

are all headed?

Still, one has the sense that despite the evident chill factor of the landscape, Tierney loves what he does and has a definite affection for the implied romanticism of a time long since past. Aerospace is no longer the force it once was, and space travel now just another frontier. If anything, these cold vacant interiors allow for the mind to wander either back or forward through time and space. After all, isn't it all really about imagination, every great idea having sprung from there first?

—Eve Wood

WHAT'S NEW PUSSYCAT?

Torrance Art Museum

CONCEIVED AS A RESPONSE to the Getty's "Pacific Standard Time (PST)" survey of Los Angeles art from 1945–1980, "What's New, Pussycat?," curated by Tim Nye and Max Presneill for the Torrance Art Museum, shows how the pioneering work of Angeleno artists in the '60s continues to influence local artists to the present day.

Though the premise is taut and articulate, there is nothing slick and polished about the installation. Not only does the show demonstrate stylistic and conceptual threads from one generation to another, its installation suggests what such shows must have looked and felt like: sparse and gritty, experimental, not averse to the taking of risks. It recreates the sense of walking into a Venice gallery in the '60s, when these artists who came of age were simply names, not art stars; names who made work, not masterpieces.

Just as the first generation artists have become household names, so too have their materials become common-



Walead Beshty, *FedEx@ Kraft Box ...* 2008

place. Though we take for granted the use of polyester, resin, spray paint, hyperbolic concave canvases and video, their use was not always so prevalent. The effect of these materials in their original, historical "What's New, Pussycat?" moment must have seemed iconoclastic. Consider how Larry Bell used spray paint on his *AAAAA 102* and Peter Alexander fabricated *Clear Wedge* and *Royal Blue Drip* with polyester and resin. This groundbreaking work paved the way for subsequent generations of Angeleno artists who, if they didn't stand on the shoulders of their predecessors, at least borrowed from their palette and work table, as it were, to continue their spirit of investigation. For example, Andy Moses made *Uluru* and *Uncompahgre* with acrylic on concave canvas and Walead Beshty's use of laminated Mirropane, a FedEx shipping box, accrued FedEx shipping and tracking labels, tape, metal and silicone.

Incisive and informative, this show suggests that art evolves through a process of innovation, dissemination and influence, that the process is organic and alive; that, as this investigative exhibition attests, it does so without losing the kernel of its original identity.

—James Scarborough

JAMES GILBERT AND JENNIFER VANDERPOOL

Lenzer Gallery

ACHIEVING A LUSH potency in the way it engulfs the senses, the cocoon-like "Worker," James Gilbert and Jennifer Vanderpool's installation at Pitzer College's Lenzer Gallery, which employs over 10,000 articles of donated, recycled, or scavenged clothing to carpet the walls, floors and ceiling of the gallery, suggests deprivation. The feeling of absence is persistent, as is the somewhat unnatural lack of ambient noise, resulting from the sheer number of clothes. This unsettling sensation is enhanced by the gallery's low ceiling, which the artists have capitalized on: like a blanket of snow, the space sucks up sound. The normal auditory perceptual cues that we rely on to augment our visual acuity and plumb depth and dimension prove hard to come by.

The sense of deprivation paradoxically draws our focus to the sensory inputs of the installation: the tactile and olfactory presence of thousands of pieces of used clothing, life-size anthropoid clothing sculptures, audio recordings and a video projection. The aroma of the clothing, funky and earthy, has the fecund odor of creation, and the mannequin-like sculptures, posed mid-stride, seem to have sprung up spontaneously. Stereo speakers concealed beneath and between folds of clothing pipe in a shifting mélange of sounds; some suggest a garment factory in an urban center — the rattle of sewing machines, footfalls which come and go, and the sounds of traffic heard from outside a window — and others appeal to the imagination — the buzzing of bees, birds singing, a barking dog, the wail of a siren. The audio can be utterly transporting, and the space alternates between enchanting and claustrophobic.

In a small alcove of the gallery, a looped video projection fixes on an individual who is never fully seen. Glimpsed only in partial views, this figure is presented as a pair of hands working to knot clothing into a long chain, or as a head and shoulders seen from behind, or obscured by mounds of clothing, working continuously, focused in an ongoing act of creation. Periodically, the silhouette of a second figure walking back and forth in front of or behind the worker corresponds to the sound of footfalls in the gallery.

While "Worker," in its homage to garment workers and allusions to the disparities between labor and capital, underscores a political point, the installation, in functioning on an imaginative, poetic level,

James Gilbert and Jennifer Vanderpool, "Worker" installation detail, 2011



creates a tension between the political and the poetic. Gilbert and Vanderpool's video creates an aura of obsession, creativity and passion — its lonely worker set on a task; the video conveys a fragmentary narrative flecked with magical realism. The anonymous morphs of clothing and humanoid structure evoke a sense of loneliness and displacement, and whether "Worker" addresses the anonymity of the garment worker or whether it is a metaphor for the artist submersed in her work, it is a human narrative which animates it and intertwines the artists' multiple drives.

