

The image is humorous, but the joke is complex, for this snowman will never melt. In a world where time is so precious that we are always trying to figure out how to do things faster, Shaw invests an almost inconceivable number of hours in fabricating extraordinarily fragile-looking things. Yet under the right circumstances, the snowman and his porcelain compatriots, like a group of Messian figurines or Han temple guardians, will outlast us all. *Ars longa, vita brevis.*

—Maria Forgas

MARYLHURST, ORE.

Aristotle Georgiades at the Art Gym

Time and labor are themes that preoccupied Aristotle Georgiades in this exhibition of finely crafted mixed-medium sculptures. In the fast-paced, hurry-up world of work, he has found psychological stresses that transcend class; whether blue-, pink-, or white-collar, we all rush to meet deadlines, ruled by job schedules or internal clocks. In *Duration*, a giant, carved-wood hand atop a pedestal of rough-hewn timber sports an aluminum watch. "You're late," it appears to admonish, and the clenched fist evokes an angry boss or a bullying superego. Because the watch lacks a minute hand, one's tardiness becomes an eternal condition. This warping of time is a function of ever higher standards of productivity and effi-

ciency. With so much to do, a few minutes of forced inactivity such as waiting in line (or even on-line) can seem infinitely protracted.

Georgiades plays with the resulting impatience in the interactive *Lull*, where a wooden hand on a large red book rests on a handsome Shaker-style table. The hand's articulated fingers terminate in hammerheads; when the viewer turns a metal crank protruding from the book's spine, the fingers drum the table, making a deafening racket while chipping away at the surface to illustrate the destructive potential of chronic irritability. Idle, by contrast, incorporates the subtle sounds of boredom. Here a great carved head lies trapped in a globe-like cage on the floor. Tubes emerge from the mouth, two attached to small stereo speakers, one to a tape-loop hidden within the gallery wall. The sculpture emits a series of noises: the artist coughing, sniffing, clearing his throat, yawning audibly, sighing. Does the globe imply that his impatience is a universal experience? All over the world, he suggests, we wait for planes, phone calls, news, the dentist, while time slips inexorably away.

The motif of the globe recurs in other works by Georgiades. In the wall-mounted ensemble *Strong Arm*, for instance, it dangles as a weight from a disembodied wooden arm in a system of pulleys and levers borrowed from defunct exercise equipment. Pulling on the hand-grip of a metal bar causes the arm to flex and delivers the viewer a global punch in the stomach. With abs and arms gone flabby in a high-tech age of desk jobs and computer sistrions, physical work is here displaced from the realm of real labor to the narcissistic exploits of the gym. Ironically, it's the sculptor, wielding power tools and arc welders, who brings together brains and brawn. His labor is not alienated but produces meaningful objects like these, informed by improvisive intelligence and wit.

—Sue Taylor

LONDON

Bridget Riley at Waddington

Over the past decade, the narrow stripes of Bridget Riley's previous paintings have given



Bridget Riley: *Going Along*, 1999, oil on linen, 48 by 72 1/2 inches; at Waddington.

way to sweeping patterns of curvilinear shapes that sometimes suggest stylized leaf forms. Consequently, dazzling optical effects have been replaced by an overall pastoral feel. This allows Riley's intangible gift as a colorist to come to the fore. Indeed, the four oils on canvas and 12 gouaches in this show reveal an explosion of fresh energy, comparable to that found in Matisse's late works. Not coincidentally, much of the rhythm in Riley's new work derives from Matisse's cutouts, while the color schemes relate to his late paintings.

