

Selma Waldman: *Heavy Cable II*, 2005, from the series "Wall of Perpetrators III," charcoal and pastel on paper, 11 by 8½ inches; at M. Rosetta Hunter Gallery.



Mark Barnes: *Three Jerrys*, 1999, silver gelatin print, 15 by 19 inches; at Blue Sky.



Giuseppe Gabellone: *Untitled*, 2007, color photograph, 16½ by 11 inches; at Emmanuel Perrotin.



summons up the cheerless pathos of Walker Evans's and Dorothea Lange's Depression-era work. Barnes's photos of out-of-work trailer park residents carry comparable documentary power with no less artistry than the pictures of his renowned predecessors. His depopulated scenes of demolished factories and abandoned roadside encampments also allude to another of photography's early charges, to provide an anthropological record, and recall 19th-century French photography of Egyptian ruins.

In 15-by-19-inch enlargements or 8-by-10 contact prints, Barnes's gelatin silver prints contain deep, lustrous blacks, silvery grays and smoky white tones that do not glamorize his daunted subjects but, rather, honor them and their plight. Often seizing on completely natural-seeming gestures, smiles and the occasionally telling, puzzled expression, Barnes brings his own compassionate eye to the long tradition of concerned photography.

—Matthew Kangas

SEATTLE  
SELMA WALDMAN  
M. ROSETTA HUNTER GALLERY  
AT SEATTLE CENTRAL  
COMMUNITY COLLEGE

"Pornography of Power: The Anti-War Art of Selma Waldman" was planned before the artist's death at age 77 in April 2008. Although the show was far from the retrospective the Texas-born, socially committed artist deserves, it did include a few works from the 1960s and '70s along with extensive selections

from series on military violence such as "Book of Combatants" (1998) and "Black Book of Aggressors" (2005-06). Over 200 small and large drawings in charcoal, acrylic, oil and pastel demonstrated her art's evolution from understated scenes of poverty in which mothers and children play an important role, as in *Bread* (1968) and *Soup III* (1977), to unrelenting images of horror, torture and military interrogation (including *Heavy Cable II*, 2005).

Waldman's final style was a kind of mixed-medium drawing on black paper; the snaking lines that define the figures imply musculature and nerve endings, as if to enhance the visceral nature of the agonizing torture they depict. The nearly 100 8½-by-10-inch scenes of interrogation selected from "Black Book of Aggressors" involve dogs and naked and clothed soldiers with guns, batons, whips, cables and chains. A single handwritten caption, such as "devil dogs," "jumpers," or "naked animal rides detainee," appears in each drawing. Compared to Leon Golub's megacanvases of torture scenes, Waldman's diminutive works emphasize the intimacy of violence. They seem like ghostly personal memories of the events they depict.

*Thin Red Line* (1999-2002), the uncharacteristically large mixed-medium work on view (4 by 6 feet), depicts a phalanx of police about to attack protesters at the 1999 World Trade Organization conference in Seattle (a melee that is the subject of Allan-Sekula's 1999-2000 *Waiting for Teargas* as well as the 2007 film *Battle in Seattle*). From

within a bloodred aura, rows of law-enforcement officers glare ominously toward the viewer. The expansive scale, combined with the topical theme and an image of imminent brutality, creates a more bluntly frightening impact than do the notebook-size torture scenes.

—Matthew Kangas

LONDON  
ALEXANDRA BIRCKEN  
HERALD ST

In a recent interview, New Museum curator Laura Hoptman suggested that Alexandra Bircken's delicate assemblages of wool, twigs and found objects demonstrated an enthusiasm for the handmade reminiscent of the back-to-the-land movement of the '60s and '70s. And indeed, like the American exodus that drew hundreds of city dwellers to the countryside in quest of a better life, Bircken's signature knitted sculptures seem infused with nostalgia for a time when what mattered was making things, not buying them.

Today more than ever, the insistence on the handmade has the feel of a manifesto, one that Bircken develops with each new exhibition. If until now she has mainly produced freestanding sculptures, her eight-piece solo show at Herald St seemed to unfold like a single installation; it could be a design for a way of life. Leaning against the wall in the first room were three large textile pieces stretched on metal frames (*Runaway*, *Receptor*, *Insert*; all works 2009). Combining variably tight weaves



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 *Icarus 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-59-inch 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 (31 1/2 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 16 1/2-by-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, Viassis Caniaris, Chryssa Romanos, Christós Charissis and Alexis Akritchakis; in "What Does New and Interesting Mean?," 2008, at AD Gallery.

figure echoes Juan Muñoz's round-bottomed 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

COLOGNE  
**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 shhhh—we should remain calm . . .

—Marc Gloede

ATHENS  
**"WHAT DOES NEW AND INTERESTING MEAN?"**  
 AD GALLERY

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). Viassis Caniaris, another avant-gardist who came of age in the '60s, had two plaster sculptures displayed against the wall. In *Face to Face* (1969), a torso with