

Noam Rappaport

COLUMNS

Paintings of Noam Rappaport, the canvas assumes a character of its own, becoming an ingredient with weight equal to that of any other in his first solo exhibition at White Columns, the artist gave his work a similar identity, and did so for a list of other structural bits and pieces, from nails and screws to wiring. The New York-based artist seems to aim for a kind of material transparency, through a practice that also constantly directs our attention to the modest and the everyday.



Rappaport's constructions, then, have a rawness that reveals a sensitivity to the potential of the just-found and the jerry-rigged. But more important, his works derive from the realm of intuition and experimentation, in which colors and lines, shapes and textures are juxtaposed and combined with a seeming casualness that can veil a finely-tuned subtlety. Rappaport's sensibility might be aligned with those of Richard Tuttle, Mitzi Pederson, B. Wurtz (with whom he exhibited last year), and even Georg Herold. But there's a personal touch to his anti-crafted gambits that prevents them from ever seeming too derivative.

The show opens with *Untitled (Gray #2)*, 2010, a wall-mounted construction featuring a tall, rectangular frame with one curved side, to which a sheet of canvas has been attached in such a way that the underlying wooden shape remains clearly visible. The canvas does not fully cover the frame but stops short of its top and bottom, and the third of the material is painted dark gray, the colored area partly filled in sky blue pencil. Imagine an entry from *Tablet: 1948–1973*, with Kelly's volume of sketches and collages, writ large; *Untitled #2* (should we call it a painting? A relief? A sculpture?) has a similarly effortless and irreducible grace. Just across the *Light Blue Door Form*, 2010, repeats the performance with a variation.

Three paintings *Washing Machine*, *Gibbous*, and *Borga*, all of which the action is a little more contained, though all the works revolve around a gently expanded notion of the medium. Here, amorphous white and dark shapes are brushed onto imperfectly stretched canvas panels to cover arrangements of wood fragments, the impression evoking Vincent Fecteau's way with casually assembled forms. *The Sleeper*, 2009–10, and *Three or So*, 2009, also make use of a tweaked base—in both cases, a diagonal bisects the painting's darker and lighter regions—adding a variety of gestural dabs and washes of color. If these two works seem at points to tip over into a certain awkwardness, Rappaport's enterprise as a whole remains grounded in its acknowledgment that such categories are porous, and that there is still a value in occupying them.

Finally, *Collection #5*, 2010, relies on a conventional panel format and inscribes its surface into a repository for a hundred-odd tiny work-fragments and pieces of studio litter. Most are scraps of wood and paper and cork; every now and then, a metal bolt or plastic bag-in-an appearance. The work's combination of order (its composition is a neat grid) and chaos (there is a certain style to the artist's

selections, but a feeling of randomness, too) mirrors Rappaport's methodology as a whole. Toying with familiar materials to quietly undermine our expectations of what constitutes a "legitimate" subject or treatment, he arrives at some lively and likable suggestions.

—Michael Wilson

Josephine Pryde

REENA SPAULINGS FINE ART

For all the vigilance with which Josephine Pryde's art guards meaning, it does reveal some of the ways in which its maker is alert to the complexities and mundanities of being a working artist. She has written for *Texte Zur Kunst* about stealing time on the job through day-dreaming. For her show at Richard Telles Fine Art last year, she presented photographs of a toddler and delivered an opening-night performance of Léo Ferré's "*La Vie d'Artiste*," a song whose lyrics relay a biting narrative of an artist's submission to economic reality. The juxtaposition suggested the complications both in the spheres of finance and individual production of intermingling *la vie d'artiste* with parenthood.

Pryde's exhibitions engender colorful and tentative speculation; for a 2007 show at Berlin's Galerie Neu, deadpan images of sheep flanked by diagrams of yoga positions arranged on Plexiglas with chains. Yoga as enchantment and embodiment of herd mentality? At Reena Spaulings, Pryde showed closely cropped photos of fabric draped on a female mannequin. Again, the work gains resonance through juxtaposition; here the photos were joined by *The Mystery of Artistic Work I, II, and III* (all works 2010), vertical, hanging assemblages of woven baskets that rotated slowly from the ceiling on a mechanism left over from artist team Claire Fontaine's recent exhibition. The gallery's press release archly claimed that the show "turns on the possibility that there is potential for relations involving objects and subjects in art practice to be therapeutic." The avatar of this possibility is a "creative lady," though the camera focuses on her clothes "under the apprehension that they could say more to a viewer about such a lady . . . than an image of her person ever could."

Some of Pryde's close-ups consist of two images of undulating fabric folds conjoined to form not quite contiguous but also not incoherent wholes. The fracture is most obvious in *I Don't Want to Take Away Your Creativity*, in which a strap aborts at the nexus of the photos. In works such as *The Hour as Dream*, where striated, oil-slick black fabric could be Lichtensteinian paintbrush strokes, the duality is almost indistinguishable, a decoy of completeness. In 1988



Josephine Pryde, *I Don't Want to Take Away Your Creativity*, 2010, color photograph, 57 1/2 x 85".

and 19 . . . , both single images, the creative lady's skin peers through small perforations in her blouse that spell out the pieces' respective titles; completing the show's Gordian knot of logic, the press release trumpets her clothing as "technologically advanced."