Of the canvases in the present exhibition, two were just off square and two, rectangular. The largest rectangle, *Evo8 1*, is quite stunning. The painting's almost panoramic format effectively persuades the viewer to imagine walking through this polychromatic landscape. Some gentle optical play remains, generated by the bold rhythms of the interlocked curvilinear shapes and their subtle variations in tone and color. The visual action takes place in shallow depth, just beneath the picture plane. Intermittently, the picture plane is punctured as the zones of deep blue throw the pink and peach shapes forward, only to have its integrity reinforced in the next moment as the paleness of the lighter-toned colors causes them to sink back again. In the other, similarly patterned oils, the lighter colors of *Evo8 1* are replaced with an acidic yellow or a lime green and the deep blue with either a purple or a mauve.

Riley's gouaches are much more than just preparatory sketches for the oils (which are painted by assistants, as has long been Riley's practice). In the gouaches employing three or more colors, fluid polyphonic rhythms are established. Where

only two colors are used (as in *July 24: Cream and Green and Bassacs*), those rhythms are arrested and replaced by a simple ricocheting movement between foreground and background. Interestingly, the gouaches lead back to the canvases by tuning the viewer into the paintings' delicately brushed, slightly uneven surfaces. Rather than creating obstacles for the eye to stumble over, such nuances only add to the overall effect of these powerful works. Taken together, the works in this show suggested why Riley may be the only artist alive who is vital to both the past and the future of British abstract painting. [*Two Bridget Riley exhibitions are currently on view in New York: "Paintings 1982-2000 and Early Works on Paper" at PaceWildenstein (Sept. 22-Oct. 21) and "Bridget Riley: Reconnaissance" at Dia Center for the Arts (Sept. 21, 2000-June 18, 2001).]*

—Alex Coles

PARIS

Gert Verhoeven at Galerie Nelson

Gert Verhoeven is a 36-year-old Belgian artist whose sculptures, drawings and videotapes share seemingly uninhibited vocabularies and esthetic casualness. Some artists use informality to emphasize their idiosyncratic seeing of the world, others to blur the lines between their art and everything else. Verhoeven's offhandedness evokes a realm where varying sorts of language and babble exuberantly intertwine, where child's play meets the assembly line, psychoanalysis is a subject of merriment and Marcel Broodthaers the éminente grise.

Verhoeven's recent sculpture

Aristotle Georgiades: *Duration*, 1999, wood, aluminum, 34 by 28 by 16 inches; at the Art Gym.





Gert Verhoeven: Installation view of exhibition, 2000; at Galerie Nelson.

show in Paris, which overlapped a show of works on paper at Christine Burgin in New York, made evident his methodical informality and deft mix of disorder and organization, dumbness and subtlety. The Paris show comprised four works, each a combination of all or part of a restrained set of elements: small-scale cast-plaster objects; common pencils; cheap wood-grain, Formica-topped, double-leaved camping tables, single or paired; and Plexiglas boxes. The smoky-brown, 14-inch-high plexi boxes covered all but one of the tabletops, serving as low-budget vitrines. The varied plaster objects sat on the tables or, in one instance, atop the Plexiglas case.

On the gallery's principal wall, a four-line, all-cap, bright yellow text proclaimed: "LES COPY-BOULES / SUB-DIRECTION / SUB-PRODUCTION / SUB-PREPRODUCTION." The words suggest the organizational diagram of a regressive hierarchy—"copy-boules" makes little sense in either French or English; "sub" as easily evokes subconscious as subcontracted; and "sub-preproduction" seems hopelessly anterior to any meaningful action. Neither caption nor slogan nor commentary, this string of words hints at order and meaning while delivering neither.

"Les copy-boules" might stand as a generic name for the plaster objects, some of which could be seen as three-dimensional renderings of the circular copyright sign. Here Verhoeven used all the tricks and potential mishaps of the casting process to spawn an inchoate family of fraternal forms, thus calling attention to

