRight *Swarm*, 2007 (detail)
Enamel paint on resin
Dimensions variable
Collection of the artist





24

/ 24 / Joel Morrison *Untitled*, 2009
Stainless steel
99 x 21 x 8 1/2 inches
Courtesy Gagosian Gallery, Beverly Hills

Born 1976, Seattle, Washington
Lives and works in Los Angeles, California

Joel Morrison's "obsession with surface and finish, and his deep interest in the history of sculpture" have led him to engage with a variety of plastic traditions, ranging from the slighted British Modernism of Henry Moore, to the enshrined high Modernism of Brancusi,

/ i / Aimee Chang, "Joel Morrison," California Biennial 2006 (Newport Beach: Orange County Museum of Art, 2006), 117. / ii / Joel Morrison, email correspondence with the author, January 5, 2009.

through the bluster of Pop and the mess of assemblage. As a consequence of his formal promiscuity, Morrison's work frequently assumes a hybrid formal character. This taste for sampling is balanced, however, by the artist's interest in extravagant, monochrome surface effects, which he often uses to resolve the heterogeneity of his compositions, or, more saliently, as the artist has noted, to transform "concept into object."ⁱⁱ

Morrison's practice hinges on the tension he stages between the way his work is conceived and executed, and the way it is presented to the spectator, between the substance he strategically conceals and the sumptuous surfaces he presents. For Morrison, surfaces serve two primary functions: they unify and beautify his sculptures, transforming ungainly

masses of detritus into wildly seductive objects, and they operate as cloaking devices, partially masking his materials and processes, allowing the origins of a work to live on only as a buried secret or implication. The act of interpretation, then, necessarily entails both archaeology and speculation. Earlier works such as *Odium, Black* (2004), for example, see Morrison coating unspecified trash in highly burnished fiberglass, the sealed contents of the sculpture straining and scratching to be seen. In this work and others, such as *Thunderbird Blue Bird (A Head)* (2002), content (and contents) seem to be held in check or denied by an irresistible formalism. In this sense, Morrison's sculptures from this period successfully objectify the conflict between the conventional avant-garde imperative to produce content-driven work, and the reality that the very same work exists as a market commodity.

JOEL
MORRISON



25



26

Two recent works included in this exhibition, both polished stainless steel, show Morrison developing further his interest in casting processes. *Weatherballoon Caught in a Bear Trap* (2008) is as uncanny as its descriptive title suggests. An unhappy union of two opposites, the sculpture was made by simply ramming an inflated weather balloon into the sharp,

/ iii / Ibid.

steel jaws of a bear trap. Cast in lustrous stainless steel, the sumptuousness of the object does not cloak the brutality of the mechanism, but in fact throws it into relief; the casting process emphasizes the violence of the sharp edges as they threaten to puncture the balloon. Like much of Morrison's work, beyond the slick surface lies the implication of abjection. In this case, the balloon appears vaguely anatomical, as if sitting on the steel mouth, enveloping it, just as the jaws of the trap work greedily to consume the bulbous mass. The slickness of the surface is, therefore, also equally sickening and disquieting.

More hermetic and less visceral in its critical address is a new work produced for this exhibition. For this piece, Morrison wrapped a replica John McCracken plank in bubble wrap and cast the composite form in stainless steel. Morrison's choice of material riffs on the famously precious quality of McCracken's signature, highly lustrous surfaces. However, applied to bubble wrap, a material associated with crating and commerce, Morrison's choice of materials assumes a more critical edge, marking his work explicitly as an object with trade value, part of the fast-paced world of global capital and exchange, and ready to travel. Like much of his work to date, this sculpture pits the value of an idea against the value of an object, presenting the "sumptuous object" as both seductive and repellent.¹¹¹

—Christopher Bedford

/ 25 / Joel Morrison *Weatherballoon Caught in a Bear Trap*, 2008
Stainless steel
28 x 34 x 30 inches
Courtesy Gagosian Gallery, Beverly Hills

/ 26 / Joel Morrison *Thunderbird Blue Bird (A Head)*, 2002
Fiberglass and paint over mixed media; plastic laminate
78 x 36 x 24 inches (including pedestal)
Collection David Richards and Geoff Tuck, Los Angeles

/ 27 / Kori Newkirk *RANK*, 2008
Mirrored acrylic, steel, microphones,
chrome-plated brass, vinyl, and acrylic paint
Dimensions variable
Courtesy The Project, New York

In an influential conversation at the time of the 1993 Whitney Biennial, Deborah Kass told Kori Newkirk that someone will always make abstract or conceptual paintings better than his, and that when he started making work about himself, then he would make something that no one could do better. Newkirk decided: "No one can make a better Kori Newkirk about Kori Newkirk than Kori Newkirk. So with that I was almost given permission."¹ Examining African American identity from his own perspective has been a productive avenue for the artist. "I always knew that Black was beautiful in the '60s and powerful in the '70s, but growing up... in the '80s and '90s, I didn't know what Black was supposed to be for me."² Nevertheless, without a savvy and novel approach to material and form, Newkirk concluded, he might make "a better Kori Newkirk" than someone else, but little more. Newkirk's many hanging curtains made of braided synthetic hair and pony beads—inspired by the media attention lavished on Venus and Serena Williams's hairstyles—are a case in point. The suggestively titled *Younger* (2004), for example, depicts a quiet, generic-looking suburban scene. The title, however, introduces some degree of specificity: Younger is the name of the African-American family in Lorraine Hansberry's 1959 play *A Raisin in the Sun* that moves to a white, suburban neighborhood.

