

Seeing Other People Marianne Boesky Gallery

by William Powhida

What do the curatorial selections of fifteen gallery artists reveal about their own contemporary practices? The obligatory summer group show at Marianne Boesky gallery presents everything from narcissism to thoughtful reflection about the nature of artistic reciprocation. The curatorial premise of the show is simple: each gallery artist



Installation view of *Seeing Other People*. Photo courtesy of Marianne Boesky Gallery.

pairs work of his or her own with an artist of his or her choice. The exhibit is largely an exercise in stylistic or conceptual mirroring, with a few notable exceptions that transcend the obvious choices.

Sarah Sze is one of the few artists who risks being upstaged by her selection. Her choice of Charles and Ray Eames' video "Powers of 10" (1977) is far more interesting than her slight, pseudo-scientific mobile. It is a fascinating piece of video lore and scientific inquiry that has the power to absorb viewers and make them sit on the cold gallery floor as the narrative seamlessly travels the known limits of the physical universe. By comparison, Sze's own sculpture, "The Difference Engine" (2004), lacks the stunning shifts in perspective of the Eames' video and her own site-specific installations. Her choice provides some insight into her own fascination with spatial relationships and material forms. The video is simply the coolest thing on the block and it was made in 1977 for the IBM Corporation.

In the entire exhibit there is really only one curatorial effort that seems to have considered how the works would be read together beyond massaging egos or making historical claims. While Sze's choice of work may be the best, her own work relates to the video only superficially. Donald Moffett creates a new installation by projecting a static DVD image by French author Jean Genet of a topographical image of a male nude opposite two of his own small, pencil drawings of a penis and scrotum. On the middle wall, Moffett hangs an abstract diptych of sensual, silver ribbons of paint. The three works together create a meta-narrative about homosexual, voyeuristic desire. It is an elegant montage that recontextualizes three separate works.

The most equitable pairing in the show belongs to Yoshitomo Nara for including British artist David Shrigley. Shrigley's wry sense of humor is evident in his series of dream-like narratives that range from the political

to the existential. In one ink sketch, a Freudian narrative unfolds in which nude men play beach volleyball as wild dogs stalk around them until a tidal wave washes the men out to sea. In another, a pair of crudely drawn legs labeled "the runner of the means of production" stand atop a wheel labeled "the world." This economy of drawing and social consciousness is not lost on Nara. He presents a series of comic narratives featuring his signature angry little girl. Nara replaces Shrigley's cerebral wit with a youthful irreverence and angst that is disarming. Nara's character rails against perceived injustices with a naiveté that is more pop fantasy than Shrigley's Freudian dreams.

There is a great comic relationship between Liz Craft's concrete dwarves and Pentti Monkkonen's carnival-colored, geometric "Beach House" (2004). A reclining dwarf greets the viewer at the gallery entrance, while another stands in admiration of Monkkonen's baroque construction. The absurd relationship between the two works stands in sharp contrast to the obvious conceptual and formal mirroring that mars the rest of the show.

Without descending into tedium, the greater part of the exhibit relies on connections that seem lazy, purely formal, or historically inevitable. Takashi Murakami pairs his stylistic mimicry "Marino" (2002) with nothing other than Andy Warhol's "Camouflage" (1985). Murakami has publicly cited Warhol's camouflage series as a strong influence on his theory of superflat painting and ably demonstrates the stylistic debt. Annee Olofsson pairs her blonde on black photograph "Familiar" (2003) with Cindy Sherman's role-playing "Untitled #122" (1983), which features a blonde in black. The formal similarities notwithstanding, Olofsson's work is about her own identity and personal relationships, while Sherman has made a career out of deconstructing cinematic, artistic, and historical feminine stereotypes. It's nice of Olofsson to recognize Sherman's influence on a new generation of neo-feminists, but her own work is less critique than personal narrative.

Painters Lisa Yuskavage, Kevin Appel, and Rachel Feinstein present awkward choices that do little to inform their own work in any meaningful way. While it certainly is pleasant to see what they like personally, it doesn't strengthen the tenuous position of their own works. Yuskavage has continued to paint variations of the 1995 canvas she presents in the show: an idealized female absorbed with her own sexuality. Her selection of Jeffery Camp doesn't add any depth to her painterly concerns. His shaped canvases of figures at the beach invoke the pastoral concerns of late Matisse paintings. The connection between Kevin Appel's abstract rendition of a tree, "Tree Altered" (2003-4), and Jon Pestoni's languid, washy portraits seems to be a common palette. Barnaby Furnas and Seth Kelly share lumpy figures as subjects.

The show suffers from an abundance of similar choices that do not risk much or offer insight into artistic reciprocity. Francesca Gabbiani's beautiful mixed media collage is placed next to René Daniels's equally lovely untitled watercolor of a zebra and giraffe in the woods. It's an elegant and honest solution that explains Gabbiani's concern with beautiful, overlapping forms and color. It is an example of a curatorial decision that is neither self-absorbed nor sadly overblown. As the title suggests, some of the artists could have benefited by looking beyond their own insular relationships and messed around a bit; it would have been sexier and less academic.