

proto-electronica of Karl-Heinz Stockhausen and Edgar Varèse, which it was, Vega's protean assemblies of rewired lights and found objects trace their lineage from Dan Flavin through Eva Hesse, Alan Saret, Bruce Nauman, Keith Sonnier and Robert Morris.

Suicide played the clubs, CBGB's and Max's Kansas City, in the 1970s, and raved on together by invitation in galleries and lofts and on the road, an ongoing incitement to riot. In 1981, famous but essentially still underground, Suicide was invited to perform in concert at the Walker Art Center in Minneapolis. Meanwhile, Vega exhibited his sculpture as works by Alan Suicide for O.K. Harris Works of Art in 1972 and '73, and in 1983 exhibited at Barbara Gladstone Gallery. Among those who took Vega's sculpture seriously along the way was Jeffrey Deitch, who recalls that he first saw the work at O.K. Harris; he reintroduced Alan Suicide, light sculptor, in this show titled "Collision Drive," named for a 1981 LP.

The artist offered a tortured litany of mostly early wired reliefs, updated and in working order, dimensions variable, along with several new works, glowing red and blue and pink and candle white, that flickered like tongues of fire and glowed in the gallery's twilight like punkster votives dangling in a not quite pristine chapel. Among several floor pieces glimmering in midpassage was

Alan Suicide: Installation view of "Collision Drive," 2002; at Deitch Projects.



Neil Jenney: Installation view of exhibition showing *Linear Piece* sculptures, 1967, aluminum rods; at Alexander and Bonin.

the subdued carnival of *American Supreme 2* (1971-2000), at its center a small black-and-white television incidentally broadcasting the Winter Olympics. Illuminated by the glow of red and pink tubular lights and bulbs were cigarette butts, a handful of tearsheets mounted on ruined cardboard, illegible mementos of some half-forgotten football game. There were readymades of the crucified Christ at the heart of several pieces, among them *Angel* (1971-2001), with a heaped strand of timely ornamental American flag lights piled at the foot of a dangling cascade of many colored bulbs. These works presaged the estheticized strings of lights and wiring of Felix Gonzalez-Torres and Matthew McCaslin, and the nifty plastic letters, photographs and electrified neon of Jack Pierson. The show looked smart and thoroughly engaging.

—Edward Leffingwell

## Neil Jenney at Alexander and Bonin

In the late 1960s, before he came to be identified as a pioneer of the style of crude brushwork and apparently naive imagery dubbed "Bad Painting," Neil Jenney created a series of influential sculptures that participated in dismantling many of the austere tenets of Minimalism and heralded a new, postminimalist interest in a more individualized and expressive form of creativity. Six of those sculptures—five diptychs and a construction of corrugated tin sheeting and fluorescent light fixtures—all from 1967, made up this show.

Each diptych (all are titled *Linear Piece*) is composed of two aluminum rods that have been shaped irregularly by hand to duplicate each other as closely as possible, but whose imperfect twinning is readily apparent as they hang together on the wall. In one instance, each aluminum bar has been bent in half, with one portion remaining perfectly straight and horizontal, and the other undulating and jutting out from the wall. It is as if the rigidity of the formal Minimalist object were at war with a softening, playful freedom. (No doubt, the structure of these inexact pairs anticipates the deadpan premise of Jenney's later paintings, such as *Trees and Lumber*, in which fundamental dichotomies are posed between two incarnations of ostensibly the same thing.)

Like such contemporaries as Eva Hesse and Robert Morris, Jenney addressed the principles of Minimalism—its simplicity of elements, its seriality—only to undermine them in subtle and often affecting ways through the introduction of anthropomorphic elements and a sensitivity to the

expressive potential of raw materials. Although the aluminum of Jenney's sculptures has connotations of industrial processing, it is frequently coated in a vegetal brown and green silicone rubber that suggests an affiliation with some natural locale.

The two rigidly horizontal rods of one work are hung side by side, as if to instantiate nothing but regimented, linear regularity. But their unruly ends are bent in wispy curves that nearly intertwine, like hands reaching for each other, and cast multiple shadows on the wall as would the frayed ends of a rope. Shadows, it should be said, play a significant role in all the diptychs, making salient the importance of the fluctuating environment that art works and audiences share.

—Jonathan Gilmore

## Cecily Brown at Gagosian

In Cecily Brown's new paintings, throngs of bacchanalian bunnies invade pastoral settings rendered with such heavily worked and frenetic brushstrokes that individual details are almost completely subordinated to an allover abstract effect. The generally horizontal format and evident horizon lines of the 11 oil paintings and three monotypes make it clear that these are landscapes; what the rabbits are up to is less certain. The central morass of jumbled forms in *Bacchanal* (2001) seems to embody an orgiastic frenzy, where all elements of the picture—rabbits, vegetal life and even bending trees—are drawn into an all-consuming gravitational core. Yet no elements are genuinely distinguishable from one another, except for a few pairs of ears emerging from the tumult and a





Cecily Brown: *Red Rum*, 2001, oil on canvas, 48 by 60 inches; at Gagosian.

couple of gray rabbits looking on in the foreground.

