

A New Deal, Art and Currency / Bric Rotunda Gallery

This group exhibition ruminates on America's presidential legacy by literally manipulating currency - collaging it, photographing it, stamping on it. Jesús Jiménez photographs stacks of Mexican peso bills at such close range that they look like geological strata - these bills correspond to the amounts Mexican workers in the US routinely send to their families in Mexico. As a way of salvaging the short-lived Susan B. Anthony dollar coin, Anissa Mack has made necklaces out of the halved coins for her work *Failure Is Impossible* (2008). Though at times clever, *A New Deal, Art and Currency* is far too literal, a propensity perhaps best exemplified by David Greg Harth, who in big blocky lettering has stamped phrases like 'I Am Oil' and 'I Am Not Church' onto the presidential portraits appearing on US paper money.

Jenny Morgan *Abrasions* /

Like the Spice Gallery

Jenny Morgan's large figurative paintings are built up in coats. Beneath the surface skin of her nude portraits of friends and acquaintances is a hidden layer of bright red flesh, which she scratches at strategically to reveal, literally, the physiology of her subjects. In some portraits, the awkwardly self-reflexive, gangly figures simply appear to have rashes. In others, the skin of an arm is entirely peeled off to reveal an intensely red, almost glistening layer instead of surface skin. While the paintings are technically impressive, this exhibition is, again, also entirely too literal.

Yuliya Lanina *Scene One* /

Dam, Stuhltrager Gallery

Scene One leaves me speechless. Lanina manipulates and reconstructs children's toys as hypersexualised animatronic characters for her films *Mishka* (2008) and *Play With Me* (2007), her characters showing naked skin and smoking stogies as they shift between scenes of depraved sexuality and scenes of judgement. Meanwhile, the gallery has displayed the sets in the main gallery space. Each is a curtained box perched atop a pair of mannequin legs. When I parted the curtains, I found a snowy, night-time landscape with glittering trees and crushed velvet. Another housed a burlesque club, complete with a rotating disco ball. The best thing about it: when I clapped, the little children's toys giggled in unison then flashed their tiny tattooed breasts. Astounding.

Emily Newman *4,000 km from the Mouth* / Klaus von Nichtssagend Gallery

This exhibition was inspired by Newman's move from New York to St Petersburg in 2004 and is a culmination of her

a scumbled surface of white and brown, neither colour able to hold enough of the surface to dominate; an off-square canvas with green and black outlines suggesting the chamfered flaps of an envelope. But these gestures, which pack a quiet but riveting punch, are overwhelmed by too much 'this and that': the word 'coward' spelled out in black fabric and torn shirt sleeves, a brushy mess of grey and green; two lengths of ripped cloth joined by splintery fragments. The result is diffuseness. It's late; I'm tired. I'm sick. Sick of galleries too numerous to mention. I tell myself, I'm glad they're here, proud there is this much art happening here in my beloved city, which I believed was the greatest in the world so many decades ago when I was a kid and the world seemed very different. I understand that what I'm seeing, in the main, and what I'm writing are at the bottom of the pyramid, the foundation that supports the Picassos and the James Joyces and everyone else in between. But I'm tired. I'm tired of art with 20 moving parts, and of figures that look a fifth-grader's diorama. I'm tired of paintings with lightbulbs in them; I remember them from when they were new, and New York was the greatest city in the world. I'm tired of casual photos of scruffy artists celebrating being scruffy and drunk. It's fun to be down and out when you're on the way up, or you're white and educated. And it's fun to drink and fuck and be proud of the big barf. But it's old now, and it's a lifestyle, minus the fun, that a lot of people are falling into these days. But what's worse is the attitude expressed in the greeting cards that celebrate the downfall of money with lines like, 'Missed you in Miami this year. Thinking of you in this difficult time', because what's happening is too scary for that kind of sour-grapes humour.

★★★★

(10 reviews to go)

Fred Sandback /

David Zwirner

Sandback's arrangements of strands of yarn strung from floor to ceiling or across corners almost make thin air palpable. You see space hovering around and between the few lengths of woollen string that fill the emptiness of Zwirner's massive rooms. But the effect seems not to humble these grand spaces, but to ramp up the tenor of this quiet, spare work. The largest pieces were all realised posthumously, following directions left by the artist, but all the same, it's a reaching for size, and a substitution of the impressive for the subtle. The magic of Sandback's work is that such an economy of means can so transform space. Its power lies, then, in its total lack of monumentality, not in the cheap grandiosity it achieves here.

