

Art in America

December 2006

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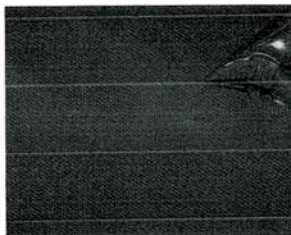
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Cover: Detail of Louise Lawler's *Something About Time and Space But I'm Not Sure What It Is (One) Cherry*, 1998, Cibachrome, 24 by 29½ inches. Courtesy the artist and Metro Pictures Gallery, New York. See article beginning on page 116.

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View of Annabeth Rosen's glazed ceramic sculptures, 2006; at Fleischer Ollman.

always triumphs, brilliantly, as the painter's wit induces even the most difficult forms to join the pictorial drama. —Carter Ratcliff

PHILADELPHIA

Annabeth Rosen at Fleischer Ollman

Quantity seems to be Annabeth Rosen's central theme. It's perhaps her comment on the nature of ceramics, which are so often produced in large numbers even by individual potters. Or perhaps it was an innate attraction to excess that drew her to ceramics in the first place. A few years ago she was exhibiting masses of vertical cylindrical forms that she squashed between heavy horizontal slabs—as if shelving containing hundreds of thick vases had collapsed when the clay was still wet.

In this show of new works, the New York-born artist, who holds the Robert Arneson chair in ceramics at the University of California, Davis, showed mostly more or less globular forms atop pedestals. But the sense of proliferation was still dominant. These untitled objects seem to have grown into their multiplicity like barnacles on a rock or to have accreted like random stuff caught in a lump of concrete. Many feature one element that is larger than the rest, usually on top. One is funnel-like, another suggests a balloon rising from the ground and some look like bodily organs (a stomach, for example). A few resemble underwater mines that bristle with spikes or knobs.

Some of these masses of both hollow and near-solid things are a beige-pink, and some feature passages of drippy greenish black or blotches of ochre, but the overall effect is dirty white. The charm of this work does not rely upon its

palette. What's engaging is all the roundedness—whether womlike, knobby, vegetal or faintly figurative—and the sense of animation. There is something of late Guston, a sort of offhand absurdity, although her agglomeration goes against his spatial isolation. Most of the sculptures are raised on balls or small pointed rod-feet, with the notable exception of a mass of snaky tubes painted with black stripes, cinched together

with an actual black wire, which stands directly on a pedestal.

Rosen's drawings in ink plus gouache or acrylic made a striking addition. Two examples took over a wall with multisheet studies of the body-organ shape, while six individual sheets—each a mass of brushstrokes with tubelike endings arising from a blur—suggest Rosen's objects, further animated. Here the motifs somehow look more threateningly medical. In a small room were a dozen diminutive drawings of the tube-masses, more clearly outlined and sometimes on emotive background colors such as peach or red. This intimate scale manages to be just as commanding as the large size. The sculptures, however, do not raise the issue of scale; their power is in their half familiar/half alien teeming life.

—Janet Koplos

MIAMI

Gavin Perry and Mette Tommerup at Fredric Snitzer

This pair of strongly contrasting but oddly compatible solo exhibitions brought together two leading Miami artists who started their careers elsewhere, Gavin Perry in Philadelphia and Mette Tommerup in Denmark. Perry's visually dazzling large-scale abstractions and Tommerup's intimate, nostalgia-laden imagist works both redefine painting by operating in the interstices between art and craft.

For the past several years, Perry's witty two- and three-dimensional work has referred to the sensibility and implicit eroticism of custom car culture with brightly colored metallic auto spray paint, shag carpets, faux fur and decals. The recent "paintings"

shown here are among his largest and most abstract to date. Each is dominated by brilliantly colored straight lines in a dynamic configuration whose optical vibrations and illusory depths evoke early work by Frank Stella, Al Held and the artists associated with Op Art. Perry's linear patterns are formed by the meticulous, complex layering of vinyl auto stripping tape laid over blond wood supports and covered with a slick coat of epoxy resin—perhaps the most successful use of poured resin since Fred Tomaselli's. Perry's *The Sleep of Reason Breeds Monsters* (2006), which also serves as the title of his exhibition, presents a hypnotic array of colored lines sweeping out from the work's center; like the Goya "Capriccio" that provided its name, it evokes a near-hallucinatory experience. In *Everything is Nothing* (2006), a pulsating, symmetrical diamond pattern reminiscent of Native American weavings is formed by brightly colored metallic and non-metallic vinyl auto detailing strips. These hybrid works unite decoration and "high art" abstraction, handcraft and industrial design.

In contrast to Perry's straight rushing lines, Mette Tommerup's work features melting forms and liquid pools of color. Tommerup has worked with digitally-altered photographs and other computer-generated images for over a decade, using specialty inks and printers to produce extraordinarily rich colors and surface effects. Entitled "Tracks," her varied exhibition addressed the "tracks of life"; the title also seems appropriate to the rippling trails left across the pictures' surfaces in the "Far Near Scrap Series." This group of small-scale works (each measures either 8 by 8 or 12 by 12 inches) originated with printed images that the artist found when helping her grandfather clean out the Copenhagen apartment he had occupied for 64 years. A policeman who was forced

into hiding during the war, he afterward collected and traded children's-book-type illustrations. To the artist, these "scraps" symbolize renewal and hope for the future. *Far Near Scrap Storybook Boys and Girls* (2006)—"Far Near" seems to refer to the way in which the past can remain ever-present—features images of children printed in paint-box colors on maple, the grain of which is echoed in the organic nature of the imagery. The red, wheeled vehicles in *Far Near Scrap Automobiles* (2006) are set in color-filled bubbles against a densely-inked black metallic ground. As both the wood and metal supports are a few inches deep, the works have a pronounced object-like quality which, along with their evocations of childhood innocence and



Above, Gavin Perry: *The Sleep of Reason Breeds Monsters*, 2006, vinyl tape and resin on board, 80 by 64 inches; below, Mette Tommerup: *Far Near Scrap-King of Denmark*, 2006, ink on metallic sheet on board, 8 inches square; both at Fredric Snitzer.

