



of reality, never embody it.

In another group of works with titles like *Aperture*, *Sugar*, *Feedback*, and *Vanity*, Oursler projected scrolling texts on white plaster casts of cupids, gargoyles, portrait busts, hands, ice cream cones, books, and dildos, creating miniature stage sets. Lifelike but lifeless and drained of sensorial color, these three-dimensional still lifes offered up mementos of life's enjoyments while words, hard to read and obscured at times by electronic static, discussed modern media or the aesthetics of death. By wrapping these arrangements of humankind's desires and baser urges within the trappings of cinema, Oursler underscored not only the temporality of pleasure but also the way we remember in these media-saturated times.

Oursler completed this installation by turning the largest space in the gallery into a *camera obscura* that included both his sculptures and the audience in

its scope. One wall became a giant projection where a fly occasionally crawled by while those looking became shadow actors in Oursler's theater. As both subject and self-conscious participant, audience members were thus invited to contemplate the significance of their own presence within the artist's meditation on the nature of experience. Juggling high and low, artifice and science, theater and technology in an installation not without humor and eerie spectacle, Oursler raised questions about the legacy of the Age of Reason and our own culture's heavy investment in the material world. As the clock ticks down to the next century, his modern-day allegories on morality and transience certainly give us lots to think about.

—Susan M. Canning

**Jason Rhoades and Paul McCarthy**

David Zwirner



One-time pioneering bad boys Jason Rhoades and Paul McCarthy have teamed to form a production company, *Proposition*. The effluvia from the promotional event at the Peninsula Hotel in Los Angeles, highlighting videotapes

**Above and detail: Jason Rhoades and Paul McCarthy, *Proposition*, 1999. Mixed media, installation view.**

of the artists pitching custom-made art products, was the recent fare at David Zwirner's gallery. The collaborative installation could best be described as a choked and messy scenario replete with adolescent-machotestosterone-inspired obsessive accumulations of sculptural and consumerist objects. Although these L.A. fringe artists said that their Hollywoodesque project was inspired by Charlie Chaplin rather than Andy Warhol, beneath the refrain of shock and spectacle sat familiar East Coast, art world structures.

Drawing on Kurt Schwitters's collage-inspired *Merzbau*, opened sculptural installations, and Pollock's expanded lateral picture plane, contemporary artists, conflating painting and sculpture, have pushed the envelope to

destroy the ties that bind. Jessica Stockholder, for one, derives from painting and counterpoints Rhoades and McCarthy who hail from a sculptural arena that encompasses the pissing-in-public actionism of early Happenings as well as the deep space of Richard Foreman's Ontological Hysterical Theater.

Blocking the entrance to the gallery's white cube were odd-lots from Canal Street, tightly fitted and messy accumulations of Perrier cartons, stacks of Wonder bread, colored lights, hard and soft sculpture, vibrating reclining couches (upholstered in leather), two videotapes, fermentation barrels used for making home-made wine or beer, diagrams, and recontextualized objects strewn in no order.

The first constructed object, *Application Egg*, a 12-foot-square, stuffed enclosure, was clad in white vinyl on the outside, yolk-yellow inside. Penetration ready, it contained a video link to the artists' studio in L.A. Blocking access to the gallery were two large doughnut shapes, one spray-painted to look like the confection, the other an unpainted, two-dimensional version. A critic once analyzed Johns's targets as anally erotic, but these savvy post-Freudians actually employ the double-entendres: "Donut...asshole/media gate; donut, Do Not, do do do," was scribbled on a diagram. The next work, a spinning sculpture of a bucking bronco-cum-Trojan horse, was surmounted by an assaultive phallic boxing bag-figure. Rhoades or McCarthy wrote, "the mythological (bronco)Trojan horse, vehicle, Ferrari or penis, penetrates alien territory to deposit its warriors, (sperm or urine)." Other diagrams, leaned or stacked in corners, served as records of the artists' maniacal equations. Diagramming was also used by Joseph Beuys for his mystical associations. But Rhoades and McCarthy cleverly mock the high ground grumbings of the artist with low consumerist ones. One

diagram deconstructed the title, *Proposition*, as "something offered for consideration or acceptance," or "a request for sexual intercourse," or "an expression in language or signs of something that can be believed, doubted or denied or is either true or false."

