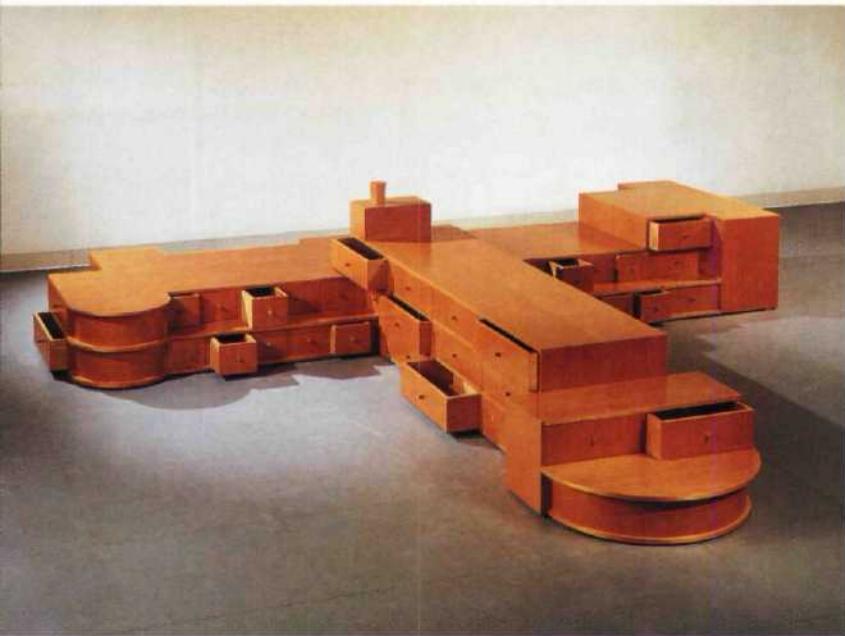


REVIEW OF EXHIBITIONS



Los Carpinteros: *Edificio Jerez*, 2003, cedar plywood, 27½ by 136¼ by 131 inches; at Anthony Grant.

NEW YORK

Los Carpinteros at Anthony Grant

Despite the departure of one of its three founding members, the Havana-based artist collective known as Los Carpinteros continues to produce objects that blur the lines between art and craft, practicality and uselessness. As in the past, their latest show of wooden sculptures extracted rich metaphor from these categorical confusions, while a suite of eight large watercolors seemed to signal a new direction for their work.

The main gallery contained three large sculptures made of cedar plywood. Expertly constructed and polished to a warm glow, these elaborate structures blend furniture and architecture into hybrid forms. *Retiro Medico* (all works 2003), for example, is a 9-foot-tall armoire that also resembles an International Style skyscraper. Two of its four sides are covered in grids of recessed shelving while the others feature stacked pairs of open and shut drawers, many of which are unreachable. Another sculpture, *Edificio Jerez*, hugs the floor in a low T shape that suggests a scale model for an airport terminal. Once again, dozens of drawers line the sides to create a massive, multiwinged coffee table.

These uncanny composites are distantly rooted in Surrealism, of

course, as is the recurring drawer motif, which Dalí and other artists once used to symbolize the unconscious. Here, however, the drawers contribute to a sly critique of capitalist consumption. By reducing modernist icons of commerce to the size of private, domestic furnishings, Los Carpinteros effectively underscore a societal impulse to accumulate and hoard.

Surrealism also haunts many of the watercolors, which are executed with remarkable finesse on an enormous scale (approx. 80 inches square). In each case, the artists adopt an oblique, bird's-eye view and seem to look down on construction sites. Sometimes hinting at physical danger, these spare, depopulated scenes recall the foreboding paintings of de Chirico. In *El Camino*, for example, three rectangular voids are set into a gray ground, resembling either a building foundation or freshly dug graves. Several wooden planks provide narrow, rickety passage across the shadowy depths. *Concreto Roto* depicts four thick slabs of concrete that are both banal and vaguely menacing. Shattered into dozens of pieces, they seem to have fallen from a great height. Described in a gallery press release as studies for additional sculptures, the watercolors may anticipate a shift in Los Carpinteros' three-dimensional work. For each depicts the raw materials of on-site construc-

tion rather than the highly finished objects the group has created in the past. —Matthew Guy Nichols

Jorge Pardo at Friedrich Petzel

In the gallery space of Jorge Pardo's recent show, visitors confronted four sets of vibrant red, yellow and orange double-hung doors. Created out of medium-density fiberboard and machine-shaped to produce a high-relief texture of draperylike undulating curves, they are punctured by large symmetrical protozoa-shaped Plexiglas windows in the same colors as their bright enamel surfaces. Reminiscent of ultra-design '70s decor, the doors are fully functional, with working hardware, hinges and knobs, and were either attached directly to a blank wall or served as portals to the gallery's other rooms.

