



View of Kendell Geer's exhibition "In the Flesh," showing *Akropolis Now*, 2004, razor mesh, shelves, 9 1/4 by 29 1/2 by 1 1/2 feet; at Salon 94.

### Kendell Geers at Salon 94

South African-born Kendell Geers, widely known on the international festival and gallery circuit for sculpture and video installations exploring themes of violence, social justice and sexuality, had his first New York solo exhibition in the ground-floor gallery of Salon 94. The choice of this elegant townhouse space gave the exhibition a relatively restrained tone, especially in light of Geers's reputation as a provocateur. Nonetheless, it brought home issues of personal complicity and privacy that he has presented more transgressively elsewhere.

The exhibition consisted of two sculptures and a series of drawings pinned to the walls. *Akropolis Now* (2004), nearly 30 feet long and 10 feet high, stretched across the all-glass rear wall of the space, not only dominating the room but seeming, at first, a part of it. Constructed of 12 open steel rectangles, stacked in two tiers of six, each containing three unwound rolls of razor mesh, the lacy, screenlike piece filtered the south sun and the tranquil backyard garden in a very pretty way, contradicting the deadly political connotations of the wire (a South African invention, Geers's notes tell us). The columns' intended visual reference to the Acropolis and, by extension, to the birthplace of Western democracy would not, perhaps, have been obvious without the prompting of the Coppolaesque title. With it, the piece became, among other things, a barbed, tightly coiled critique of America's lost idealism and its present self-deluded, militaristic imperialism—a transparent facade, indeed.

In that the large and impressive *Akropolis Now* was mostly an open composition, it made a

pointed contrast to the concentrated density and tiny size of the show's other sculpture, *Potlatch* (12 East 94th Street, New York), a white gold cast of Salon 94's front-door key. This innocuous-looking object, displayed in a vitrine in the entrance hall, conjured up the possibility of a violation of the space at least as real and scary as the holes Geers has on occasion blasted through the walls of other galleries.

In the first drawings that Geers has exhibited, images of the skeletal dome of the former Industrial Promotion Hall in Hiroshima (now preserved as part of the Hiroshima Memorial Peace Park) are silhouetted in white against splashes of violently thrown black ink. The iconic image is defined and at the same time confused by incompatible visual activity, not unlike the way, in earlier works, Geers wrapped a crucifix and other religious symbols in hazard-warning tape. Though the ink splashes—sprurts of black blood—do not particularly resemble Jackson Pollock's drips (first essayed a year or two after the atom bomb was dropped), they inevitably evoke them. They also bring to mind (and implicitly contradict) Pollock's 1951 statement, "The modern painter cannot express this age, the airplane, the atom bomb, the radio, in the old forms of the Renaissance or of any other past culture. Each age finds its own technique."

—Nathan Kerman

### Jean Shin at Frederieke Taylor

Jean Shin has recently earned a reputation for her transformative installations that imbue castoffs of our consumerist society with a new vitality. Several ambitious

installations (all 2004) engaging sculptural assemblage, architecture, painting and drawing were the focus of the artist's first one-person exhibition at Frederieke Taylor Gallery.

For a large installation titled *Hide*, Shin dismantled hundreds of discarded leather shoes and sorted, sewed and assembled them into 13 sculptures that she suspended from the ceiling like flayed animal pelts, using an intricate system of tied shoelaces. Walking through the surreal forest of hanging "skins"—with their richly textured surfaces penetrated by apertures of their unmaking, like faces with their mouths wide open—became a complex spatial experience that invoked aspects of both abstract painting and architecture. Worn, wrinkled, torn, faded and stained, the splayed shoes bore traces of their pasts in the colors, grains, buckles, fringe, perforations, straps, patches, stitching and other intricate detailing. Through a laborious process, the animal hides had been initially transformed into functional footwear which, in turn, was recycled by the artist into a new entity that retained and yet transmuted its lineage.

Another installation, *Clothesline*, employed a series of white button-down shirts stripped down to their mere seams. Strung across a corner of the gallery, the work produced an evocative drawing of linear shadows on the wall while deconstructing the uniformity of corporate dress.

From a distance, *20/20* appeared to be a beguiling cluster of floating, glistening objects. Upon closer inspection, it revealed itself

to be an agglomeration of differently shaped and colored prescription eyeglasses, inserted into a thin wall built in front of a window. Viewers could peer through the lenses onto the landscape of urban architecture beyond, which was modified by the lenses in various ways. Looking through objects once worn by various anonymous individuals made the viewer conscious of the act of seeing and the relativity of experience. Here, as in much of her work, Shin brings together disparate histories in order to set new ones in motion.

