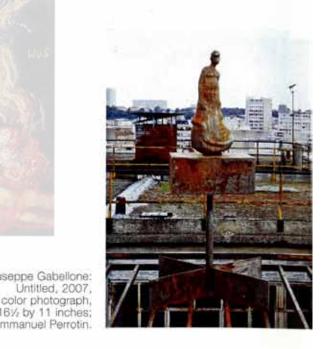




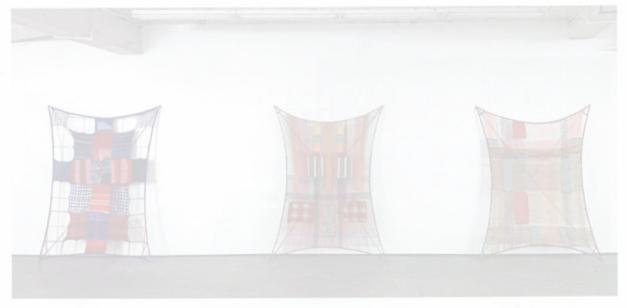
Gluseppe Gabellone: 16½ by 11 inches; at Emmanuel Perrotin.



SELMA WALDMAN

ALEXANDRA BIRCKEN

INTERNATIONAL EXHIBITION REVIEWS



Alexandra Bircken: Left to right, Runway, Receptor and Insert, all 2009, mixed mediums, each approx. 86 by 63 inches: at Herald St.

of colorful yarns and rectangular fabric remnants, these oversized dreamcatchers seem to describe an ideal community, kept together by a dense network of affectionate links.

As always in Bircken's practice, there is something intrinsically—and almost aggressively—feminine about the work. Her choice of materials and techniques once routinely associated with womanhood and later reclaimed by the feminist movement constitutes a female counterpoint to historically macho geometric abstraction. Bircken's work also refers to the minor miseries of domestic existence. In the gallery's second room was Not Beyond Repair, a clothes-drying rack draped with rags and adorned by a couple of pathetic rabbit stuffed animals; it evokes both a terror of the mundane and a yearning for escape.

In another corner of the gallery was learus Survivor, a red and white mobile made out of a slashed-open puffy vest, a kitschy woolen scarf, and plaster casts of bananas and cupcakes that has the defiant air of a fetish. This ritualistic feel is another characteristic of Bircken's work, seen again here in three Joseph Cornell-like box/frames, each containing numerous found objects evidently meant to conjure the spirit of a place or a person (Setup, 5 O'Clock, Thwack). The artist seems to endorse the magical power with which some feminist symbols have been endowed, but not at the expense of making other, rather too obvious associations: Setup includes a fabric heart, pink textbook drawings of a uterus and three red-

stained tampons neatly aligned in the bullet holders of a marksman's satchel. As visually efficient as Bircken's work may be, it leaves the viewer wondering if 21st-century artists shouldn't be inventing a new form of feminism instead of repeating ad nauseam the once-radical gestures of the '60s.

Coline Milliard

PARIS

GIUSEPPE GABELLONE

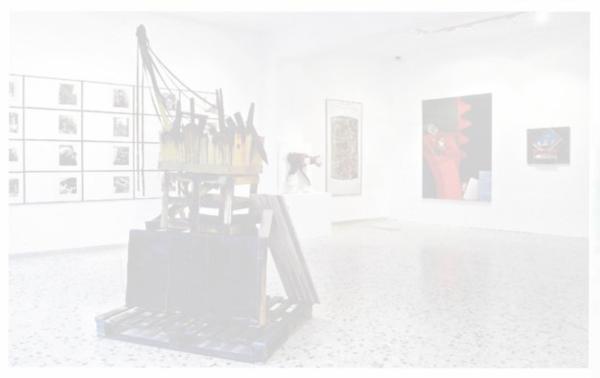
EMMANUEL PERROTIN

The 35-year-old Italian sculptor Giuseppe Gabellone consistently confounds expectations. He often fashions pieces in surprising ways, for example press-molding a series of ukiyo-e-inspired reliefs in a silvery substance that turns out to be a mixture of tobacco, aluminum powder and glue. He also constructs large sculptures that he photographs in a chosen context from a single viewpoint; as with Thomas Demand, the picture is the work, since Gabellone says the sculptures have been destroyed. Gabellone's 82-by-59inch chromogenic prints stood out at Documenta 11; each foregrounds a tall sculpture assembled from carved blue foam, an unlikely pole lamp bearing lilies standing in the even light of a nondescript southern Italian landscape.