Hung and displayed as artworks but employed like utilitarian objects, the doors exemplify Pardo's mode of pressing at the boundaries between art and architecture, craft and industrial design, formalism and functionalism. He achieved a similar effect in *Project* (2000), a redesign of the discrete spaces of the Dia Center's ground-floor gallery, bookstore and lobby into a single citrus-hued entity with a continuous tile floor. Other recent category-crossing works include a redwood pier that extended, like a modest earthwork, into the Aasee in Munster (1997), a functional but temporarily "sculptural" white sailboat that the artist dry-docked at the Chicago Museum of Contemporary Art (1997) and a house he

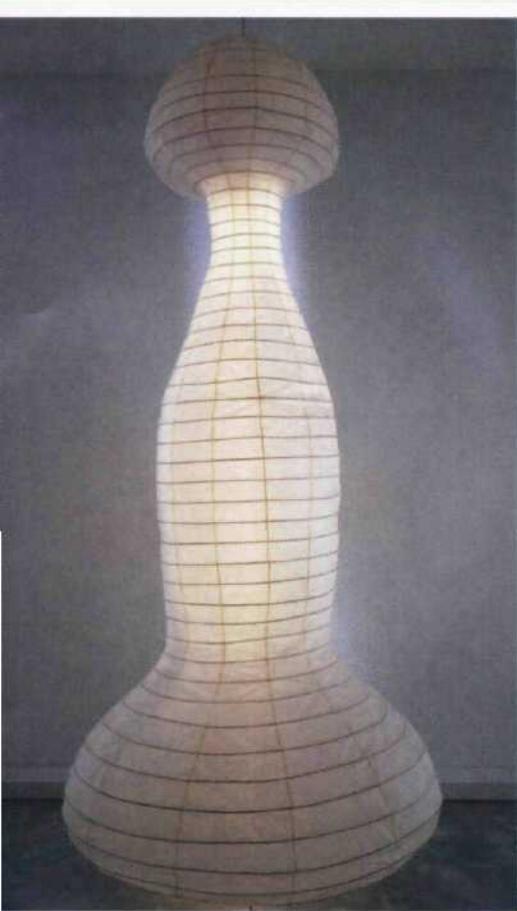
designed in the Mount Washington neighborhood of Los Angeles (1998). Pardo lived in the house while it served as a public/private annex of MOCA, complete with uniformed guards and an exhibit of his own handblown glass on loan from Rotterdam.

Not so much concerned to elevate craft or design through association with high art as to provoke an open-ended experience in viewers confronting the conjunction of these different institutional and cultural forms, Pardo's work alludes to both the materials and fabrication techniques of Minimalism and its emphasis on the constitutive role played by a viewer. But in Pardo's recent show, the audience's interaction with the work is more than phenomenological: one actually opens the doors, even if they lead to nowhere, or, as in the case of the other major piece on view, a large-scale sunroom, one actually occupies the work.

The sunroom, built from birch plywood with porthole windows and notches filled by colored Plexiglas, has a prefabricated appearance, as if ready to be disassembled and reconstructed anywhere. Yet in its topsy-turvy roofline and Gaudiesque kaleidoscopic interior (layers of natural light colored by the windows overlap on its walls), the construction proclaims its status as singular and handmade. And, as in other creations by Pardo, the sunroom is suspended between the perspectives of utility and delectation, housing, like a gallery within the gallery, its own works within: an inkjet-on-paper artwork and a folded paper lamp that can be

Jorge Pardo: *Untitled*, 2004, birch plywood, Plexiglas, 11½ by 21½ by 12½ feet; at Friedrich Petzel.





Lynda Benglis: *Bikini Incandescent Column*, 2004, paper, wire, light, 13½ by 6 by 6 feet; at Cheim & Read.

approached as autonomous esthetic objects or just anonymous items of interior design.

—Jonathan Gilmore

Lynda Benglis at Cheim & Read

A pioneer of Post-Minimalism, Lynda Benglis remains best known for her poured sculptures of the late 1960s. Several of these groundbreaking works were displayed in this concise survey of her career, which presented 19 sculptures in various mediums from 1967 to 2004. Yet the show also affirmed the significance of Benglis's subsequent work, which has continued to generate allusive forms from self-evident processes and gestures.

