



Left
Pipilotti Rist *Related
Legs (Yokohama
Dandelions)*, 2001, mirror
scanner and computerized
control box, two DVD
players, audio system,
steel cables, lace curtains,
and children's chairs,
dimensions variable
COLLECTION OF ADAM SENDER
PHOTO: RUTH CLARK. COURTESY
THE ARTIST AND LUHRING AUGUSTINE,
NEW YORK. IMAGE COURTESY MOCA,
LOS ANGELES

have an *institutional* experience. (This was reinforced by all of the caveats posted around Klaus Weber's *Public Fountain LSD Hall* (2003), a work which seems to have much more potential if his desired plans for it to be housed in a glass-and-steel public building to be literally dropped onto a section of an urban street could be carried out.)

Schimmel does attempt to address the 'academic trap' in his typically thoughtful catalogue essay: 'These artists seem to operate within a zone of potentiality between the constraints of neo-conservative academicism and those of a deconstructivist impulse that has also become academic.' I completely agree with the larger claim of his statement, however, too many of the artists in this exhibition do not actually remain in the zone between these two constraints: two egregious examples are assume vivid astro focus's *HOMO CRAP #1* (2005), which manages to suck the life out of the potent setting of a Berlin nightclub, taming it into something better off footnoted in a thesis; and Pierre Huyghe's *L'expédition scintillante, Acte 2 (light box)* (2002), which somehow manages to make a room full of fog and lights feel like going to school (the fact that the work is a fragment of a larger installation doesn't help). Adding insult to injury, some of the other works that do find this 'zone' come off rather lame. Sylvie Fleury's *8* (2000) – a large capsule-like golden ball – is presented as a 'meditative space', but immediately after I stepped inside it and was shut inside its bejewelled interior, then forced to listen to a snippet of the soundtrack of the 1958 film *The Queen of Outer Space*, starring Zsa Zsa Gabor, I got it: it's camp, and I'm sure it's meant to be lame: if there's ecstasy here it comes with a wink and a smirk. (In other words, it ain't Kusama.)

Wanting very much to end on as 'high' a note as possible, however, I'd like to recognize some of the works that I did think were successful. Eija-Liisa Ahtila's breathtaking film *Talo/The House* (2002) is so moving and beautiful that it could easily survive any context. Tatsuro Bashi's *Karifornia* (2005) was short-lived but slyly spectacular in its ability to be straightforward and ecstasy-provoking: positioned outside of LA City Hall it provided a needed escape from the museum, and to climb its rickety structure and then enter a plainly furnished living room built around the top of a flagpole (bearing the California flag) was to have a genuinely transcendental experience. And finally, for me, the entire show proved again (more than 15 years after I first saw it) that Charles Ray's *Tabletop* (1989) is a masterpiece. It has more 'ecstasy' in its little cups and saucers than all of the rest of the show combined. TRM

Right
Lari Pittman *Untitled #6
(View from the Kitchen)*,
2005, cel vinyl, acrylic,
alkyd on gessoed canvas
over panel, 259 x 218 CM
PHOTO: DOUGLAS PARKER
COURTESY GLADSTONE GALLERY,
NEW YORK. © LARI PITTMAN 2005

Facing page from above
Hans Memling *Portrait
of a Man with a Spotted
Fur Collar, c.1475*, panel,
38 x 27 CM
GALLERIA DEGLI UFFIZI, FLORENCE
IMAGE COURTESY THE FRICK
COLLECTION, NEW YORK

Mark Bradford, still from
Niagara, 2005, DVD video
loop, 3 mins 17 secs
COURTESY SIKKEMA JENKINS & CO.,
NEW YORK



New York

Lari Pittman

Gladstone Gallery

19 NOVEMBER – 23 DECEMBER

Lari Pittman's new paintings – all big and all scenes of domestic settings, so signalled by the subtitles of these otherwise-untitled works: e.g. *The Living Room, View from the Living Room, In the Patio, The Pantry*, etc. (all 2005) – require no small amount of watching. Not because they are fast, in the sense that Leo Steinberg described Kenneth Noland's vast horizontal striped canvases as some of the fastest paintings he had ever seen, but because they are in fact the opposite, which is to say they are slow: slow to give up their content, slow to give up their imagery and organization, and, in the end, slow to give up their meaning. On this last bit of reluctance (or reticence, if you believe paintings speak to us), when I write 'slow', I mean glacial.

This is why one must 'watch' Pittman's work, rather than look at it. The paintings are only kinetic if granted status as cartoonish, in the way that even the most static imagery of popular anime or manga bears a kind of anxious quivering often resultant from a deft and photographic handling of light and reflection. Perhaps the growing influence of this and other graphic traditions in the US at the moment is affecting the collective image bank of artists and critics alike, which is why it would be difficult to single it out as either one of Pittman's formal resources or simply an inescapable way of seeing his work. The rise of the 'graphic' prefix (think '-art', '-design', '-novels') informs the work's 'slick' quality (a term that even the press release uses as a badge of honour) and the almost arrogant busyness of each canvas (made more so for the seemingly banal subject matter). Perhaps this is what happens to a production designer's storyboards when things go helplessly, and terribly, awry; and when they do, one cannot help but watch.

Instead of 'mining' some pictorial terrain between abstraction and figuration, then, perhaps we should call what Pittman does 'terraforming' – a term appropriately cartoonish in its connection to science fiction and the latter's fables of planetary preparation for future inhabitants (easily the most extreme of makeovers). A terraformer readies hostile planetary ground by producing it anew, covering it with an atmosphere, and making it suitable for the agricultural and industrial practices that sustain life on earth. Naturally it is prior to (or sometimes coextensive with) any kind of 'mining', either literal or figurative. Equally naturally, it often proves detrimental to the planet to be so 'formed'. For Pittman, neither abstraction nor figuration can offer the poles between which some new pictorial territory may lie open for exploration (and profitable extractions). It seems he wants nothing less than a new planet for painting, one where abstraction and figuration have yet to be established as viable modalities. JTDN

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