reproduction and its productive failures. In one untitled work, nine casts of detumescent hand-sized near-spheres vaguely recall misshapen infants' skulls; each is assigned to a fixed location, indicated by a green magic-marker circle and number. Above them a red-white-and-black oversized pencil, roughly hewn out of a tree branch, is propped up point down by its real pencil model. The embodied capacity to write and draw seems to rule over the languid group of objects underneath. In *Sub*, there are 16 approximate spheres, seemingly the result of casting a Styrofoam ball in a two-part mold while paying little attention to registration. Some of the spheres are colored, some not; all but two sit atop the Plexi case. The flatulent-sounding nonsense syllable "prutt" is scribbled on one, a reminder, perhaps, of the potentially scatological interpretation of so many forlorn balls. The 28 objects that make up *Sub Sub* can be divided into four groups: KKK hood shapes, floppy penises, rough spheres and, again, headlike blobs, these last a sort of devolution of all the others. Their placement makes no evident sense but appears definitive.

Linguistic and physical accidents abound in Verhoeven's works. One of the Plexiglas boxes had been damaged, and Verhoeven repaired the cracked edge with a couple of band-aids in a gesture both playful and semantically complicated. The vitrine isn't mended by the band-aids, but its injury is treated. The Plexi box was offhandedly pinned in place by broken bits of pencils stuck in the table hinges. While

the means of a sculpture's making often helps us fix the work's meaning, here simple processes such as casting, coloring and arranging raise more questions than they answer.

—Anne Rochette and Wade Saunders

TOKYO

Toshikatsu Endo at Akiyama

The photographs in Akiyama's street-level entry set the tone: the dark, partially obscured black-and-white imagery ranged from a fairly straightforward shot of a factory courtyard to glimpses of machinery, a view of Mount Fuji and some dark, scrappy patches of tall grasses. The one large and seven small photos, framed with metal and wrapped or embedded with copper wire, communicated a feeling of ominousness. The largest work, the factory building, had a copper tube in a notch at the bottom of the frame from which amber oil had poured down the wall into a trough, where it had coagulated and darkened. Glass tubes and wire-wrapped metal bars intruded into other images.

The immediate suggestion was of contamination of Japan's vaunted natural features. These photos, one learned, are from Toshikatsu Endo's hometown. The symbolism deepened, both literally and figuratively, as one entered the gallery proper by descending a spiral staircase past the first large sculpture, a narrow, two-story metal box mounted on the wall. Its dark intrusion on the white wall was its most remarkable feature except for the faint sound of running water emerging from it.

In the subterranean space were two forbidding works. One, titled *Trieb—Narcissus*, consisted of a large glass tube about 5 feet tall and 10 inches in diameter that stood on a metal plate. A copper wire, coiled repeatedly around it near the top, led off to a plugged-in glass box of battery connections on the floor. The tube was filled with a nasty sludge of soil, litter and water. It looked toxic, and one reflected that Endo had pointedly positioned this work directly below the oil seeping from the factory photo in the gallery's entry. The

gallery explained that the soil is in fact from a factory site that had been contaminated with dioxin. The final work was slightly less dark in outlook. *Trieb—Solitary Cell of Narcissus* was an I-beam and steel-plate tank full of water, painted white outside, turquoise inside, and lit from above; through a roughly 2-by-5-foot window in the end of the tank, one could see cool-and-soothing-looking water bubbling gently from a recirculating hose.

Endo is best known for his large ring sculptures made of blocks of charred wood, one of which was included in the L.A. County Museum's "Primal Spirit" exhibition in the early '90s. He has always had a sense of the spirituality of natural materials that perhaps derives from Japan's indigenous Shinto religion. The pieces at Akiyama were both more grim and more explicit than his earlier work. Not only did he take advantage of the gallery's configuration to evoke



Toshikatsu Endo: *Trieb—Solitary Cell of Narcissus*, 2000, mixed mediums; at Akiyama.

the dangers of ground pollution, he also drew on the regard in Japan, as in many other cultures, for water as a purifying force. And more than that: by titling the works "Narcissus" he recalled the myth of a man looking into the water and falling in love with his own image. One could hardly love what this reflection showed, but it could be equally fatal.

—Janet Koplos