

Made in Space

Night Gallery, Los Angeles

Although not a regional survey, *Made in Space's* assembly of 49 works by 30 artists—all handpicked by curators Peter Harkawik and Laura Owens—did not immediately furnish its curatorial premise [March 16–April 15, 2013]. All the artists were at some time based in Los Angeles; most of the work was recent, but some dated to as early as 1987. What governed the show was a press release-cum-exhibition text that resisted scrutiny, a gesture that seemed to extend Night Gallery's veil of cool obscurity (the gallery previously kept hours only in the evening). In anecdotal fashion, Harkawik and Owens' 13-point text listed such SoCal "landmarks" as the crowds that gathered on overpasses to watch O.J. Simpson's white Bronco cruise back into Brentwood in 1994 or a day in 1999 when, according to the text, "a fixed quantity of gasoline was converted to smog." Given that a regional survey is inextricably linked to its local geography, Harkawik and Owens' elusive shuffled chronology maintained that the City of Angels is as diffuse as the haze that blankets it from time to time, and aligned to banality as much as to the spectacle. Likewise, the works in the show did not fit into any single formal category and instead represented a compendium of dispersed (and inherently diverse) practices, all formally discrete points on a sprawling map. Borrowing the words of philosopher Elizabeth Grosz,

Harkawik and Owens noted that, like space, Los Angeles is "emergence and eruption, oriented not to the ordered, the controlled, the static, but to the event, to movement or action."

Yet most of the artworks in *Made in Space* were static (no video or time-based work, for example), and most were genuinely weighty, whether the Jorge Pardo lamp (*Untitled*, 2013) that hung low just above the concrete floor or the leaden frames of the late Eric Orr's paintings on view (consisting of a pair of ombré paintings, like finely tuned Rothkos, *Ngorongoro* and *Taveuni*, and the small reliquary-like *Radio Play*, all 1990). Other works were seemingly placed with a calculated nonchalance that mimicked how they might be encountered on the street. Joshua Callaghan's three *Chicago Snow Chunks* (2012), gritty mounds including sand and resin, were convincing props despite their incongruity in LA's balmy climate. Jedediah Caesar's bricks of street refuse encased in urethane, appropriately titled *Gleaner Stones* (2008–2011), huddled along the gallery's outer perimeter. Caesar's hard-edged line was buffered by the blue, floppy shapes of Hannah Greely's *Conforms* (2013), installed opposite. These 14 yarn-and-wood objects—made by acquaintances of the artist according to a set of instructions—sat on the floor in a cluster and drew the eye around a freestanding wall in the gallery.

Elsewhere, Mungo Thomson's pair of blown-up and stripped-down *Time* magazine covers on mirror (titled appropriately after their respective real-life issue dates: *June 25, 2001 [How the Universe Will End]* and *March 6, 1995 [When Did the Universe Begin?]*, both 2012) are deadpan examples of ontological "lite," but hanging on opposing walls they created a tantalizing mise en abyme. In *Dancers* (2012) Max Maslansky painted a pas de trois approaching a ménage à trois on a rumpled bed sheet using stencils and spray paint to deft effect, rendering the male-female couple and the woman on all fours at their feet with a hazy blur. John Seal's *Orpheus Singing to Pluto for Eurydice's Release* (2013) recalled local stalwart William Leavitt (represented in this show with a small drawing, *Two Dancers with Orchestra*, 2004) and his modified tableaux of domestic interiors. In Seal's installation, his compressed floral riot on canvas—painted with juicy, psychedelic impasto—was mounted on a custom, freestanding wall and fronted by a tall vase of lilies and asters made convincingly of clay and set atop a wooden table. Opposite, Asha Schechter deployed a lost vocabulary of motifs within a space even flatter than Seal's with his stark digital print *Picture 050* (2013). In it, eccentric wooden forms and a soccer ball toy—rendered in CGI—hover over an austere black-and-white grid punctured with random letterforms.

The delightfully awkward subject of Vanessa Conte's *Hot Bike (Green)* (2013), a flattened tricycle seemingly all elbows and knees, floats on a green field that leans toward Miro's scrubbed canvas grounds. Next to it was Marina Pinsky's *Role Model I* (2013), a digital collage consisting of a candid street photo of a man wearing Dockers and shades and superimposed atop Doric columns and related ornament. Rendered near life-size and wrapped around an upright foam-and-metal form, the man's image was an uncanny presence in the gallery.

While almost everything remained still (save for Peter Shire's winsome 2013 mobile *Untitled*, which reworked his iconic Memphis-styled shapes in flat, painted steel), what was ultimately successful about *Made in Space* was Harkawik and Owens' eclectic aesthetic taste. Their varying modes of installation injected the show with a devil-may-care buoyancy and provided enough of an eyeful to entice the observer to drift through it.

—Jen Hutton



ABOVE, TOP: foreground: **Jorge Pardo**, *Untitled*, 2013; background: (left to right) **Peter Shire**, *Untitled*, 2013; **Jesse Mockrin**, *Abracadabra!*, 2013; **Hannah Greely**, *Conforms*, 2013; **Eric Orr**, *Radio Play*, 1990; **Jedediah Caesar**, *Brick*, 2012; **Rebecca Morris**, *Untitled (#02-13)*, 2013; BOTTOM: foreground: **Marina Pinsky**, *Role Model I*, 2013; background: (left to right) **Vanessa Conte**, *Hot Bike (Green)*, 2013; **Hannah Greely**, *Conforms*, 2013; **Jesse Mockrin**, *Abracadabra!*, 2013 [images courtesy of Night Gallery, Los Angeles]