

Elsewhere in the show, Lucas launched an assault on gender stereotypes. In one photographic self-portrait, *Human Toilet Revisited* (1998), she sits atop a toilet seat, naked from the waist down, feet up, smoking a cigarette. In another, entitled *Laugh?* (1998), the artist opens a beer can, which sprays up and out toward the viewer. Lucas targets gestures and actions associated with a very specific "brand" of masculinity: the beer-swilling, leg-splaying, ass-scratching bloke. By usurping

thoughtful accumulation of effort, with a result that has none of Minimalism's sometimes shrill self-importance. Laib downplays his artistic intervention, presenting familiar components of the natural world—beeswax, marble, rice and pollen—in such density that their color, texture and smell become the focus of each piece. Nature is the star, Laib seems to be saying, and he is just the man behind the scenes.

Even the monumentality of a pair of beeswax ziggurats tall enough to graze the gallery ceiling was overwhelmed by their almost stupefying scent and dense, honey-rich color. They seemed out of place in the gallery's white glare, begging to be discovered rather than displayed. Laib's proposal to eventually site them in a cave in the Pyrenees seems entirely appropriate; in a natural setting, their man-made qualities will seem more cryptic and significant.

The ziggurats dominated Sperone's main gallery, while the second room held an installation of three much smaller works. The first was a white marble sculpture in the shape of a house, long like a chicken coop, low

to the floor and banked, as by drifts of snow, with curved mounds of white rice. The "house" is roughly hewn and the marble is unpolished, which makes it sparkly and gives it an almost edible look, like salt. Another sculpture, six beeswax steps going nowhere, like a fragment of a ziggurat, climbed the far wall. The pièce de résistance, alone in the vast middle wall, was a tiny, uneven mountain of brilliant yellow hazelnut pollen tucked into a small square niche. It was displayed like a jewel and engendered a mood of reverence—some of it for the interminable amounts of time Laib spends collecting the

fine powder. The role of pollen as an agent of new life allows us to view it as a quiet force, a little pile of potential and possibility.

Impressive as this exhibition was, it lacked the mystery of some of Laib's earliest pieces: paintinglike squares of an almost otherworldly yellow (who would guess it was pollen?) and "Milkstones"—shimmering whiter-than-white surfaces, also square, which turn out to be thin slabs of marble gently hollowed and filled with milk. Even without that compelling "what is it?" quality, however, Laib's work succeeds, and is remarkable for its asceticism and integrity.

—Carol Diehl

Katy Schimert at David Zwirner

Katy Schimert's engrossing, densely layered multimedia installation at David Zwirner is her first new work since *Oedipus Rex: the Drowned Man* at the 1997 Whitney Biennial. This conceptually rich and mesmerizing effort encompasses glass and ceramic artifacts; a six-minute film titled *Icarus and the World Trade Center*; framed ink and pastel drawings; and wall drawings of the sun, Manhattan and the twin towers.

The wall drawings create an illusion of narrative by diagramming two intertwined stories onto three cosmic, geographical and architectural sites. Dotted lines plot trajectories and enigmatic penciled phrases suggest a sequence of events. The myth of Icarus—who fell into the sea and drowned when the sun melted his wax-and-feather wings—is intertwined with Schimert's own tale of "The Man in the Gray Suit," a bear-market suicide who jumps from the top of the World Trade Center and then (perhaps) "walks home" as "the headless man."

Projecting from the wall in the main gallery room was *The Sun*, an 8-foot circle formed of translucent yellow, rose and amber blown-glass pieces which are shaped like irregularly contoured rocks and long tubes with flared lips. A low platform in the rear gallery supported two rows of rounded terra-cotta vessels, glazed with 14-carat gold and called *Sun Spots*. The glaze and reference to the sun made the

kiln-firing process seem like a distillation of cosmic energy into the gold of human commodity exchange. The film adds an element of self-referentiality by recording the effects of sun glare on the camera lens, and by changing focus and film speed in the midst of documenting the WTC, the teeming floor of the stock exchange and the anguished face of the man in the gray suit as he walked toward the lens.