Benglis first made a name for herself by translating Jackson Pollock's drip technique into sculptural forms. Pouring pigmented latex and polyurethane foam directly on the floor, she created works like *Night Sherbet A* (1968), a vivid puddle of fluorescent green, orange and red foam that suggests melting ice cream. The painterly flatness of these early pours soon gave way to more substantial volumes, which were often cast in monochromatic metals. The dark leaden mass of

Quartered Meteor (1969), for example, seems to ooze like lava from a corner of the gallery. In both cases, the once-liquid materials have found their own shapes, defined with a minimum of artistic intervention.

Since the early 1970s, Benglis has exerted greater control over her materials. Nonetheless, blatant processes have remained central to her work, as have references to the human figure. For the series of wall-mounted "knot" sculptures, Benglis configured lengths of cotton bunting into loose knots before spraying them with liquefied metals. While clearly demonstrating twisting, looping and other basic constructive gestures, the knots also reference the body. The copper tangle of *Uno* (1974), for example, resembles a pair of crossed arms, each end flattened into a fan shape that reads as a hand.

The human body is also conjured in the pleated sculptures that Benglis began making in the 1980s, a portion of her oeuvre that merits greater critical attention. After pressing sheets of steel mesh into tight accordion folds, Benglis unfurled the pleats into vaguely sartorial shapes that she covered in shiny metals. Works like the bronze-coated *Bolero* (1991-92) suggest sumptuous capes, gowns and other garments while remaining essentially abstract. Here Benglis generates remarkably complex rhythms of contraction and expansion from the modest act of folding.

The most recent sculpture in the show was *Bikini Incandescent Column* (2004), a 13½-foot-tall paper lantern illuminated from within by lightbulbs. Its hourglass shape evokes the female form and atomic mushroom clouds, both referred to in the title. As a vessel "containing" the diffusion of light, the lantern suggests Benglis's abiding interest in the general phenomenon of expansion. But the anomalous use of electricity resists more specific connections to the rest of her work. It will be interesting to witness how such a physically engaged sculptor continues to address the immateriality of light.

—Matthew Guy Nichols

Jane South at Spencer Brownstone

With its opposed laser-cut louvers set into a 35-inch circle in an 8-by-8-foot partition wall at the gallery entrance, *Untitled (double cut wall)* permitted a limited view into Jane South's world of paper constructions just beyond. Her vocabulary was introduced by a floor assembly of three louvered drums in black, gray and fluorescent red, and two flat circles in red and white that seemed to be their shadows. Among other elements seen in the works on view, all primarily paper, were girders and girder structures, cables, hooks and towers, for the most part dated 2004 and made for this British-born artist's second exhibition at Spencer Brownstone.

Both floor and wall-mounted pieces emphasized the nature of her project: the witty conflation of drawing and sculpture. With Rube Goldberg-like imaginings, these drawn, cut, folded and variously attached paper and balsa objects are reinforced with wax, so that even the most fragile-appearing cables, made of narrow strips of paper, seem sufficient to the task they simulate. A 16-foot installation, *Untitled (vertical shaft)*, comprised patches of flat mauve painted directly on the wall like circuit boards, one at eye level, the other close to the ceiling. An inventory of elements emerged along the surface of the wall, including abstract housing units, objects resembling window frames, and drums hanging from a hook and cable tethered to the surface of the wall—all constructed of paper and mixed mediums with ink and watercolor embellishment. The many parts of the 40-foot expanse

of the site-adjustable *Untitled (horizontal strip)* included interrupted bands of gray paint the color of the installation's darkest shadows, larger than the objects that supposedly cast them, enlivened by paper cylinders suspended in midair by opposing cables, hooks and toggle bolts.

Among the wall pieces in the rear gallery, the 4-by-3-foot *Untitled (long green construction)* was ornamented by elements that seemed both industrial and domestic, including a cake sifter, drums and cantilevered structural members, all of which appeared to be suspended by one paper cable and a single pin. At 2 feet high, 1 foot deep and 6 inches wide, the smallest of the works, *Untitled (small green construction)*, was suspended high up on the gallery wall. It consists of a cage-like cylinder hanging by a thin cable from a small vent structure attached to the wall above. Perched like a diver at the end of a grid of balsa splints, the cylinder dangled a second, tiered vent. These charming, seriously quirky structures advance the cause of studio practice in an arena of scatter work that their hard-won forms only marginally recall.

—Edward Leffingwell

Marc Quinn at Mary Boone

Ever since Marc Quinn made *Self* (1991), a cast of his own head that used nine pints of his blood, frozen and contained in a refrigerated vitrine, his efforts to redefine figurative sculpture have often sparked intense controversy. This effective and thought-provoking exhibition, titled "The Complete Marbles," was no exception. Containing 11 recent,

Jane South: *Untitled (horizontal strip)*, 2004, cut and folded paper, mixed mediums, 3 by 40 by 1½ feet; at Spencer Brownstone.



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