Newkirk's recent mid-career retrospective at the Studio Museum in Harlem and the Pasadena Museum of California Art (2007–2008) showcased the variety of his artistic output (including video, sculpture, and painting) and his consistent investigation of urban life, African American culture, notions of beauty and functionality, and avenues and accoutrements of self-presentation. Much of Newkirk's work sits squarely within the premise of *Superficiality and Superexcesscence*, especially a number of his most recent projects. *Helix* (2006), for example, is a clear, suspended Plexiglas form that emulates fire escapes that Newkirk saw in downtown Los Angeles. Its practical, safety functions are replaced with an uncanny beauty in part bestowed by its shiny, pristine material and elevated location. *Helix* tows a transparent line between representational form and abstraction. *RANK* (2008), another ambitious sculptural installation, similarly recreated an identifiable object in unexpected materials. In this case, an oversized podium carrying a jumbled abundance of microphones was dramatically rendered in a highly polished, mirrored surface. The subjects of spectacle and celebrity were put on exaggerated display, as was the legacy of "theatrical" Minimalist sculpture. Displayed on the eve of the 2008

/ i / "Thelma Golden in conversation with Kori Newkirk," *Kori Newkirk 1997–2007* (Los Angeles: Fellows of Contemporary Art, 2007), 29.
/ ii / Huey Copeland, "A Family Resemblance," *Kori Newkirk 1997–2007*, 60.

Born 1970, Bronx, New York
Lives and works in Los Angeles, California



KORI NEWKIRK



U.S. presidential election, *RANK* reminded the reflected viewers not only of what constitutes political showmanship, but also of their own potential roles and responsibilities within the media-bound political process.

In *Superficiality and Superexcrecence*, Newkirk presents a new work that uses the same reflective Mylar that he used to curtain the walls of the gallery for his installation of *RANK*. Newkirk purposefully plays on Robert Morris's felt pieces from the 1960s and '70s, specifically Morris's then-noteworthy choice of an unusual material. As the choice of felt was meaningful, in Morris's opinion, for the "sculptural moment," so too does Newkirk find relevance in using Mylar for his installations. While Morris's stated intention was not to reveal his soul but the nature of his materials, it has since

been recognized that personal experiences influenced Morris's choice and deployment of materials more than previously acknowledged by Morris or his critics.ⁱⁱⁱ The alignment of the two artists, then, might be closer than it

would seem, and Newkirk's Mylar-based installation more than a witty redux of an earlier artist's material concerns. As Huey Copeland has aptly observed, Newkirk's work is both "precious and aggressive."^{iv} Through his material-driven practice, Newkirk posits an interior, changing spectacle, infused with personal history, to which the artist can productively return again and again.

ⁱⁱⁱ See Pepe Karmel's interview with Morris, "Robert Morris: Formal Disclosures," *Art in America*, June 1995. ^{iv} Copeland, 62.



28

/ 28 / Kori Newkirk *Dirm*, 2009
Polyethylene, vinyl, Mylar, acrylic, grommets, adhesive
Dimensions Variable
Courtesy of the artist and The Project, New York

/ 29 / Kori Newkirk *Helix*, 2006
Plexiglas and steel cables
42 x 120 x 156
Edition of 3
Courtesy The Project, New York



29

TIA PULITZER

In their delicacy, color, and ostensible subject, many of Tia Pulitzer's ceramic sculptures seem purposefully trapped between the categories of decorative art and fine art. Pulitzer has stated that her work is about the perversity of beauty. *It's Not Me, It's You* (2007) is a salient example. The mutated figurine of a petite, antlered deer, rendered in clay and coated in lilac automotive finish and lacquer, lies down with its rear legs crossed delicately behind it. Only if the viewer decides to approach this easily startled animal will the animal's engorged female genitalia be revealed.

/ 30 / Tia Pulitzer *It's Not Me, It's You*, 2007
Clay, automotive finish, MDF, lacquer
24 x 45 x 32 inches (including pedestal)
Collection Sirje and Michael, Los Angeles

Pulitzer's animals recall an extravagant menagerie commissioned by Augustus the Strong in the early 18th century. This unusual and ambitious project included hundreds of life-size, white porcelain mammals and birds installed in his palace in Dresden, an installation that in its original form must have been both uncanny and gorgeous. Another legacy for Pulitzer's work is that of fantastical literature populated with magical animals. Just as a young reader of such work would appreciate its fluid, whimsical approach to nature and biology, so too does Pulitzer. Using very different means, Pulitzer, like Rebecca Campbell, seeks to capture a mysterious, fleeting moment between childhood and adulthood, a process of maturation that happens both on the surface





Born 1978, Santa Monica, California
Lives and works in Los Angeles,
California

and on the interior. *Doctor* (2006) is a cream-colored sculpture of a naked female figure with a soft, young-looking face and flat chest. She tenderly holds a small dog whom she lets suckle her finger. Pulitzer's aim was to capture the vulnerability of both subjects, referencing scenes of the Virgin Mary and infant Jesus. In this imaginary moment, Pulitzer affords a preservation of innocence, and perhaps staves

/ i / Email correspondence with artist, January 2009. / ii / Lewis Carroll, *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland*, a classic illustrated edition, compiled by Cooper Edens (San Francisco: Chronicle Books, 2000), 32.

off the artist's own internal conflict over the "necessity and tragedy of inevitable sacrifice."ⁱ