—Susan Harris

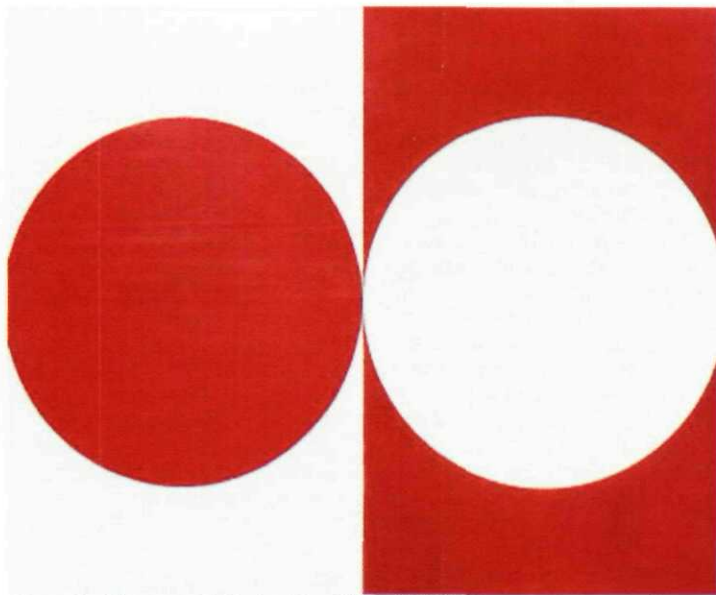
### Alexander Liberman at Ameringer & Yohe

While studying architecture and working as a set designer in Paris in the 1930s, Alexander Liberman (1912-2000), who was born in Kiev, joined the staff of *Vu*, one of the earliest magazines to incorporate photographs. There he began a multipart career: as editor and designer, photographer and painter. After moving to New York, he was appointed editorial director of Condé Nast—a post he held for over 30 years. Liberman was deeply influenced by currents in modernist art in both his own work as a painter and sculptor and in his commercial production.

Liberman played an important role in introducing avant-garde art to mass audiences, commissioning Dalí, Duchamp, Johns and Rauschenberg, among others, in projects for *Vogue* and, in a more uncertain legacy, pioneering the use of contemporary

Jean Shin: *Hide*, 2004, cut leather and suede, dimensions variable; at Frederieke Taylor.





Alexander Liberman: *Diptych—Two Ways*, 1950/2004, enamel on masonite, 60 by 74 1/4 inches; at Ameringer & Yohe.

art in fashion shoots. Notions of high and low culture colored his critical reception as an artist, the insinuation being that his day job must somehow contaminate his art. Upon seeing his paintings, Diana Vreeland exclaimed, "Oh Alex, they'd make such beautiful sweaters!"

This show re-created a 1960 exhibition at Betty Parsons of 15 of Liberman's paintings of circles, a motif on which he had concentrated almost exclusively for the prior decade. In early works, he mainly employed the circle geometrically, as figure against ground or as shape-defining negative space. In *Diptych—Two Ways* (1950), a large (60 by 74 1/4 inches) enamel on masonite, two tall rectangles of equal size are butted together. On the left, a red circle sits on a white ground, while on the right, the colors are reversed. Centered vertically, with space above and below, the circles touch the outside edges and brush up against each other in the middle, appearing to conduct some sort of exchange. Here, as in many similarly composed paintings, circles are endowed with both vaguely transcendental intimations and a snappy, midcentury-modern design esthetic.

Painted in enamel, in some cases on aluminum, these works have an industrial feel (Liberman acknowledged this to Thomas Hess in 1974, comparing his whites to the coating of refrigerators). That and his hard-edge renderings have suggested a minimalist sensibility *avant la lettre*. But Liberman's ambitions were largely pictorial and formalist, as he placed one element next to

another in a flat, open field. There is also a hint of optical afterimage effects.

Liberman exploits the universality of the circle to endow his purely abstract configurations with suggestions of the actual world. An untitled oil on canvas of 1959 shows just two black circles containing a few red and blue dots, but we can also see them as organisms in petri dishes or the distant view through binoculars. Likewise, in three oils on canvas, each titled *Yellow Continuum* (all 1958-59), we find the pared-down configuration of a single large yellow circle and one or more small blue and black ones marshaled to disparate associations: a flat turntablelike disk, the pupil of an eye or planets in orbit around a sun.

