



Rachel Berwick, *Stills* (2000), resin and stainless steel, 22 1/2 x 34 1/2 x 8"



Jonathan Feldschuh, *Spindles* (2000), acrylic on canvas (one panel), 28 1/2 x 24"

through the meandering differentiations of painterly surface, nuanced with shifting luminosities and sudden blackness.

Greenberg traced modernist field painting from Titian through late Monet to Pollock and finally Olafki (with smaller steps along the way), and in strictly academic terms Olafki's paintings (particularly those in the "Celebrations" series) are Titianesque masterpieces—say, Titian in Florida, where light, atmosphere, and water are much more magical than they ever are in Venice. In Greenberg's thinking, Olafki not only completely gave himself up to feeling but achieved what the critic called a "decorative unity" of surface, which for him signified mastery of feeling, and with it strength and self-control.

—Donald Kuspit

RACHEL BERWICK
BRENT SIKKEMA

Rachel Berwick's art is haunted by extinction. For previous exhibitions she has cast animal death masks in amber and taught parrots a defunct Amazonian language. In her most recent show, "Hovering Close to Zero," Berwick focused on the Tasmanian tiger, a creature that survives only in a few bones and in a sixty-second film made in the '20s documenting the disappearing beast. The exhibition consisted of stills from the film, a series of computer-aided forensic re-creations of the tiger in resin, and a group of crystal models cast from tigers' skulls.

Berwick approaches questions of loss, collection, and recollection in part through the lens of scientific knowledge. For the

resin sculptures (the "Stills" series; all works 2000), she scanned images from the film into a computer, which then built up forms using a complicated stereolithographic layering technique, ultimately setting the sculptural "tigers" within gridlike patterns, as if to emphasize their status as specimens to be studied. The works in the "Crystal Skull" series relied on a more immediate process, simply coating tiger skulls (which, in pieces belonging to a natural history museum, were themselves often supposed to have magical, curative properties). The resin sculptures were not particularly visually appealing; they looked a bit like aging Eva Hesse studies. Conversely, the skulls looked almost too perfect in their smooth, clear shelliness; you might initially think you could find something similar in a 5d to store specializing in provocative paperweights. But the more one looked at the work, the more one realized that all these distinct forms of representation—scientific, films, artistic—are just that, representations. None of them can reanimate the once living, now extinct animal. Indeed, not even an exact, life-size replica of a creature can bear witness to its carnal and spiritual presence. And in Berwick's case there is another factor that separates the art from its subject: The very "modernity" that enables such precise re-creation of the tiger is what wiped out the species in the first place. Her work thus becomes a testament to a kind of failure, but a necessary, important one: the failure of memorialization.

It is because Berwick so intelligently investigates the different temporalities of commemoration—and thus of history—

that her art takes on the properties of a haunting: Her pieces invoke something that is not exactly present or absent, neither precisely here (now) nor there (then). They occupy a liminal zone, a state of hovering in-betweenness, in which time is out of joint and unfinished business waits its lodges. If art is in some way still inclined to preserve something of the past and present for the future, Berwick turns our attention to the complexities of that function as well as its relation to science, to mind, and even bearing in mind the associations of crystal: to magic. Moreover, if we consider what it means to lose something irrevocably, to recognize that all attempts to bring back that which was anointed to fail, the work also resonates with more personal, viscerally felt questions. Despite the desire to recover what was lost, the viewer (like the trauma survivor or spurned lover) is left only with incomplete traces—out, more precisely, retracing tiger tracks.

—Nico Israel

JONATHAN FELDSCUHL
CYNTHIA BRON
GALLERY

In "Little Corner of the World," his first solo show in New York, Jonathan Feldschuh exhibited twelve canvases, varying in size but consistent in their mixture of cartoonish sci-fi and romantic verse. A product of the Harvard physics department, Feldschuh has a nice feel for the fine line between microscopic and cosmic conceptions of space and good instincts for the solitary effect of elegance on silliness (and vice versa).

Feldschuh alternates layers of acrylic paint with thick coats of clear medium, so that the final image reads as a series of laminated tissues, each one at once obscuring and revealing those lying beneath. Tightly drawn, faintly figurative elements—root systems or ganglia? robotic pods?—hover near the picture plane, seeming to float on the outer stratum of loose color washes and glassy mediums. Feldschuh softens the forms here and there by sanding the layers of dried acrylic (the canvases are stretched over panels to support this procedure). The result is reminiscent of a digital screen, with its crystalline false space, or of superimposed transparent pages in a medical textbook.

Such direct play of flatness and depth runs the risk of metaphysical postmodernism, suggesting self-conscious comment about painting as a historical phenomenon—the materiality of the shallow abstract surface pined against the illusion of animated proliferation and baroque fantasy. But this particular version of art's pitched battle got warmer as it became more literal. Feldschuh doesn't mind showing us that he is working on very basic problems posed by paint, like how to make it be drawn out or jump out from a canvas—and in these innocent inquiries, he seems to be having a really good time. The paintings are both unapologetically goofy and unapologetically pretty. Color is laid down as if the artist were constantly consulting a painter's encyclopedia of possible gestures: Van Gogh's spatters and comic-book explosions interweave with elegant, calligraphic lines like those of Boris Mardon; Feldschuh's seriously articulated biomechanical forms, meanwhile, evoke something to evoke Eisenberg or Alex Ross. In spite of the shallow, plasticky feel imparted by the acrylic laminations, the paintings remain preoccupied with landscape, always returning to the fundamental organizing principles of foreground, middle ground, and background. There are passages suggestive of Hudson River School sunsets and cloudy skies à la Tappan.

A style so heavily dependent on patchwork runs the risk of a cute softness. There is a forced quality in Feldschuh's titles—*A Wonderful Day in a Wagonwheel Sky*, *As Though to Breathe Were Life*—that suggests he may be trying to do too many things at once, attempting to force more meaning into the paintings than they semiotically warrant. The key to "Little Corner of the World" lay in its coherent physicality. Like a twelve-year-old boy who draws the same muscled superheroes

Rachel Berwick

SIKKEMA JENKINS & CO.

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