Even as the animated brushwork makes them teeter on the edge of abstraction, these works have the natural light of 19th-century plein-air paintings. The busy surface of *Overbite* (2001), for example, in which the febrile rabbit hordes are arrayed across the canvas as if in a frieze, suggests one of Eugene Boudin's tightly composed conglomerations of well-dressed bathers set off by broad natural expanses in all directions. Other works, such as *The Quick One* (2002), an image of two rabbits mating in a human posture while others roll singly or coupled in the grass, have the woodsy, hermitagelike air of the Barbizon school.

Although it sometimes incorporated rabbit imagery, Brown's earlier work generally featured couplings of the human variety. Fleshy, pulsating, fractured and layered forms filled the picture plane, which oscillated between wild, abstract brushwork and bodies in explicit sexual contortions. Today, the rabbit motif, while lighthearted in tone, appears to serve primarily as a figurative pretext without the endless associations human imagery enjoins. But the current work sometimes appears slighter in effect, mainly because the visual energy is more confined to the groupings of dynamic bodies. In *Red Rum* (2001), for example, which shows some sort of agitated procession—perhaps not rabbits but horses—the ferocious impact of the paint that represents the phalanx is siphoned away by the anodyne rendering

of the natural surroundings. It is as if the serene 19th-century pictorial models on which these works are based arrest and contain the hyperkinetic brushwork with which they have been figured. —Jonathan Gilmore

### Matthew Monahan and Georg Herold at Anton Kern

The nine monumental charcoal drawings on view in Matthew Monahan's recent show could be called landscapes, however notionally. They are replete with rocky crags, waterfalls, brooding skies and, in one case, a baleful moon straight out of a Caspar David Friedrich painting. But this imagery fades in and out of roiling passages of abstraction, and is interlayered with all kinds of additional marks, ranging from big, loose gestures to intricate patterning to sneaker treads. All of these elements are combined into seemingly aleatory compositions that, like fractals, operate on several scales at once. In this respect, and in their aura of freewheeling automatism, the drawings recall Sigmar Polke's series of giant mixed-medium works on paper "The Ride on the Eight of Infinity."

Monahan adheres to the conventions of landscape representation just closely enough to take advantage of their dramatic potential. His drawings employ the kind of flattened, vanishing-point-free perspective characteristic of Japanese picture scrolls, and the effect, in these large works, is vertiginous. He is also adept at producing luminous

light effects, especially apparent in two drawings, *Summons to the Recluse* (104½ by 80 inches) and *The Bee-Loud Glade* (107 by 80 inches), that use colored pigment in addition to charcoal. In *Summons to the Recluse*, bilious green lava glows through jagged fissures in dark, mountainous terrain, while in *The Bee-Loud Glade*, a sourceless yellow penumbra illuminates a field of black, like some mysterious atmospheric phenomenon.

These two drawings, like several others on view, feature tiny human figures, hapless creatures who huddle around campfires, teeter across gorges on planks or drown in frothy pools. *The Bee-Loud Glade* also features a little Land Cruiser, the command vehicle of wars and disasters. The world Monahan depicts is clearly apocalyptic, but one gets the sense that he is more conceptual trickster than eschatological visionary—partly because there is something in his delicate touch that suggests a sardonic, Aubrey Beardsley-like glee.

At Monahan's request, four floor assemblages by the German artist Georg Herold were exhibited as part of the show. In these cool, blasé pieces, which date from the last years of the Cold War, bricks are arranged in lines or piles on wanly colored squares of carpet. The assemblages can themselves be read as landscapes of an Eastern Bloc-ish, industrial variety, and they functioned in acerbic counterpoint to the eerie intensity of Monahan's drawings. Together, these two artists' works formed a unified installation that both reiterated and tweaked landscape's traditional claim to the sublime.

—Elizabeth Schambelan

### Victor Pesce at Elizabeth Harris

The 15 recent still-life paintings by New York artist Victor Pesce in this exhibition convey a certain rustic simplicity. At first, these small and medium-sized compositions, featuring centralized arrangements of mundane objects such as bottles, boxes and vases, seem almost like a form of folk art. In *Two Bottles*, for example, tall containers resembling soda bottles, one cream yellow and the other a pale blue, stand side by side on a bright yellow tabletop set against a gray-blue background.

*Empty Bowl* shows a lone white porcelain basin placed squarely in the top center of the picture. Against a richly textured blue and charcoal gray background, the bowl seems intentionally overpainted. The obsessive layering of oil paint in this canvas, and in a number of other pieces on view, lends the surface an almost weathered look. In spite of the thick impasto, however, the artist manages to evoke a sense of the bowl's sleek perfection. Pesce's work is full of such contradictions, and its modest demeanor veils a rigorous and ambitious enterprise.

To begin with, he creates the tableaux that become the subjects of the paintings. He assembles found objects and constructs wood and cardboard boxes. After each component has been painted a dense monochrome, the artist places them in simple configurations. Transposed to canvas, each object appears enmeshed in the surrounding space in a manner that recalls Morandi's still lifes, a comparison that critics have often noted. Pesce no doubt

Installation view of works by Matthew Monahan (on walls) and Georg Herold (on floor); at Anton Kern.

