

down a ground of quinacridone violet, a fiercely hot, beet-juice magenta that sometimes works the way Goya used black: as a gorgeous and scary narrative site. As with late Guston and George McNeil, no mark is without a possible figurative reading, and no absolute distinction is made between representation and abstraction. As always with Colescott, there is a bitter/comical send-up of racial and sexual proprieties and a minstrel show's worth of stereotypes. Along these treacherous fault lines, Colescott's anarchic imaginings and appetites are given free reign. *Ole McWillie's Farm* (2002) features an ice-cream cone floating against a blue sky; the vanilla-fudge and raspberry scoops might proclaim a yummy apotheosis of interracial sex. Unlike Glen Ligon's deconstructive reiterations of black jokes (or Richard Prince's white jokes), Colescott's comics are really comical: you may actually laugh, even while flinching at their edgier ironies. Really funny, nuanced and outrageous ethnic humor (like that, say, of Moms Mabley, Redd Fox, Myron

Cohen or Garrison Keillor) is the right of those unafraid to turn it on themselves. At 78, Colescott is playing at the top of his game.
—Robert Berling

Paul Ramírez Jonas at LFL

"The Earth Seen from Above" was the telling title of Paul Ramírez Jonas's first New York solo show in six years. A post-colonial take on politics, space travel and global exploration, it came at a timely juncture—the impending war with Iraq and the international mourning of the Columbia shuttle catastrophe. The 38-year-old, New York-based conceptualist, who grew up in Honduras, presented six critical, often comic and even sometimes musical works (1995-2003) in this deceptively light-hearted show.

Ghost of Progress is a 22-minute DVD shown on a TV monitor. It was filmed from the right handlebar of Jonas's bicycle as he traversed the streets of an unnamed Third World city. Attached to the left handlebar was a small scale model of a Concorde jet, so that throughout the DVD the inward facing camera records the Concorde passing in front of the city. The contrast between the passive townscape in the background and the forward-moving jet points to Jonas's interest in flight as a trope for progress (a motif he has engaged with before), while also calling attention to First World luxury.

In what might be a more encouraging take on global affairs, *Another Day* (2003) is a homemade computer resembling arrival and departure monitors at airports; it counts down the hours until sunrise for 90 cities worldwide (each city chosen for its location on every fourth meridian). As it was installed here, the list ran across three screens and as each city reached sunrise, its name would disappear from the top of the list, making room for another at the bottom.

For his piece *Album: 50 State Summits* (2002-03), Jonas plans to mount the highest point in every state; at the gallery, he had completed 10 of his intended summits. The empty frames or self-portraits (C-prints, each 24 by 19½ inches) of the artist atop the peaks resembled a scrapbook-in-progress splayed across the gallery wall. Jonas also hopes to climb three



Robert Colescott: *tastess lik chickens*, 2001, acrylic on canvas, 73 by 85 inches; at Phyllis Kind.

other peaks: the farthest from the earth's center, the farthest from his home and Everest on the 50th anniversary of its first ascent. The artist always appears with his back to the camera waving a homemade flag that reads "OPEN." In "Florida, Britton Hill," he wears a T-shirt bearing the iconic photo of Neil Armstrong's first steps on the moon.

The most comical piece in the show was *Rocinante* (2003). Named after Don Quixote's horse, this was a musical machine composed of drums, a cymbal, single-note flutes and more, which played a hybrid of two utopian tunes once an hour: the Disney tune "It's A Small World (After All)" and "L'Internationale," the Socialist worker's inspirational anthem. The lyrics scrolled across a Teleprompter-like screen. The instrument resembles a satellite; Jonas hopes to launch it into orbit as a representative for all countries lacking a national space program. The real charm in Jonas's sardonic works is that even in the face of monotony or impossibility, they maintain a genuine sense of optimism. —Jessica Ostrower

Viola Frey at Nancy Hoffman

Although Viola Frey's ceramic figures are monumental in scale, they don't have a monumental effect. Rather, these people appear beaten-down, passive or impotent. Constructed in several sections, fired separately and then joined, the sculptures

evince human vulnerability through their fragile and fragmented clay material. Indeed, the gigantism of these lumbering men and women—their scale is extraordinary among figurative ceramics—amplifies the symbolic frailties with which they have been invested.