One of Pulitzer's new ceramic pieces is based loosely on historical portraits of court women, with an emphasis on the figure's intricate hair, which forms swirls that lead to braids that lead to curls. Like some

of her other sculptures—and like a few of the other artists in the exhibition—it is painted with automotive paint and, additionally, paint that glows in the dark. The unusual finishes that Pulitzer applies enhance the Manneristic sensibility of her work. There is a similar focus on hair in *Shaman*, an unsettling work from 2008, in which the hair obscures all of the male figure's facial features. The figure has not only sacrificed sight, speech, hearing, and taste for his beauty, but, in the guise of an ancient Greek or Roman statue, has no forearms or lower legs. Mute and motionless, with gender apparent but diminished, he is similar to one of the many aestheticized portraits of Alexander the Great, but taken to a level of absurdity. Pulitzer's historical sampling is purposeful yet does not discount the potential for humor seen, in this case, in the figure's luscious hair run amok. Another new project harkens back to another ancient sculptural form, namely that of a Roman sarcophagus figure of a reclining woman. In Pulitzer's hands, this once common form is finished in a startlingly bright pink and is transformed from obsolete to obscene. The surfaces of Pulitzer's sculptures speak to the identities of her figures, and the surfaces work to incline the viewer to look inward. The surface effects and historical distortion of her frozen or captured figures and animals pose timeless questions and riddles. As Alice said in *Alice in Wonderland*: "But then, shall I never get any older than I am now? That'll be a comfort, one way—never to be an old woman—but then—always to have lessons to learn!"ⁱⁱ

/ 31 / Tia Pulitzer *On a Mission*, 2008
Ceramic, automotive finish, MDF and lacquer
31 1/2 x 45 x 56 inches (including pedestal)
Collection of the artist

Born 1968, Los Angeles, California
Lives and works in Los Angeles, California;
Chicago, Illinois; and Berlin, Germany

Catherine Sullivan's film, video, and performance oeuvre, in its idiosyncratic, baroque, and topical complexity, resists simple summarization. The artist is clearly drawn to multi-layered subjects and stories of transformation, often related to performance and performers. Sullivan trained as an actress before studying studio art at Art Center College of Design in Pasadena. She seeks, through her work, to bring diverse material into dialogue with the politics and popular culture of her time. She says, "The inspiration of the work comes through the privilege of being able to consume information.... I've thought a lot as an artist about what it means to operate with any information I want and with the privilege of using that information in any way I want."¹

This investment in information gathering is reflected in Sullivan's penchant for recasting, miscasting, and aggressively recontextualizing historical figures and narratives, a research intensive process never undertaken lightly. More than once she has taken as her subject the relationship of Helen Keller to her teacher Annie Sullivan and the filmic portrayals of the two women by Patty Duke and Anne Bancroft, respectively. In Sullivan's *Gold Standard* (2001), the two are recast or, more aptly, miscast: a black woman plays Annie and a man plays

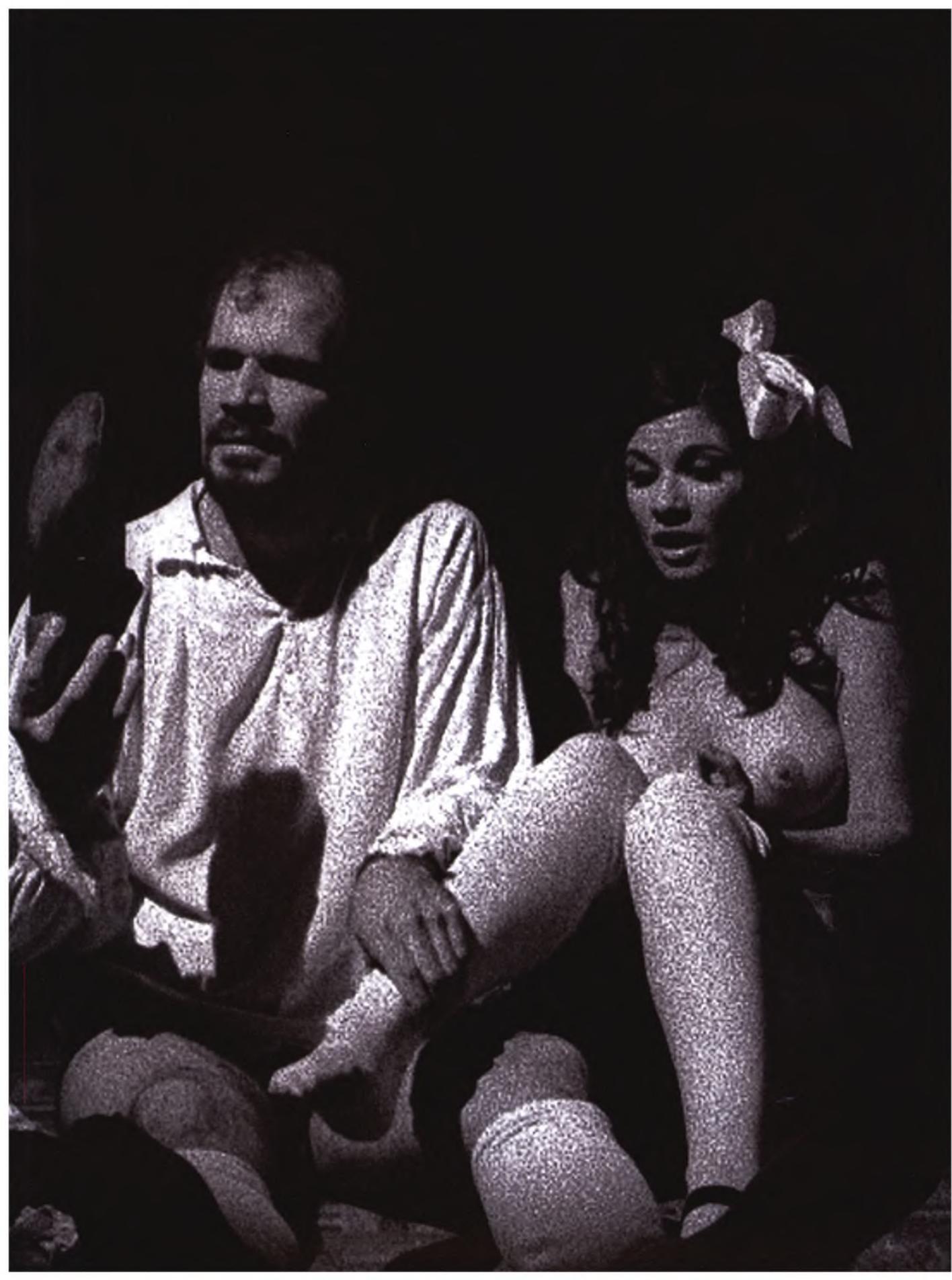
Helen, which results in upending expectations and complicating both their interactions and the fusion of actor and role. Sullivan's work interrogates the nature of a performed character and asks how this personally relates to the performer.