A darkened rear room was cluttered with luxury-TV-massage-lounging couches, building materials, stuffed giant doughnut rings, and paired videos. One video, of two women making love had been shot secretly during the promo meeting in a client's hotel room; the other was a record of the artists' pseudo-serious pitch in the Peninsula Hotel boardroom.

In 1982, Julia Kristeva said, "the abject confronts established categories or social taboos through the investigation of degraded elements." With TV's Howard Stern, *Proposition 187* in California, the Clinton/Lewinsky coverage, recent exhibitions like

"Boy Toys" and "Testosterone" (both in Atlanta), and certain sensationalist British artists, the abject has become mainstream. Furthermore, though Rhoades and McCarthy still burst with adolescent energy and continue to try to raise the ante, their collective manner of taboo-tweaking was not as punchy as when they go solo.

—Carolee Thea

#### Mia Westerlund Roosen

Lennon, Weinberg

Mia Westerlund Roosen has long been a subtle maverick in the art world. Her work never fails to challenge the prevailing aesthetic but does so quietly and with extraordinary elegance. Like a diamond in a dime store, Roosen's sculpture cuts through the fickle world of fashion/art to reveal the authentic in a multitude of imitations. In the 1980s, she feminized and eroticized austere forms of concrete and plaster by skinning

them with tinted encaustic. The early 1990s brought a pop spin to her minimal aesthetic when her forms metamorphosed into rows of disembodied breasts and vaginas (*American Beauties; Promises, Promises, Promises*). Repetition soon became a critical aspect of Roosen's work as she began to interact more with the surrounding space through strategic placement of multiple forms. This interaction ultimately continues the physical dialogue with the gallery space that she initiated in 1996.

Roosen's newest installation consists of the massive *Pulse*, a 70-foot wall sculpture, which spans the gallery's two major rooms; three small, although very related, sculptures; and a selection of ink drawings on vellum. Because of its ambitious scale, *Pulse* dominates the gallery physically and psychologically. Being in the gallery with *Pulse* is like being nude in a hall of mirrors—one is emerged in flesh—not nubile flesh but experienced, knowing flesh. The sculpture includes scores of flesh-colored vertical elements, rhythmically placed and stretching nearly from floor to ceiling. (In actuality, the piece is constructed in sections and assembled on site.) The fabric and resin elements remind one of stretched vaginal lips, inviting, yet somehow shocking. The message is emphatic: "Here we are—big, tough, and beautiful." The title, *Pulse*, encourages this impression and clearly equates the wall from which the sculpture forcefully emerges with the body whose structure and operating systems are as hidden and as vital as the building's. That Roosen wants to make visible what is normally hidden is an act of affirmation—a persuasive celebration of female power.

*Stud*, a fascinating counterpoint to *Pulse*, is a small colorless collection of rigid elements.

**Mia Westerlund Roosen, *Pulse*, 1997. Fabric and resin, 12.5 x 69 ft.**



Constructed of plaster and paper pulp, *Stud*, sneaks out of the opposite wall, almost embarrassed to appear. Yet, a stud is a supporting structural element in a wall and should by all logic be as imposing physically as its function. Perhaps Roosen, in a sly linguistic twist, refers both to a wall support and to the vernacular stud—a virile, sexy, promiscuous man. If so, Roosen's *Stud* is ineffectual as a "stud" but makes a powerful artistic statement on sexual roles—particularly in proximity to the radiant *Pulse*.

The brilliant sexual and political undertones of Roosen's art as evidenced in this ambitious, courageous, and intelligent exhibition distinguish her from her contemporaries. Her refined aesthetic is enriched by a life lived with full attention given to nuance, the possibilities of expression, and the throbbing heart of humanity.