Although the figures are unmistakably American in appearance, their titles suggest general existential conditions. *Questioning Man* (2002), for example, is a nearly 9-foot-tall fellow in a nondescript blue suit and red striped tie who towers over spectators. With an ungainly stance, arms rigidly pinned to his sides and a blank expression, he elicits more pathos than awe. Even when a figure assumes a more commanding identity, strength is simultaneously asserted and undermined: *Man Kicking World* (2002)—a seated, suited individual about to kick an enormous 5-foot-diameter globe—seems less Master of the Universe than frustrated child. *Reflective Woman I* (2002) stands about 8 feet tall in a brightly painted but dowdy, knee-length dress, her palm outstretched in a gesture of inquiry and resignation. A massive nude such as *Seated Woman* (2002) is less constrained by social identity than the businessmen, yet her stilted and impassive air suggests not a voluptuary but a studio model. In such works, Frey favors a stiff frontality that alludes to archaic sculpture.

Frey also exhibited two oversized vessels: *Amphora (Men in Power Suits)*, 2001-02, bearing a

Jenny Hankwitz: *Cool Starry Night*, 2001, oil on canvas, 90 by 42 inches; at Cheryl Pelavin.





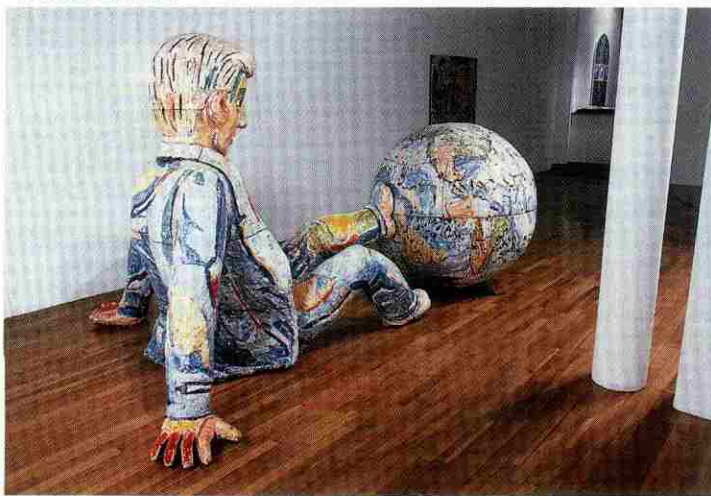
View of Paul Ramirez Jonas's *Rocinante* (foreground), 2003, *Album: 50 State Summits* (right), 2002-03, and *Another Day* (back wall), 2003; at LFL. (Review on p. 119.)

frieze of interlocking glad-handing businessmen, and *Um VF Iconography* (2002), a decorative, freely colored compendium of such motifs as classical statuary, puppetlike humans (including nudes) and pastoral landscapes. Wide-bodied and two-handed, these amphorae echo Frey's thick-waisted women, much as ancient sculptural vessels refer to the human body.

The exhibition's pastel drawings and large glazed-tile wall pictures feature images of figurines, another reference to past forms. These call attention to the fact that Frey's large sculptures often look like ordinary, blocky statuettes or cheap figurines that have been enlarged to humongous size. This association, seen against the titles' large themes and her grand scale, suggest that Frey's sculptures are a sardonic comment on human ambitions.

—Jonathan Gilmore

Viola Frey: *Man Kicking World*, 2002, ceramic, 68 by 83 by 138 inches; at Nancy Hoffman.



Matthew Northridge at Gorney Bravin + Lee

Delivering on the promise of *New City*, a sprawling metropolis of a sculpture displayed at the New Museum of Contemporary Art in New York in 2002, Matthew Northridge presented three sculptures and 21 collages in his impressive solo debut. Collectively titled *Continent*, these new collages conjure vast realms of architecture and geography in small objects and economical gestures.