For the film *Lulu oder Wozu braucht die Bourgeoisie die Verzweiflung* (2007), which is featured in *Superficiality and Superexcrecence*, Sullivan collaborated with conductor Christian von Borries. The multi-layered project centers on Louise Brooks, the dancer-turned-silent-film-actress who portrayed Lulu in G.W. Pabst's film *Pandora's Box* in 1929. Von Borries was interested primarily in Alban Berg's opera *Lulu*, and in how the opera and Pabst's film existed simultaneously but with no awareness of each other. Sullivan was captivated by the film and British theatre critic Kenneth Tynan's intense fascination with Brooks, both on- and off-screen. The layered images in Sullivan's film are comprised of footage from *Pandora's Box*; the nude musical *Oh! Calcutta!*, of which Tynan was

/ 1 / Art:21 interview with Catherine Sullivan, <http://www.pbs.org/art21/artists/sullivan>.

/ 32 / Catherine Sullivan *Lulu oder Wozu braucht die Bourgeoisie die Verzweiflung*, 2007
16 mm film, discontinued super 8mm film and digital media mastered to digital media, black and white, no sound
30 minutes
Courtesy Metro Pictures, New York

CATHERINE
SULLIVAN



a co-creator; imagined scenes between Tynan and an elderly Louise Brooks; and phantom characters inspired by *Oh! Calcutta!*.

During her colorful life, Brooks repeatedly transformed herself and was transformed by circumstances. Tynan, who presumably saw some of his own psycho-sexual proclivities in Brooks, suffered his own fall from grace. By chance, Tynan saw *Pandora's Box* one day on television, which lead him to seek out the reclusive star of the "film on which my fantasies had fed ever since I first saw it, a quarter of a century before."ⁱⁱ The resulting essay, "The Girl in the Black Helmet," is most revealing of Tynan, specifically as it unveils the role of performance in his own life. Tynan quotes Brooks as saying: "The great art of films does not consist in descriptive movement of face and body, but in the movements of thought and soul transmitted in a kind of intense isolation."ⁱⁱⁱ This passage prefigures Brooks's loneliness, the possibility of her "discovery" by Tynan, and, ultimately, for Sullivan's filmic reckoning of the two.

In *Lulu*, Sullivan conflates diverse imagery to rescue a relatively obscure narrative and to give two historical figures the stage on which to perform and transform themselves one more time. While the convoluted background for the piece is not presented in a straightforward manner, the project is more rewarding when the viewer unearths it. By mining the stories of fascinating historical figures that teeter on the brink of obscurity, Sullivan reminds us of how close we all exist to the threshold of being lost or famous, and also of the possible riches of such investigation in which identities, both performed and real, blur and come into focus purposefully.

/ ii / Kenneth Tynan, "The Girl in the Black Helmet," *New Yorker*, June 11, 1979. / iii / Louise Brooks quoted in Tynan.

EXHIBITION CHECKLIST

AMY ADLER

/ Once In Love With Amy / 1997

Cibachrome print
3 panels, 50 x 34 inches each
Collection Sirje and Michael Gold, Los Angeles

/ Centerfold #3 / 2003

Cibachrome on aluminum
48 x 68 inches
Collection David Stewart, Los Angeles

REBECCA CAMPBELL

/ Salt Palace / 2005

Oil on canvas
96 x 144 inches
Private Collection, Courtesy LA Lover,
Venice, CA

/ Hot Jesus / 2007

Oil on canvas
60 x 43 1/2 inches
Collection Jane and Barton Shallat, New York

MARCELINO GONÇALVES

/ Glass Top / 2007

Oil and graphite on panel
48 x 40 inches
Collection of the artist

/ Dirty Sneakers / 2007

Oil and graphite on panel
40 x 48 inches
Collection of the artist

LIA HALLORAN

/ Dark Skate/LA River Bridge / 2007

Chromogenic print
48 x 48 inches
Courtesy DCKT Contemporary, New York

/ Frantic MIA / 2008

Cibachrome print
4 panels, 47 1/2 x 59 1/2 inches each,
95 x 119 inches overall
Courtesy DCKT Contemporary, New York

SALOMÓN HUERTA

/ Untitled Wrestler (Spiral Mask) / 2007

Oil on canvas on panel
61 x 48 inches
Courtesy of the artist and Patrick Painter, Inc.,
Santa Monica, CA

ELLIOTT HUNDLEY

/ Landslide / 2003

Mixed media on foam core
5 panels: 84 x 24 inches each,
84 x 120 inches overall
Collection Dean Valentine and Amy Adelson,
Beverly Hills

KURT KAUPER

/ Diva Fiction #4 / 1997

Oil on birch panel
82 x 48 inches
Collection Kerry Hannawell and
Matthew Iadarola, Los Angeles