The glass and ceramic shapes comprising *The Sun* and *Sun Spots* all have been used by Schimert in earlier installations; the new work recombines that vocabulary of sculptural forms into new configurations, and then uses myth and story to build an explanatory context around them. Schimert brazenly seeks to determine all aspects of the exhibition experience—from creating the "object," to controlling the gallery installation, to using her narratives and diagrammatic maps to demarcate the ground of criticism and analysis. The work plays skillfully on a deep longing for story and meaning in the wake of 20 years of deconstruction; at the same time it is a product of that critical practice, and reveals the limitations of any single set of visual perceptions or conceptual tools.

—Daniel Rubey

Marc Quinn at Gagosian

Along with British artists Damien Hirst, Jake and Dinos Chapman, Chris Ofili and Abigail Lane, Marc Quinn has helped to spark an international sensation, most notably in 1991 with *Self*, a refrigerated cast of the artist's head made of nine pints of his own congealed blood. In his first New York solo exhibition, he continued this exploration of mortality using a vast array of materials and casting techniques, from rubber and polyurethane to silvered glass and frozen flowers.

Raucous sexual and scatological content is typically encountered in Quinn's work; his "Shit Paintings" and *Shit Head* of 1997, as well as *Incarnate* of 1996, a boiled sausage filled with the artist's blood, are primary examples. But none of these more grotesque works was included in the recent exhibition; which is not to say that his show was



Wolfgang Laib: *Nowhere-Everywhere*, 1998, beeswax, two wooden constructions, 152 by 146 by 29 1/2 inches each; at Sperone Westwater.

this socially abject male stereotype, she seeks to undermine the conjugate myth of the weak and vulnerable woman. Her grungy, gender-ambiguous work is intended as an affront to the decorum of the gallery context in particular and the mores of patriarchal society in general.

—Maura Reilly

Wolfgang Laib at Sperone Westwater

Wolfgang Laib uses the fruits of nature to create art works whose power is derived from their almost extreme modesty. Although Laib's forms are simple, his work depends on a

lacking in morbidity or sexual content. Life-size casts of the artist's nude body (in bronze, rubber and polyurethane) hung by their feet from stainless-steel suspension units on the ceiling. The figures had been sliced laterally from head to toe, and their backsides flipped upwards to reveal the insides. These macabre pieces resembled sloughed skins, emphasizing the uncanny ability of the cast to imitate flesh. In *Yellow Cut Nervous Break-down*, a cast severed head on a steel rod was covered with psychedelically colored polyurethane which, before it solidified, had dripped down to the base, pooling over it and onto the floor.

The "Morphology" pieces on the floor were made of silvered glass which resembled drops of spilled mercury. Despite the abstraction and scattering of the forms, two shapes were ostensibly identifiable as the artist's head and penis. Indeed, the penis was so prevalent throughout the show that it left one wondering if the artist was arrogant or anxious about his potency. *Eternal Spring (Red)* testified to a (perhaps related) preoccupation with fertility and mortality. In the center of the room, red flowers in full bloom stood frozen in a whirring, custom-built freezer unit.

The most remarkable piece in the show was *The Great Escape*. Resembling a large banana whose rubbery yellow skin had been peeled back, this piece revealed a reverse cast of the artist's body within its cocoonlike interior. Suspended from the ceiling and braced by large anchors on the floor, this enormous sculpture conjured up images of large sea creatures being pulled in by ships, while its qualities of monumental absurdity also confirmed Quinn's Pop sensibility.

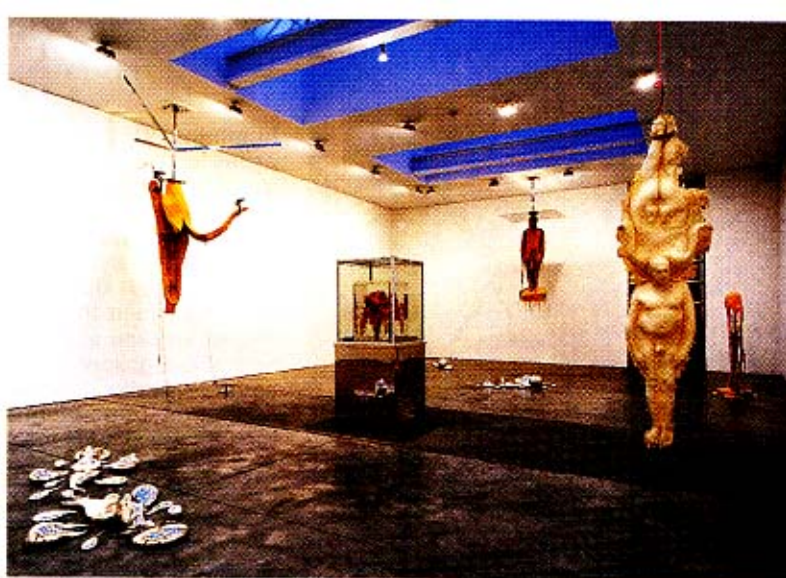
Critic Jane Rankin-Reid was right when, in 1993, she referred to Marc Quinn as "one of the bad bad boys on the English art scene," but that claim could not be made with regard to the show at Gagosian. Instead of reverting to adolescent shock-techniques, Quinn has created works whose impact results from thematic coherence and sheer visual appeal. In fact, he was looking mighty "good."