—Judith Page

### Holly Zausner

Caren Golden

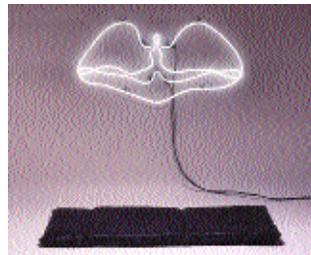
The body has always been Holly Zausner's tool. In her exhibitions of the last few years, this mid-career sculptor created an effigy of herself, a mutable logo, a meditative, comic, elongated Gumby figure. Like a playwright, Zausner stages situations in which the figure performs or mutates. Scale, postures, or the inclusion of alien objects and mediums are the props or clues enabling us to decipher her codes. In 1996, at Galerie Wohnmaschine in Berlin, a hugely enlarged Gumby, pigmented in blue, was stretched through connecting doorways of the gallery, as if in two places at the same time. At the Gramercy Art Fair in 1997, the effigy embraced a queen-sized bed in a hotel room and at the Johnson County Community College in 1998, Zausner draped it on an Eames chair. Like in a Mamet play, Zausner is designer and mistress of the "Game." The *mise-en-scène* describes the figure with props or tokens—the bed, chair, or the hotel room—



each a clue, which has been carefully engineered to confound, tease, and cause mental havoc.

The invitation to her solo exhibition at Caren Golden's gallery in New York was a vintage photograph of the artist. This smirking, bikinied teenager, breasts aplomb, holds a beer bottle tightly by the neck. When fast forwarded into the '90s, it describes the self-conscious anxiety of a woman approaching the millennium and presents us with a brain teaser: why this image? Is it to exhibit her excellent breasts, a comment about time, molting, of divesting the past, or an accelerated persona in the present?

Couched in a mixture of media as metaphor, the works themselves conflate both the formal and the sexual. Ongoing social change, like outmoded skin, is mirrored in collapsed systems. In *Can you see me?* a rubber mold of a female vestiture made of sculpy is draped on an Arne Jacobsen chair, a retro furniture clue. The molted skin of the



teenage Zausner becomes a relic, ves-tit-ure, or vest, hung on a chair—di-vested for examination. The skin-vest, draped on the designer chair, has further clues. A flesh-colored underlayer, still partially attached to its armature, is metaphorically clinging to its past. The retention of such formal concerns reminds us that certain psychological structures still remain.

*You got me floatin* is the mother impression for *Can you see me?* In this work, Zausner exposes her process. Embedded in a plaster mold on a plaster table is a sculpted form, one that supports the process of the work. Here, the sculpy is removed, while white

**Left: Holly Zausner, *Can You See Me?*, 1998. Jacobsen chair and silicon rubber, 32 x 36 x 19 in.**

**Below: *Love and Happiness*, 1998. Silicon rubber and neon, 43.5 x 49.5 x 28 in.**

silicone rubber is poured into the cavity, "like ink," said the artist, or perhaps like semen—the female as vessel again. Turquoise plastic was applied and the black silicone rubber poured. The mediums overflowed the structure but only to the point that Zausner permitted.

*Love and Happiness* broke into another medium, neon. In this case, the familiar spread-eagled gumbiette appeared etherized upon the wall, a conjured essence glowed whitely over the black cushion to reference a psychiatrist's couch. The inescapable black wires attaching the figure to its electrical source elucidated that her power was still derived from being a "female" receptor. We are the psychiatrists, the witnesses, and the sleuths of this game.

In this moment of revelation, Zausner plays in no one medium. Other works present the Gumby frolicking in collages or photographs. The varied postures show a woman moving through time and are clues to Zausner's story. She exposes the intimate moments of a serial protagonist/artist whose game is always afoot.

—Carolee Thea

### Yonkers, New York

#### Ann Sperry

Hudson River Museum

In the opening passages of *The History of Gardens*, Christopher Thacker identifies gardens with icebergs. Acknowledging the challenging dimensions of a subject in which most examples have vanished forever, there is generally the hint of evidence on the surface. But far more is insinuation—out of sight and inscrutable. There is a similar mysterious, inaccessible dimension to Ann Sperry's sculpture. Her inorganic, short-lived gardens cultivate related