/ Diva Fiction #7 / 1998

Oil on birch panel
70 x 54 inches
Collection Tia and David Hoberman,
Los Angeles

/ Rodrigue / 2004

Oil on birch panel
31 x 23 3/4 inches
Collection Jill and Dennis Roach, Beverly Hills

ELAD LASSRY

/ Wall / 2008
C-print
14 x 11 inches

/ Persian Cucumbers Shuk Hakarmel / 2008
C-print,
9 1/2 x 11 inches

/ Portrait, Black & White / 2008
Silver gelatin print
10 x 8 inches

/ Burmese Mother, Kittens / 2008
C-print
11 1/2 x 14 1/2 inches

/ Untitled / 2008
Foil on magazine paper
14 1/2 x 11 inches

/ Untitled (Red Cabbage 1) / 2008
C-print
14 1/2 x 11 1/2 inches

All works courtesy David Kordansky Gallery,
Los Angeles

BLUE MCRIGHT

/ Swarm / 2007
Enamel paint on resin
Dimensions variable
Collection of the Artist

JOEL MORRISON

/ Thunderbird Blue Bird (A Head) / 2002
Fiberglass and paint over mixed media;
plastic laminate
78 x 36 x 24 inches (including pedestal)
Collection David Richards and Geoff Tuck,
Los Angeles

/ Weatherballoon Caught in a Bear Trap / 2008
Stainless steel
28 x 34 x 30 inches
Courtesy Gagosian Gallery, Beverly Hills

/ Untitled / 2009
Stainless steel
99 x 21 x 8 1/2 inches
Courtesy Gagosian Gallery, Beverly Hills

KORI NEWKIRK

/ Dirm / 2009
Polyethylene, vinyl, Mylar, acrylic, grommets,
adhesive
Dimensions Variable
Courtesy of the artist and The Project, New York

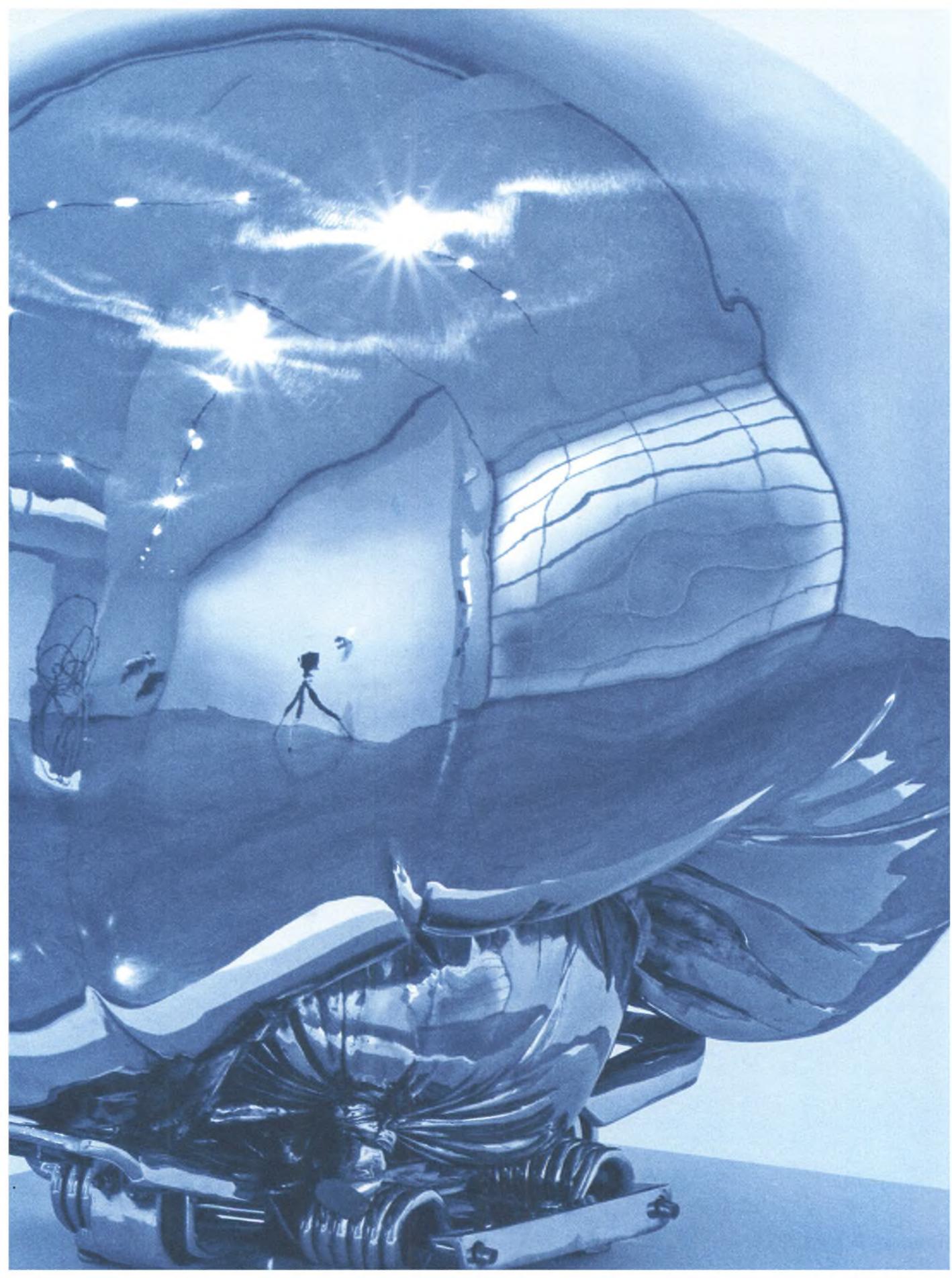
TIA PULITZER

/ It's Not Me, It's You / 2007
Clay, automotive finish, MDF, lacquer
24 x 45 x 32 inches (including pedestal)
Collection Sirje and Michael Gold, Los Angeles