Gabellone has conceived, fabricated and presented his latest sculptures to be both sharply defined and hard to construe. At Emmanuel Perrotin, he showed two similar pieces facing one another, both titled L'Assetato (The Thirsty Man), 2008. The two sculptures are precisely

120 centimeters (47 1/4 inches) high; they stand on 80-centimeter-high pedestals (311/2 inches), unwieldy structures of welded and galvanized square steel tubing. Each sculpture reads as a standing figure of indeterminate physique and features, modeled and cast in iron. In fact, the figures are milled out of solid blocks of iron by a CNC machine-a digital controller that drives a cutting device. Gabellone fed the program that guided the machine information from loose sketches of an Arturo Martini sculpture of the '30s, thus bypassing questions of anatomy, resemblance and touch. The deep gray matte surface of the waxed iron further softens the ambiguous volumes. Though the bases could pass for found industrial stands, the artist built them, and they hark back to Minimalism. The figure on a pedestal is a long-lived sculptural trope; these oscillate between present and past, clear and murky, unique and twinned.

Gabellone also exhibited seven 161/2by-11-inch digital prints; they lack the crystalline quality of his earlier analog photos. The pictures represent seven smaller-scale machined iron sculptures, each a figure standing on a unique steel base that is in turn machine-screwed to a tabletop of widely spaced steel bars; the table's legs are always outside the pictorial field. All the elements are rusted. Gabellone now calls Paris home, and for his shoots he chose flat rooftops around the city to silhouette each of the seven sculptures against the sky and the anonymous urban landscape; he claims to have destroyed the Iron pieces. One



Left to right, works by Nelly's, Kostis Velonis, Vlassis Caniaris, Chryssa Romanos, Christos Charissis and Alexis Akrithakis; in "What Does New and Interest AD Gallegy, 2008, at AD Gallegy,

figure echoes Juan Muñoz's roundbottomed iron castings, another suggests a Max Ernst sculpture, a third a Boccioni. In an interview with the curator Frédéric Paul, Gabellone mentions being drawn to the innumerable Italian monuments commemorating now unremembered events, and in this series he seems to offer his adopted city a group of anachronistic public guardians, personages who've dematerialized but live on in these photographic portraits.

-Wade Saunders and Anne Rochette

JONAS MEKAS MUSEUM LUDWIG

Over the last 50 years, Jonas Mekas has been without doubt one of the most important figures in experimental film. Along with his own filmmaking, he started the magazine Film Culture in 1955, organized the Film-Makers' Cooperative (1962) and the Filmmakers' Cinematheque (1964), and, finally, founded Anthology Film Archives in 1970, where he later became (and remains) director. (All are, or were, in New York.) By gathering these different roles—director, critic and curator—in one person, he not only actively combined the fields of theory and practice, but over a long period significantly shaped our perception of experimental film, and expanded what independent cinema could be.

Acknowledging his unique position, the Museum Ludwig in Cologne recently presented the first overview of Mekas's accomplishments. The main focus of this retrospective was his films—including

Diaries, Notes, and Sketches (also known as Walden), 1969, and The Brig (1964)—which were nicely presented in a cinema setting—and such recent video installations as the 2006-07 "365 Day Project" (for which Mekas shot one short video a day). But Mekas's poetry, film critiques, posters and programs were also well represented. By putting early issues of Film Culture next to posters for the Film-Makers' Cooperative, along with film works and installations, the exhibition achieved a striking dynamic: in the space between different mediums, it became clear that the film experience cannot be limited to watching movies in a dark room. With this overview of Mekas's work, the full cosmos of independent cinema opened up.

Whoever expected that this diverse roundup would necessarily engage the typically noisy Pop politics of the art-film world would have been surprised, because the show was very calm. It was a serenity that emerged from Mekas's artistic disposition, expressed as early as 1961 in a "Movie Journal" article for the Village Voice titled "The Creative Joy of the Independent Film-Maker." With a clear understanding of the impact of criticism, and of the hype that is often created there, he wrote, "Newspapers and critics are looking for waves. Let them look for them, goodbye, goodbye!" How beautiful, precious and important is the confidence that comes with such an independent mission and practice. That the museum managed to translate them into a show is remarkable. But shhh—we should remain calm.

-Mara Glanda

ATHENS "WHAT DOES NEW AND INTERESTING MEAN?"

Pantelis Arapinis of AD Gallery set out to connect the dots between older and younger generations of Greek artists in the group show "What Does New and Interesting Mean?" Arapinis's title alludes to the historic 1996 exhibition at the Athens School of Fine Arts of works from the Dakis Joannou Collection, called "Everything That's Interesting Is New." In the exhibition at AD, the works—high quality though by no means seminal in all cases—were installed on two floors, with juxtapositions of recent and older works spanning 1950 to the present.

The photographer known as Nelly's (1899-1998), more widely recognized for fashion magazine spreads than gallery exhibitions, was represented by works from the series "New York Easter Parade" (1953), presented with texts by various poet collaborators in a grid as book page mock-ups. The crisp style of Nelly's contrasted with the weathered materials of a 1965 brown paper collage by Jannis Kounellis. Dialogues about the expanded use of photography developed between various works, such as a group of Lucas Samaras Polaroids from 1971, and a self-portrait on photosensitive canvas (1986) by the now revered—if only in Greece—Nikos Kessanlis (1930-2004). Vlassis Caniaris, another avant-gardist who came of age in the '60s, had two