



**Sarah Sze**, installation view, 2000, mixed media, dimensions variable.

## Sarah Sze

Marianne Boesky Gallery, **New York**

In the tight series of rooms of Marianne Boesky Gallery, the intricate, delicate contraptions of Sarah Sze's installation nearly catch the visitor unawares. Sze's structures are composed of the detritus of everyday life—cue tips, aspirins, wire, electronic transistors, gauze, clamps, plastic fans, dorm room clip-on desk lamps, notebook paper, and empty light bulb shells. Hitched, clamped, and glued together, their movement seems precariously frozen, a moment before they surrender to external forces and either fall apart or spin furiously out of control. The installation is a work of several parts: each made from bric-a-brac conglomerations of domestic furniture. They cling to the walls and corners of the rooms, stretched from one to the other by plant-like filaments, as if they were organic complexes—weeds or ivy—left to grow on the walls and ceilings, and even out the window. Sze's work has often been described as though her materials were invariant from space to space, as if all that mattered was how the same sorts of objects were joined and fitted into the site at hand. But this approach hinders the particular kind of experience her different installations can provoke. Here, for example, it is the sense that we are witnessing a neglected bedroom or the recesses of an abandoned home—a chamber, like that of Dicken's Miss Havisham, slowly disintegrating, undisturbed by human hand. It is not so much the room's furniture we see in the installation, as the residues of its entropic dissolution, united with the flotsam and jetsam of a swirling tide of transient household stuff. Sze's constructions suggest the remains of a ruin, objects that once were the anonymous and indifferent articles filling the space of a life, but now only odds and ends waiting to be swept away.

**Jonathan Gilmore**

## Matthew Ritchie

Andrea Rosen Gallery, **New York**

The sprawling, brightly colored, densely composed canvases of Matthew Ritchie's current exhibition, entitled *Parents and Children*, continue the ambitious project he began in a 1995 show, *Working Model*. There he proposed a narrative structure involving 49 cartoon-like cultural, mythological, and religious characters, out of which could be generated a virtually inexhaustible range of possible combinations and story lines, and through which Ritchie has symbolized the manifold and complex interactions among art, religion, politics, science, and other systems of knowledge and belief. Each subsequent installation featured these characters in one simultaneously cosmic and local adventure. *The Gamblers*, for instance, depicted the Big Bang as an event in a casino in a Holiday Inn outside Boston, with seven entities representing quantum mechanical forces of the universe. *Parents and Children* (described in accompanying notes in the voice of hard-boiled fiction) tells the story of the transformation of energy into matter, but does so in a '60s Miami setting in which the characters of a disappearing Mercury astronaut, a pregnant actress, the Golem, an aging body-builder, a mysterious "Mademoiselle Florida," and an elderly Mam'bo, defend their provisional identities against the entropy that would dissolve them into the environment. This story is told through four canvases painted in oils and drawn on with marker pens, wall drawings and inscriptions, and elaborate constructions of a flat vinyl material that jut out from the paintings and echoes their imagery and patterns. The pieces are loaded with images that have the flat colors and heavy outlines of comic book figuration and Japanese animation. These are frequently overlaid with mock scientific and mathematical formulae that symbolize objective functions through which the atomic forces of matter could be converted to energy. Yet, at the same time, they call for numbers quantifying subjective features of human existence, such as a value for "remaining ignorance." Despite its welter of often arcane references (which sometimes suggest not so much deep understanding, as a voracious accumulation of context-less theoretical fragments), Ritchie's work does not appear to be intentionally cryptic. For it is less concerned with the internal theoretical workings of sciences such as biology, probability, thermodynamics, geology, and statistics than with the ways in which these scientific systems (as well as philosophical, historical, and political kinds of knowledge) function as structures of information; as the symbolic architecture that forms the world.

**Jonathan Gilmore**



**Matthew Ritchie**,  
*Parents and Children*,  
installation view, 2000.