/ On a Mission / 2008
Ceramic, automotive finish, MDF and lacquer
31 1/2 x 45 x 56 inches (including pedestal)
Collection of the artist

CATHERINE SULLIVAN

/ Lulu oder Wozu braucht die Bourgeoisie die Verzweiflung / 2007
16 mm film, discontinued super 8mm film and
digital media mastered to digital media, black
and white, no sound
30 minutes
Courtesy Metro Pictures, New York



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/ 2007 / Kori Newkirk: 1997 – 2007

Thelma Golden, curator
Studio Museum in Harlem
November 14, '07 – March 16, '08

/ 2005 / THING: New Sculpture from Los Angeles

James Elaine, Aimee Chang, and Christopher Miles, curators
Hammer Museum at UCLA
February 6 – June 5

/ 2004 / Topographies

Karen Moss, curator
San Francisco Art Institute
March 19 – May 8

/ 2003 / George Stone: Probabilities – A Midcareer Survey

Carole Anne Klonarides, curator
Barnsdall Municipal Art Gallery,
Los Angeles
September 9 – November 16

/ 2003 / Whiteness, A Wayward Construction

Tyler Stallings, curator
Laguna Art Museum, Laguna Beach
March 16 – July 6

/ 2002 / On Wanting to Grow Horns: The Little Theater of Tom Knechtel

Anne Ayres, curator
Ben Maltz Gallery, Otis College of Art and Design, Los Angeles
November 9, '02 – February 15, '03

/ 2002 / Michael Brewster:

See Hear Now – A Sonic Drawing and Five Acoustic Sculptures
Irene Tsatsos, curator
Los Angeles Contemporary Exhibitions
February 16 – April 20

/ 2001 / Flight Patterns

Connie Butler, curator
Museum of Contemporary Art at the Geffen Contemporary, Los Angeles
November 12, '00 – February 11, '01

/ 1999 / Bruce and Norman Yonemoto: Memory, Matter, and Modern Romance

Karin Higa, curator
Japanese American National Museum, Los Angeles
January 23 – July 4

/ 1999 / Eleanor Antin

Howard N. Fox, curator
Los Angeles County Museum of Art
May 23 – August 23

/ 1998 / Access All Areas

Pilar Perez, curator
Japanese American Cultural and Community Center, Los Angeles
June 6 – July 26

/ 1997 / Scene of the Crime

Ralph Rugoff, curator
UCLA at the Armand Hammer Museum of Art and Cultural Center, Los Angeles
July 22 – October 5

/ 1995 / Lynn Foulkes: Between a Rock and a Hard Place

Marilu Knode, curator
Laguna Art Museum, Laguna Beach, California
October 27, '95 – January 21, '96

/ 1994 / Plane/Structure

David Pagel, curator
Otis Gallery, Otis College of Art and Design, Los Angeles
September 10 – November 5

/ 1993 / Kim Abeles: Encyclopedia Persona, A Fifteen-Year Survey

Karen Moss, curator
Santa Monica Museum of Art, California
September 23 – December 6

/ 1992 / Proof: Los Angeles Art and the Photograph, 1960 – 1980

Charles Desmarais, curator
Laguna Art Museum, Laguna Beach, California
October 31, '93 – January 17, '94

/ 1991 / Facing the Finish: Some Recent California Art

Robert Riley and John Caldwell, curators
San Francisco Museum of Modern Art, California
September 20 – December 1

/ 1991 / Roland Reiss: A Seventeen-Year Survey

Betty Ann Brown, curator
Los Angeles County Municipal Art Gallery
November 19, '91 – January 19, '92