For many of his collages, Northridge clips aerial photographs of buildings from the pages of magazines, then isolates the tiny structures on sheets of white paper. While never surpassing the size of a thumbnail, each building imposes a strong sense of perspective on its otherwise blank support. In *Hillside, Nepal* (2002), for example, three thatched huts appear to climb an

invisible mountain. A clutch of miniature farm buildings colonizes a corner of another collage and efficiently transforms the empty expanse of paper into receding meadows. In a separate group of collages, Northridge pastes innumerable drawings of gray and white cubes along the bottom edges of large sheets of paper. Stacked into low mounds and tall towers, they resemble grisaille cities seen from afar or, because a few of the cubes have open lids, warehouses full of cardboard boxes.

Similar shifts in the perception of scale are elicited by the artist's sculptures. On one wall of the gallery, Northridge pressed 100 pushpins into a tight circle (*Pushpin [Laserbeam]*, 2003). Thimbles, beads, drill bits, springs, plastic pen parts and other assorted found objects were glued to the heads of the pins, creating a tapered cylinder that projected several inches from the wall. Despite its modest size, this homespun object has an architectural impact, and suggests the tip of a castellated tower.

The most elegant work in the show was aptly titled *Horizon* (2000-02). It consists of hundreds of acrylic hemispheres, each an inch in diameter, arranged in a long line across one wall. As the viewer obliquely approaches the sculpture, the hemispheres glow gold, green and a wide range of blues. Closer inspection reveals that each acrylic dot is transparent and magnifies an image of the ocean pasted to its back. While precisely aligned into a single, unbroken horizon, each vista features a slightly different seascape. Some are stormy, others serene. Some offer sunsets, while others contain tiny swimmers. By collapsing such vast dimensions into small, unobtrusive objects, Northridge seems to channel Jonathan Swift, sending the viewer traveling through his work like Gulliver. —Matthew Nichols

Anthony Caro at Mitchell-Innes & Nash

Anthony Caro's figurative bronzes of the early 1950s recall his academic training and his association with Henry Moore. While he is best known for his abstract welded-metal structures with painted surfaces, which dominated his oeuvre for some 30 years, in 1992 he began work on a group of abstracted figures

featuring individualized ceramic heads mounted on bodies of metal or wood. They represented historic figures of "The Trojan War" series, and their ceramic elements were crafted in the workshop of Hans Spinner in France. The terra-cotta components of Caro's most recent sculptures were also made there.

The life-size mounted warriors and single cart that constitute a monumental sculpture in seven parts, "The Barbarians" (1999-2002) furthers Caro's interest in the expressive figure. Authoritative assemblies of finished and rough-sawn wood, clay, and bands and rods of steel, each engages one of a group of wood, steel and leather vaulting horses Caro found in a secondhand shop in London. In a catalogue essay by



Matthew Northridge: *Pushpin (Laserbeam)*, 2003, found objects, glue, 100 pushpins, 6 by 7½ by 6 inches; at Gorney Bravin + Lee.

Dave Hickey, Caro is described as spotting the gymnastic equipment and in "a flash of Blakean vision" seeing the ensemble as the mounts of marauding barbarians. Recalling Constantine Cavafy's interrogatory poem, "Waiting for the Barbarians," a compelling meditation on a decadent culture's need for the idea of its conquest, Caro intends the potency of his figures to address such historical lineage. Given the nature of their display—deployed in ranks—and their ceramic material, they bring to mind the celebrated ancient Chinese terra-cotta warriors that were produced as substitutes for the traditional burial of retainers with their master. Caro's figures, like the Chinese examples, have detachable hands and heads that were individually crafted and mounted.

His titles, however, are not Chinese. Each of Caro's equestrian sculptures is named for a venerated item of the equipage of the Mongol conqueror Genghis