—Maura Reilly

Gillian Jagger at Phyllis Kind

Although all the major works in this show dated from 1997 or '98, it had the feel of a retrospective because it allowed such a deep look into Jagger's motivations and obsessions, including, by means of photographs in a pocket portfolio on the gallery desk, an astonishing pairing of her monumental, expressionist abstractions, most often made of minimally altered tree trunks and sometimes including stone slabs, with the classically heroic war monuments of her father, the English sculptor Charles Sargeant Jagger.

The main room here was dominated by a 14-by-25-by-18-foot installation, *Matrice*, that centered on a resin-stabilized decayed corpse of a road-kill deer Jagger found near her upstate New York home and studio. The deer hung by a chain around its neck, amid large, fearsome tools. In the foreground was a triangular swath of rock, seemingly excised from a larger rock face, below a curving, irregular grid of steel that seemed to peel away from it, into the air. Its legs stretched in a graceful and terrible dance, the deer encompassed both life and death in its bodily condition. As Jagger presented it, the front was mostly skeletal with ragged bits of flesh, while the back still had its hide intact and looked whole. "Front" and "back" are appropriate terms, for although Jagger allowed visitors space to walk into the installation and see the other view, the work as a whole was theatrical, frontal, oriented toward the gallery's entry and



Marc Quinn: Installation view of exhibition, 1998; at Gagosian.

dramatically lit, primarily from floor level.

Most of Jagger's characteristic elements were present in this work: chains, meat hooks, tools, decay. About the only things missing were her usual tree trunks. But they were seen in another large installation, *The Gathering*, which consisted of three suspended trunks, their areas of rot worked and polished, hung alongside an equal-size section of flat rocks clamped together. All were slender, vertical and, in a very loose way, figural.

In the gallery's lower level, Jagger presented drawings, collages and nearly a dozen sections of tree trunk or branch that she has worked to bring out some naturally occurring figural suggestion: the long nose, eye and nostril of a camel, a horse's head, a vertical segment of an elephant's eyes and trunk, a jackrabbit with ears laid back. Bones and skin are equated with wood and decay, suggest-

ing a continuum, a graceful inevitability. So Jagger's theme truly is life and death. The trees' rot, rather than marking an ending, seems to reveal the souls within them.

Last, one stopped at the gallery desk and looked at the portfolio in which Jagger had paired photos of her own sculptures with photos of her father's pieces. The materials, the finish, the specificity of subject were quite different, yet the aspiration, nobility and boundless feeling were strangely consistent. Here one saw death in two ways, the father's conventional celebration/denial in the propagandistic form of monuments, along with what might be Jagger's attempt to capture this lost father, who died when she was four, in the inchoate expressions of her own agonized yet enduring sculptural beings.

—Janet Koplos

Vito Acconci at Barbara Gladstone

This exhibition, "Spoken Rooms," reproduced three of Vito Acconci's multimedia installations from the 1970s. With their insistent theatricalization of space, these works raise the question of Minimalism's legacy for the art of the '70s. In so doing, they open the way for a possible encounter between the concerns of that decade and our own.

Originally created in 1974, *Plot* divided the gallery space into 10 scenes, meandering "chapters" separated by long, narrow black curtains. The first chapter, "Secrets of the Skin Trade," raises the specter of bodily disaggregation: a square

Katy Schimert: *The Sun*, 1998, blown glass, 96 by 96 by 18 inches; at David Zwirner.