—Jonathan Gilmore

### Rachel Howard at the Bohem Foundation

The English painter Rachel Howard's first American exhibition, "Guilty," consisted of a set of large color photographs and a series of 10-foot-high paintings titled after the seven deadly sins: Lust, Avarice, Sloth, Gluttony, Anger, Pride and Envy. In the literature that accompanies the work, Howard states that she has substituted her love of painting for the sinful passions referred to in the work.

Howard spent over two years on the deliriously elegant "Sin" series, within which there is only slight imagistic variation. All seven paintings contain a glowing yellow cross glimpsed through a curtain of vertical brushstrokes painted in crimson, maroon and burgundy,

colors Howard likens to "dead blood, expelled blood." The paintings are a big experience, with a cinematic punch. Light intensity varies from the effulgence of *Avarice* to the lugubriousness of *Pride*.

Howard finishes the paintings by applying many layers of acrylic gloss. This, in effect, distances the viewer from the works, unifying the material presence so that the paintings become pure image. In *Avarice*, for example, the red draperylike strokes are slightly parted and much of the deeply placed yellow light streams dramatically toward the front surface, where it is halted by the thick, clear aspic of the plastic medium.

The deep, glossy surfaces could be interpreted as Howard's way of examining the distance between religious imagery and her professed atheism. Alternately, the slivers of light coming through the parted curtains could be taken as wounds, as in representations of Christ that depict light passing through his tortured body. Or Howard might be casting herself as a doubting Thomas, the New Testament apostle who needed to put his hand in Christ's pierced side in order to believe.

In comparison with the "Sin" paintings, Howard's C-prints on the lower level of the two-story Bohem

Foundation space were comparatively humble, though at 66 1/2 by 49 inches still large-scale. The effect was like attending Low Mass after experiencing the High-Mass pomp of the paintings. This series of photographed views, executed in France, is dominated by the cross, this time derived from shadowy foreground crosspieces of window frames. Where the paintings place the viewer outside of a dramatic apparition, the photographs implicate the viewer in an interior, where the gaze is broken by cruciform silhouettes before reaching a distant, blurry landscape or sky.

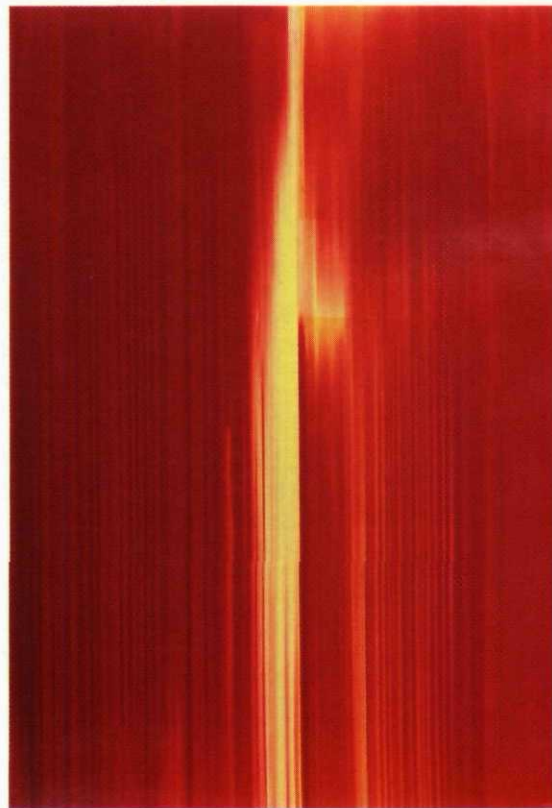
Seductive but baffling, this show seemed to be about smashing together religion's power of affirmation and art's questioning stance in order to see what happens.

—Joe Fyfe

### Harriet Korman at Lennon, Weinberg

In her latest show, Harriet Korman continues in much the same vein as she has for the past few years, and, in fact, the earliest works among these 18 paintings and four pastels date to 2001. There is something delightfully stubborn about this endeavor, in which Korman conceives an allover composition of intersecting shapes and fills them in with solid colors (a few are brushy, but most are not). The forms are roughly geometric, with edges that wobble slightly—triangles, oblongs, squares and circles as well as the more complicated sections left over in between. They are always the same scale in relation to the frame and to each other—not too big, avoiding hierarchies, and not too small, eliminating the effect of scenic distance. In some of the works, a different color is assigned to every shape, but even where colors are occasionally repeated, there is everywhere the sense of a compulsion to ecumenically mete out hues. The result is cheerful, to

Rachel Howard: *Gluttony*, 2002-03, household gloss on canvas, 10 by 7 feet; at the Bohem Foundation.



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