

Scope Art Fair

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Was it the feng shui? The cavorting in cozy casual chambers with curators and dealers, normally enshrouded in white, hallowed gallery walls? Was it the art towels, Kara Cressman's grandma's swan tchotchke, terrycloth soap dog, and other bathroom art fare? In any case, a good time: the intimate art fair -scope, conceived of by directors Alexis Hubshman and Peter Surace of Rare, Robert Curcio, and Ronald Sosinski, lived up to its subtitle, "culture on the verge." -scope put art on the cutting board and served up a combination platter. The display of each artist's work in rooms on the 11th through the 13th floors of the Gershwin Hotel (site of the fair) evolved into site-specific installation. Diverse stock ingredients were reprocessed into fresh corporeal sculpture.

In Cornell DeWitt's room, for instance, thick slabs made from rolls of stained canvas, squeezed together and then sliced with a band saw, formed evocative, hazy orbs. If nougat came in smoky lavenders and muted mothy teals, interspersed with glowy yellow round bits, it would look like this. Likewise, Max Johnston stacked cut-up strips and knots of acrylic paint in the Christopher Cutts lodgings. Evoking sensuous craft from Guatemalan textiles and hand-knit nubby wool sweaters to summercamp plastic lanyard, Johnston's Crayola-colored, gum-stick weavings formed plush mini-rugs.

In Florence Lynch's salon, Christa Maiwald embroidered Long

Island suburban adolescent-land. She parodied wanna-be, self-consciously "cute," pose-for-the-snapshot smiles and gestures on the pillows, lamps, and bedspread. Threads splayed out in all directions, and negative space, bleeding out into the white plane of the bedspread, rendered all the best aspects of drawing tangible.

Down the hall, other offbeat incarnations of sculpture intrigued viewers. Perched in a corner on the Mizuma bedside table, Les Joynes's gloppy candy-colored foam sculpture teased with rotating chassis of toy cars barely visible under the spongy piles of delectation.

Things got wilder in Johanna Berke's installation curated by Bill Previdi. Surrounded by sprawling springs of dogwood branches on which a myriad of stuffed blackbirds roosted, visitors were instructed to use the hotel phone to contact a "woman in nature," the artist. Berke reconnected contemporary urbanites to the sounds, smells, and inner essence of nature, not merely the superficially visible nature of contained and manicured cut roses or orchids lined up for sale at the corner deli. Simultaneously, she commented on woman's over-cultivated sexuality and over-groomed place in society.

Further probing plasticizes existence in America. Mick O'Shea's installation on the De Chiara floor touted a full-blown takeover by pop culture, ersatz nature. Just as kitschy holiday regalia for Christmas, Valentine's Day, and Easter partition up the year, dictating what decorations should seasonally adorn our homes and minds, O'Shea's suburban window boxes (blown up into giant fortresses) subdivided color-coded neighborhoods. Including Eater egg vinyl Colorforms, graphic neon-arrow gameboard directions, and rows of Monopoly houses, *Cattle Raid* depicted a child's innocent world of play. Nonetheless, there were toy Barbie war trucks and tanks camouflaged to match pink artificial flowers. O'Shea portrayed Middle America's naive, oblivious, media-driven mindset in the midst of U.S. military and ecological exploitation.

Fakeness also features in Pascal Spengemann's curatorial project. *Amenities* satirized hotel/fine art hype, especially at the Gershwin.

The Hotel vaunts its up-market cultural cachet with artwork in every room, yet offers few essential services to guests. Rachel Corney's etched mirror welcome mat was anything but warm and welcoming. Guests hesitated to step on the glass; some women who did risked a clear, reflected view up their skirts. The most striking pieces in the room were Jeffrey Hatfield's *Egg and Dart* pattern molding, which emphatically skewed the straight lines of staid residential architecture, and Jeff Feld's shiny, supra-sanitizes, shrink-wrapped bed and pillows.

Finally, in the curcioprojects quarters, we got sex in the afternoon...or something. With the windows blocked, no air, and four different soundtracks playing at once-carnival music, popular porn music such as from *Debbie does Dallas*, sentimental, romantic favorites, and actual moans-we were directed to study the video monitor showing not the flick *Eruption* itself, but artist Sandra Bermudez watching seven hours of such porn. Bermudez's face as it turns out, however, does not in fact register turn-on, instead it shows the tedium of repetitive sex stunts. Even for guests swaying on the vibrating bed, the upshot was no upshot. money shot-no climax whatsoever. Ultimately-scope did more than sell art. It proffered room service for the mind, serving up poly-dimensional, perceptive art.