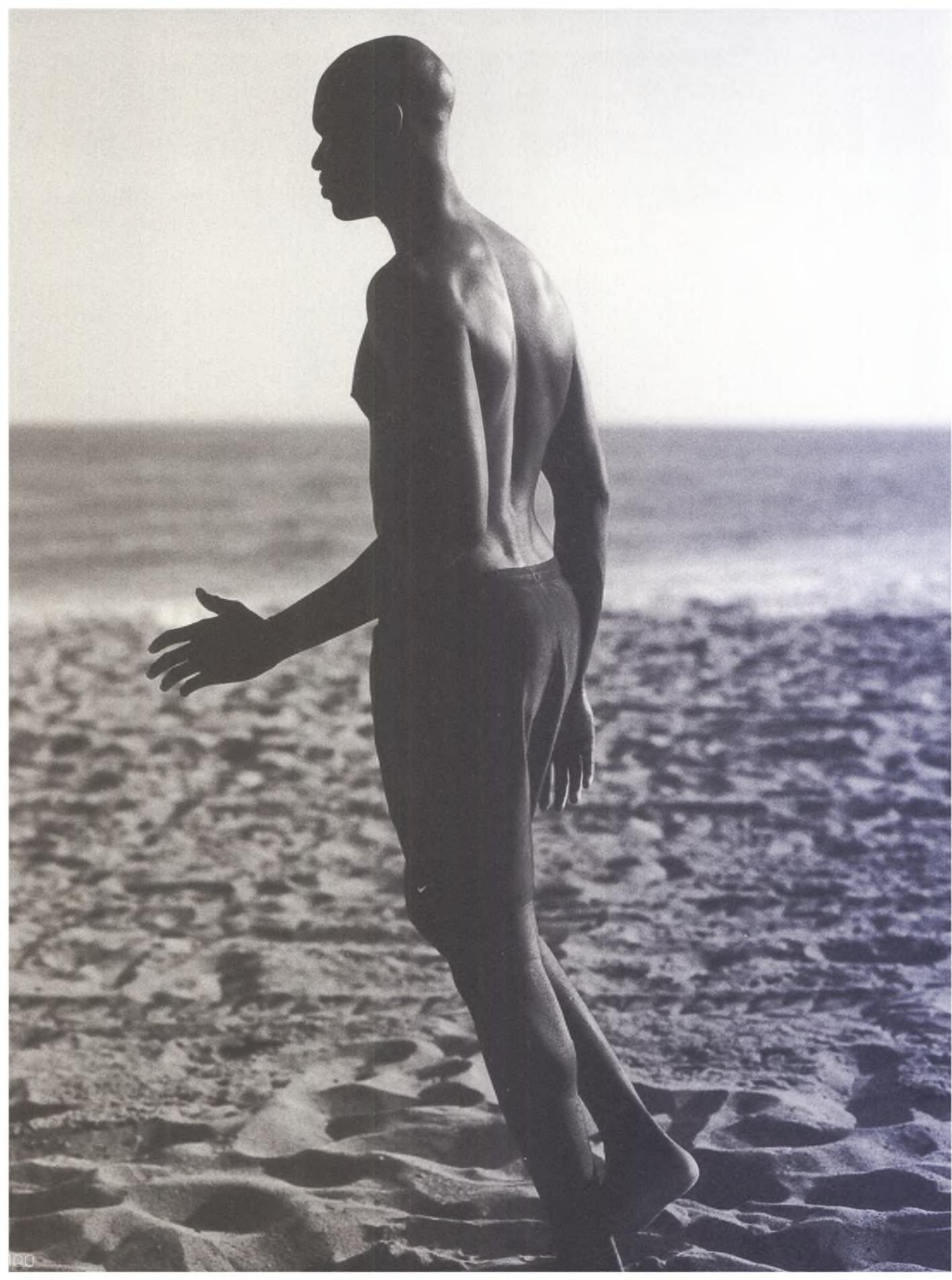
/ 1990 / Lita Albuquerque: Reflections

Henry Hopkins, curator
Santa Monica Museum of Art, California
January 19 – April 1

/ 1989 / The Pasadena Armory Show 1989

Noel Korten, curator
The Armory Center for the Arts, Pasadena, California
November 2, '89 – January 31, '90

- [/ 1988 / Jud Fine](#)
Ronald Onorato, curator
La Jolla Museum of Contemporary Art, California
August 19 – October 2
- [/ 1987 / Variations III: Emerging Artists in Southern California](#)
Melinda Wortz, curator
Los Angeles Contemporary Exhibitions
April 22 – May 31
- [/ 1987 / Perpetual Motion](#)
Betty Turnbull, curator
Santa Barbara Museum of Art, California
November 17, '87 – January 24, '88
- [/ 1986 / William Brice](#)
Ann Goldstein, curator
The Museum of Contemporary Art, Los Angeles
September 1 – October 19
- [/ 1985 / Sunshine and Shadow: Recent Painting in Southern California](#)
Dr. Susan Larsen, curator
Fisher Gallery, University of Southern California, Los Angeles
January 15 – February 23
- [/ 1985 / James Turrell](#)
Julia Brown, curator
Museum of Contemporary Art, Los Angeles
November 13, '85 – February 9, '86
- [/ 1984 / Martha Alf Retrospective](#)
Josine Ianco-Starrels, curator
Los Angeles Municipal Art Gallery
March 6 - April 1
- [/ 1983 / Variations II: Seven Los Angeles Painters](#)
Constance Mallinson, curator
Gallery at the Plaza, Security Pacific National Bank, Los Angeles
May 8 – June 30
- [/ 1982 / Changing Trends: Content and Style—Twelve Southern California Painters](#)
Robert Smith, curator
Laguna Beach Museum of Art, California
November 18, '82 – January 3, '83
- [/ 1981 / Craig Kauffman Comprehensive Survey 1957 – 1980](#)
Robert McDonald, curator
La Jolla Museum of Contemporary Art, California
March 14 – May 3
- [/ 1981 / Paul Wonner: Abstract Realist](#)
George Neubert, curator
San Francisco Museum of Modern Art
October 1 – November 22
- [/ 1980 / Variations: Five Los Angeles Painters](#)
Bruce Hiles and Donald Brewer, curators
University Art Galleries University of Southern California, Los Angeles
October 20 – November 23
- [/ 1979 / Vija Celmins, A Survey Exhibition](#)
Betty Turnbull, curator
Newport Harbor Art Museum, Newport Beach, California
December 15, '79 – February 3, '80
- [/ 1978 / Wallace Berman Retrospective](#)
Hal Glicksman, curator
Otis Gallery, Otis College of Art and Design, Los Angeles
October 24 – November 25
- [/ 1977 / Unstretched Surfaces/ Surfaces Libres](#)
Jean-Luc Bordeaux, Jean-Francois de Canchy, and Alfred Pacquement, curators
Los Angeles Institute of Contemporary Art
November 5 – December 16
- [/ 1976 / Ed Moses Drawings 1958 – 1976](#)
Joseph Masheck, curator
Frederick S. Wight Art Gallery, University of California, Los Angeles
July 13 – August 15