The effect of Pryde's nonlinear and yet not incoherent juxtapositions here recalls Godard's 1965 film *Alphaville*, in which a society of fragmentation and deletion (of vocabulary, of emotion, of joy in the social) creates for its subjects an effective decoy of emotional satiety. Yes, Pryde's baskets were handmade by the artist and some students—and now they rotate dumbly from the ceiling like the tchotchkes being sold in dollar stores down the street on East Broadway. For all the agency the press text imbues her with, the woman cited as the "guardian" of the ideas, images, and objects has basically been imagined as a model, one who glamorizes another's ideas, images, objects. What is purportedly therapeutic sure seems pathetic. The fixations of the gaze in these photographs cause the works to read as portraits of mental zone-outs: what the eyes fall and lock on when something else is on the brain. Maybe this is the defiant whisper against a deadening empirical and corporate notion of "productivity" embedded in these images. Or maybe the photos are more like illustrations of a twenty-first-century working condition that hovers somewhere between dismal and self-preservationist: the eye-mind divide of daydreaming.

—Nick Stillman

Molly Smith

KATE WERBLE GALLERY

For her third New York solo show—and her first at Kate Werble—Molly Smith grouped diminutive sculptures in casual table-bound cliques, with other, larger assemblages hugging the surrounding walls. Surprisingly evocative installation devices, these bases offered up their wares in a manner that highlighted the delicate formal specificity of each of Smith's structures, while simultaneously rendering the pieces all the more affective for their staged interrelations. For instance, the triangular, sail-like zenith of *Sink*, 2009, repeated the apex of the adjacent *Stand*, 2010; the former's cracked mirror base—though both wholly abstract and obdurately specific in its employment of this material—called to mind nothing so much as the undulating surface of water, whose hues reappeared as the color on *Stand*'s aqueous membrane. Then there was the intricate *Shell*, 2010, a small crepe paper bowl resting alongside them; it recalled a toppled acorn, or, more to the theme perhaps, a beachcomber's prize, with an interior positioned to reveal a dense, quasi-geologic moiré of striated concentric rings. Yet such a description (or associative train) risks overwhelming



View of "Molly Smith," 2010. From left: *Shell*, 2010; *Stand*, 2010; *Sink*, 2009.

these objects, for they also insist on their distantiated relationship as only, at best, loosely referential things, more evocative than obliquely representational.

In this, Smith seems to take seriously her show's title, "Wings," a qualifying phrase that additionally suggests a position of relative to two possibilities—as in, whether x or y , z still prove true. She frames the issue in her accompanying statement: "When I enter a studio, a discarded object I pass on the sidewalk is transferred to my mind, eliciting narrative possibilities through its gesture and context. I am drawn to the enigmatic possibilities of a scene. . . . The images waver between coming together in the whole and falling apart in ambiguity. I explore this transition from the whole to abstraction, whole to part." Her work thus offers and retards a resolution, more generally advocating for possibilities (i.e., without a particular arrangement of objects or an interpretation might be made and under what conditions): a fiberglass fan crumpled just above a wooden umbrella handle in *Pour*, 2010, or the ingenious use of a fractured CD case in *Wing*, 2010. Indeed, her use of Hydrocal and gypsum cement, evidences an emphasis on making that is not at least forestalls, incursions of exogenous meaning—rather than apart from finding, manipulating, and making.

Smith uses such quotidian mainstays as plastic bags and plaster cups as molds, and she dyes the plaster as it is being cast. The resulting pieces appear to be sketches in three dimensions. This tentatively vulnerable quality recalls the work of Eva Hesse, whose ostensibly "non-connotive" paper, tape, and cheesecloth "studioworks" by Briony Fer—were laid out on tables reminiscent of worktables at Hauser & Wirth in New York in the spring. Made in the late 1960s, they summon allusions to anatomical parts (often quite literally, sometimes appearing to have been formed according to the precise contours of a body part) actively disavowing the biographical and biological anachronism that this reading elicits. I couldn't stop thinking of Smith's works, as they, too, articulate a range of possibilities regarding form and of meaning's only provisional but not opposition to it—or at least a desire to have it both ways.

—Suzanne Lacy

Tod Wizon

NICHOLAS ROBINSON GALLERY

Rarely has a series been titled more aptly than Tod Wizon's "Darknesses," 1996. The acrylic panel paintings that make up fourteen nocturnes are a uniform eleven by eight inches on a somber palette of dense blues, punctuated by waves of shafts of radiant yellow. Essentially abstract but strongly evocative of oceanic vistas and drama on a cosmic scale, they were hung in the gallery's basement, as if they had been stewing there for their own doomy, romantic juice. Arranged in a number of loosely suggestive of narrative flow, these physically modest paintings can be imagined as illustrations of Genesis or Revelation, depicting epic mythical events in an unassuming style.

The New York-based Wizon has exhibited extensively since the late 1970s, but much less often over the past ten years. Beyond his landscape painter, he moved gradually toward a more psychologically inflected practice and a less conventionally representational style. It is hard, then, not to wonder what specific circumstance prompted this show's brooding mood, but more productively to consider the group a universe unto itself. The press release's casual mention of Wizon's fascination with "Promethea"