—Christopher Michno

SAN FRANCISCO

ROGER ARVID ANDERSON & BILLY BOWERS

Steven Wolf Fine Arts

FUELED BY ROCK music and psychotropics, along with free love, hippie culture attracted throngs of followers to "turn on, tune in, and drop out." The Mecca for flower children in the '60s and '70s was clearly San Francisco, specifically the Haight-Ashbury district. Out of this atmosphere was born an alternative performance group, The Cockettes, whose creative, cross-dressing ranks included men and women of various sexual persuasions, sharing an acid-laced utopian vision.

San Francisco's Steven Wolf Fine Arts, relocated to an airy, semi-industrial space in the outer Mission, recently presented Roger Arvid Anderson's "Cockette Close-Up" suite of photographs, and Billy Bowers' mind-blowing "Walt Disney was Homosexual" assemblages. Anderson captured the performers backstage at The Palace theatre in North Beach in 1972. Bowers, a founding member of The Cockettes, is best known for his revolutionary costume design. Performers and artists including Mick Jagger, Alice Cooper and Salvador Dali eagerly sought his creations; and his fashion work has been recognized in publications such as *L'Uomo Vogue*.

Wolf started the year off with a bang — offering a New Year's Eve reception where live models donned Bowers' wearable creations and put on an ersatz runway show. These costumes range from split-crotch jeans festooned with rainbow-hued Mardi Gras beads, plastic jester-heads in gold and violet, erotic photos, buttons and baubles to the red, white and blue patriotic frenzy of the 9/11 Jacket.

Trippiness, porn, fetish art and kitsch mesh in kaleidoscopic adventures in S&M, spiritualism/politics, confession and fantasy in Bowers' wall-mounted fabric assemblages. A memorable denim and fake fur quilt features faux tiger skin plastered with photos of body builders posing and/or having sex. On another tack, *Stop au Genocide Du Peuple Tamoui* uses an exotic batik background, images of Ganesh, and what looks like Leonard Nimoy in drag, to make a plea for compassion. While these works all seem far removed from the world of art-school theory, they are sincere and compelling — one might think of Rauschenberg's "combines" or Jess' collages, or the wearable art of Nick Cave; Salvador Dali is even said to have attempted to claim Bowers' monkey-fur cape with rat collar as his own invention.

In the lounge, Roger Arvid Anderson's "Cockette Close-Up" offers large-scale, poster-sized prints. Grainy and oversaturated, the work bears a vintage, almost otherworldly feeling, presenting the Cockettes from a safe distance both chronologically and emotionally. We see them from a back-stage perspective, or as though we're peeking from the wings. We may ponder Johnny, a striking, platinum blond with glitter eye shadow and dense false eyelashes,



Roger Arvid Anderson, 1972 (printed 2010)

her face reflected in an oval mirror, a can of Aqua-Net hairspray at her side.

Anderson shares some memorable, quirky images of a unique era and group of committed visionaries. Bowers, one of these, continues to pursue his passion for fashion, as well as transgression, creating a stir beyond the fringes of social acceptability. Taken on their own expansive terms, these images and objects give us a welcome and invigorating jolt of unsettling energy, as well as a bit of a blast from a very visceral past.

—Barbara Morris

TRACY SNELLING

Rena Bransten Gallery

IN HIS JUSTLY FAMOUS 1960s manifesto, pop artist Claes Oldenburg proclaimed, "I am for an art that embroils itself with the everyday crap and still comes out on top. I am for an art that imitates the human, that is comic, if necessary, or violent, or whatever

is necessary ... I am for U.S. Government Inspected Art, Grade A art, Regular Price art, Yellow Ripe art, Extra Fancy art, Ready-to-eat art, Best-for-less art, Ready-to-cook art, Fully cleaned art, Spend Less art, Eat Better art, Ham art, Pork art, chicken art, tomato art, banana art, apple art, turkey art, cake art, cookie art." Two generations later, we associate Pop Art with an ironic affection for commercial dreck, but we forget that Ed Kienholz and George Segal explored the less glossy sides of life in the capitalist vanguard nation. Tracy Snelling's art both celebrates the cheerful vulgarity of the commercial landscape, now globalized, and its melancholy aspects. Her sprawling retrospective — noisy and blinking with recorded audio and commercial neon — transports the viewer into an intricately rendered miniature universe that is alternatively enthralling and thrillingly mundane, our universal hybrid American/Asian/Latino border town.

Snelling's retrospective is ambitiously immersive, comprising almost 30 pieces in a range of media and scales: a handful of illuminated wall sculptures mimicking commercial signage (*Bar, Park, Shocking, Sinsational*); several wall-hung photos (*Film Still, Zhujijiao; Chinese Donut*), some incorporating sculptural and video elements; a couple of video projections; two installations, one a

Tracey Snelling, *Strip Mall (Los Angeles)*, 2007