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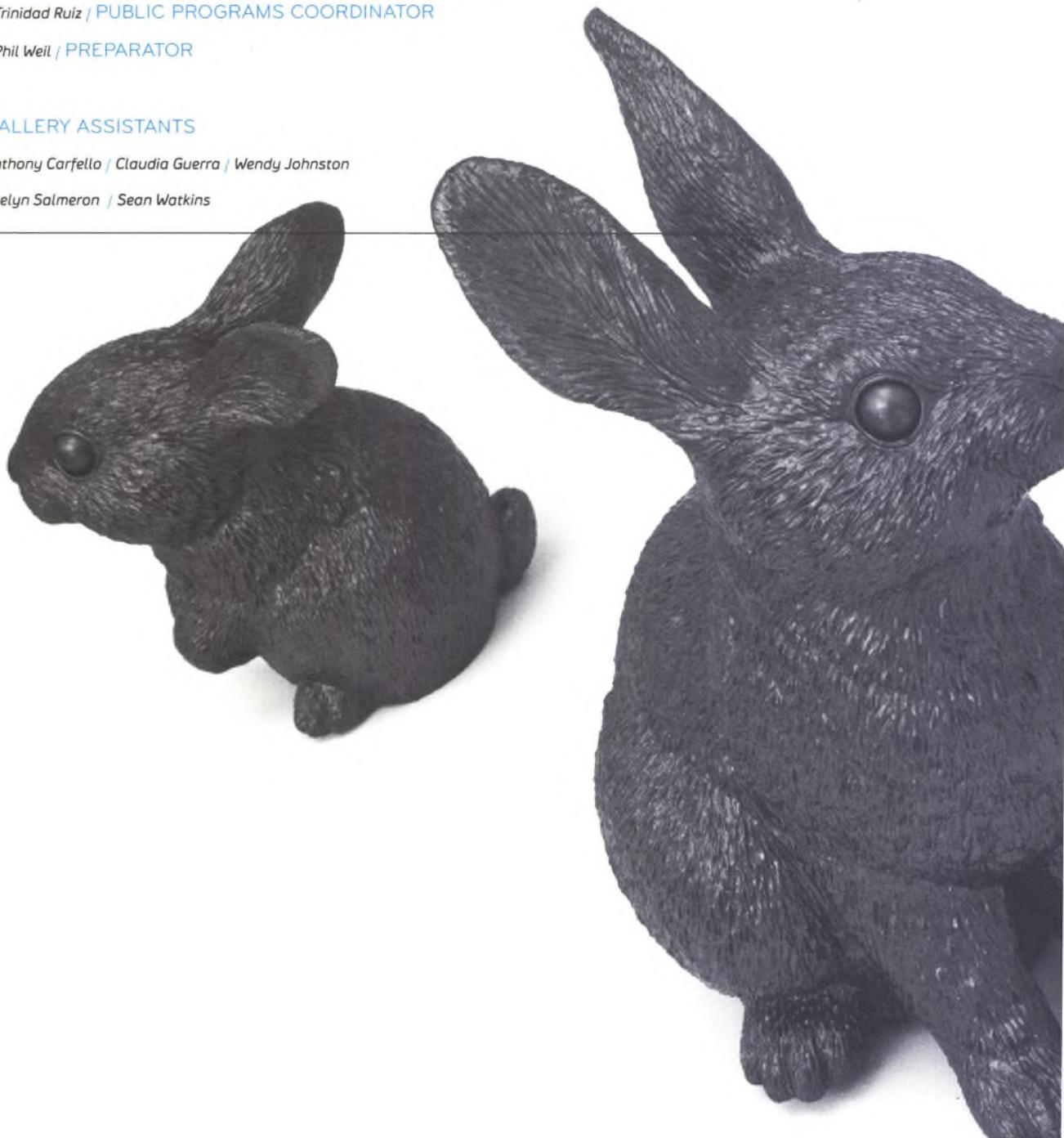
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ARTIST INDEX



/ 46 / AMY ADLER

/ 50 / REBECCA CAMPBELL

/ 54 / MARCELINO GONÇALVES

/ 58 / LIA HALLORAN

/ 62 / SALOMÓN HUERTA

/ 65 / ELLIOTT HUNDLEY

/ 68 / KURT KAUPER

/ 72 / ELAD LASSRY

/ 76 / BLUE MCRIGHT

/ 80 / JOEL MORRISON

/ 84 / KORI NEWKIRK

/ 87 / TIA PULITZER

/ 90 / CATHERINE SULLIVAN

OTIS

Fellows
of Contemporary
Art

This book has been published in conjunction with the exhibition *Superficiality and Superexcessence* at the Ben Maltz Gallery at Otis College of Art and Design, June 27-September 12, 2009, initiated and sponsored by the Fellows of Contemporary Art, organized by the Ben Maltz Gallery at Otis College of Art and Design, and curated by Christopher Bedford, Kristina Newhouse, and Jennifer Wulffson.

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/ cover and contents page / Joel Morrison
Untitled, 2009 (detail)
Stainless steel
99 x 21 x 8 1/2 inches
Courtesy Gagosian Gallery, Beverly Hills

/ fine page / Tia Pulitzer
It's Not Me, It's You, 2007 (detail)
Clay, automotive finish, MDF, lacquer
24 x 45 x 32 inches (including pedestal)
Collection Sirje and Michael Gold, Los Angeles

/ page 05 / Joel Morrison
Weatherballoon Caught in a Bear Trap, 2008
(detail)
Stainless steel
28 x 34 x 30 inches
Courtesy Gagosian Gallery, Beverly Hills

/ page 100 / Elad Lassry
Michael, 2008 (detail)
C-print
14 x 11 inches
Courtesy David Krodansky Gallery, Los Angeles

/ page 102-03 / Blue McRight
Swarm, 2007 (detail)
Enamel paint on resin
Dimensions variable
Collection of the Artist