On Kawara *One Million Years* /

David Zwirner

The same sense of commercial aggrandisement haunts the Kawara show - a live reading (volunteers recite the dates in two-hour stints) of his 20-volume sets *One Million Years [Past]* and *One Million Years [Future]*. CDs produced and edited from these readings will then

'As an artist, Smithson was a poet, at his best in critical, philosophical, and manifesto-like pieces that he wrote for *Artforum* and other magazines between 1966 and 1973. If his art is great - in the sense that great art, whatever else it does, nags at the minds of subsequent artists - it is so in ways that do not meet the eye but take form in cogitation. In visual mediums, Smithson was some combination of the congenitally talentless and the allergic to sensory enjoyment... But his coldly impassioned, polymathic, torrential essays are objects of art that will outlive much of what hangs in modern museums.' - Peter Schjeldahl, *The New Yorker*, 5 September 2005

Jason Kraus /

Rental

(presented by Redling Fine Art, LA)

Jason Kraus's sculptures and photographs have a well-balanced and even-better-polished quality. For his show at RENTAL/Redling Fine Art, motorcycle parts sit alongside identical casts, in plastic and cement, while plaster casts of wrecked car fenders and bumpers gnarl their way up gallery walls. In light-jet prints taken from Betamax stills, spectators look onto an Evil Knievel performance that Kraus hides from sight, his sculptures sufficing as fetish-relics. This all makes for a somewhat familiar game of aesthetic seduction, albeit one carried out with an assurance that belies the artist's young age.

Mark Barrow, Anthony Pearson and Blinky Palermo /

Lisa Cooley

Lisa Cooley's first in a series of three-person, intergenerational shows exhibits far more cohesion and scholarship than Team's similar attempt. Departing from Blinky Palermo's 'Stoffbild' fabric paintings, Cooley exhibits work that also professes a 'materials-based look at abstraction', including Anthony Pearson's solarised, silver-gelatin photographs of inky tinfoil and Mark Barrow's hand-loomed, compulsively dotted canvases. Quiet and meditative, insular yet inviting - all things we've come to expect from Cooley's space.

R.H. Quaytman *Chapter 12: iamb* /

Miguel Abreu

Little justice can be done in this format to the 12th series of works from painter R.H. Quaytman. Yet for my dearth of luminous insight, the artist provides countless surrogates. In Quaytman's poetics, blindness and illumination form the twinned foundations of visibility. Various photographic silkscreens show freestanding, domestic lights overlaying paintings, which in turn crop up on the gallery walls, their intricately patterned fields playing to optical margins. Two comparably straightforward oil paintings reward searing eyes, like commas or semicolons, and subtly inculcate still more careful ways of viewing. A diamond dust-covered silkscreen now betrays its gesso underpainting; the bevelled wood

Art and Love in Renaissance Italy / Metropolitan Museum of Art

'It is unbelievable how much is spent on these new weddings...' If this sounds like your father's lament about the bakery bill when your sister's cake is finally delivered, unscathed, think again; these words came from a groom - in fifteenth-century Florence. Whereas we have *bridezilla.com* to take stock of those special, over-the-top moments, Renaissance Italy had maiolica, marriage portraits, glassware and instruments meant for wooing. Childbirth trays are not as gory as they sound, but rather were painted in celebration of the arrival of a new family member and used to serve delicacies to the convalescing mother in the weeks following delivery. It is impossible to exaggerate the sumptuous nature of these items. My favourite could have been the birth tray whose verso bore two little boys tugging on each other's... well... um... wieners. Is it me or is it hard to take issue with work that's still standing after 600 years? Maybe it's just me.

Diana Kingsley *In Pari Delicto* /

Leo Castelli

These photographs poke fun at poking fun. Where on the postmodern continuum does this put them? I think it's too late at night for this sort of academic nitpicking. They're good. Sarcastic-bourgeois with a touch of erotic-nasty, Kingsley's snark at the trappings of upper-class life manifests itself not just through juxtapositions meant to evoke ennui, but in a further step meant to express ennui at ennui, almost to the extent of getting back to being enthusiastic about the original subject matter. Almost. Silver chalices and equestrian motifs boost the cinematic snob quotient of these domestic tableaux. In *Night Ramble* (2008), a single white-gloved hand holding a burning cigarette floats in darkness near a magnolia flower; *Not Your Friend* (2008), a sort of daytime twin image, finds a languid, black-gloved hand bending over hydrangeas. Each has a curious, almost grotesque punctum that saves it from being a glib depiction of discontent; in the former, the accumulating ash tip is perversely long, becoming an unexpected visual irritant and glory-stealer. In the latter, the glove is skinlike in texture, inserting a fetishistic element into a narrative of disgust. Every single one of these images seems to harbour this type of unexpected twist, and almost each time that twist is different.

Keith Sonnier /

Lever House

I'm sure if I'd gone after dark, this installation of fluorescent lights framing the plate-glass walls of the Lever House lobby would have reflected ad infinitum as claimed, and impressed and dazzled me with its multiplicity of form. But since the building itself houses business, not residential suites, I'm not sure why people would be there at night. I wasn't. So there wasn't much to see. Give me Dan Flavin or Daniel Buren over this anytime.