



Partial view of Connie Zehr's installation *Atoll*, 2007, sand and mineral pigments, 1½ by 22 by 27 feet overall; at Claremont Graduate University.

Amy Adler at Acme

During the past decade, Amy Adler has surveyed many of the roles, guises and surrogate selves available to young women in contemporary American culture. She doesn't critique the dynamic of role models so much as demonstrate, through her art, how popular fantasies about other lifestyles and experiences may offer keys to individual identity. About two years ago, Adler gave up her trademark digital amalgamation of drawing and photography in order to create wholly hand-drawn work based on her photographs. The series shown at Acme (and before that at the Aspen Art Museum) consists of five 50-inch-square sepia-toned pastel drawings on canvas that depict Amy Cook, the Austin, Tex., indie singer-songwriter whose highly personal, yearning music puts her in the tradition of the less commercial artists of the 1970s (Tim Buckley and Ferron come to mind).

Attracted to Cook's music and artistic persona (most of Adler's work springs from past or newly formed relationships with her subjects), the artist proposed a collaborative effort, which resulted in the drawings being used on the CD foldout cover for Cook's 2007 album, *The Sky Observer's Guide*. The eponymous drawings (*Sky Observer's Guide #1-5*, all 2006) are based on staged photographs—close-ups and medium shots—of Cook relaxing in the trailer she calls home when performing on the road. Deftly employing the softly sensuous textures of pastel, Adler makes the light-filled space seem like a dreamy refuge. Images of the languorous, pensive singer, portrayed as if resting between sets or after a gig, convey a romantic view of an itinerant life given over to lyrical intensity. A '60s-style curtain of plastic discs is depicted at the edges of each work: like

little heavenly bodies, the disks invoke the title of Cook's album while theatrically demarcating her self-contained universe.

Adler is continuing to explore how public performance shapes our sense of identity and sparks our desires, but more than in previous bodies of work she seems to be endowing her subject with real warmth. The drawings are a tribute to the contemplative, solipsistic nature of Cook's life and music, which are both so out of step with the celebrity-fed pop of the mainstream music industry (an industry that resembles the art world in more than a few ways). In this respect, Adler has appropriated the identity of the itinerant singer-songwriter for herself, taking on Cook and, perhaps, all the tough yet sensitive and slightly downbeat personae evoked by her songs as surrogate selves of her own.

—Michael Duncan

CLAREMONT, CALIF.

Connie Zehr at Claremont Graduate University

For over 30 years, Connie Zehr has been "sculpting" by pouring sand directly onto gallery floors. The earliest of these sand works consisted of identical diminutive mounds topped with upright eggs arranged in a minimalist grid—a kind of feminine riposte to the rigid steel and plastic structures that were so prevalent in the 1960s and late '70s. Her patient process of funneling sand, much as an hourglass does, has continued to produce breastlike forms, and gently pressing flat plates or other items onto the tops of the mounds has expanded her repertoire of shapes. Part panoramic landscape, part ephemeral earthwork, her most recent installations have become more "painterly" with

the addition to the sand of colorful dry pigments, even as she undermines the permanence painting has traditionally sought. Zehr's perennial recycling and reconfiguring of her material embody and mimic natural processes in ways that pure painters can only dream about.

For this exhibition, Zehr, who has taught at Claremont for 27 years, created *Atoll*, a semi-abstract "georama" inspired by a group of coral islands encircling a lagoon in the Pacific. Nine polychromed flat-topped or nipped cones in different shades—misty celadon green, acid cadmium yellow, terra-cotta, deep phthalic blue and green, lava black and hot pink—were surrounded by wavy banks of unpigmented sand seemingly shaped by watery currents, with an effect not unlike that of Zen rock gardens. With the soft, indented mounds springing from a fleshlike ground in the quasi-darkened room, sensual allusions to female corporeality were inescapable. This gendered landscape came across as a nurturing, life-sustaining organism.

In an adjacent gallery, a series of large digital photographs provided side and overhead views of previous installations. As multicolored and boldly abstracted as Navajo or Tibetan sand paintings, the sand mounds, with their shimmering stripes, expressive swaths, ellipses and polka dots, appear to dissolve like desert mirages into the grainy pixels of the prints. The epically scaled installations themselves, rendered with richly hued and fragile earthen forms, convey profound implications in the present ecopolitically charged climate.

—Constance Malinson

SAN FRANCISCO

Wolfgang Paalen at Frey Norris

In 1937 the Surrealist painter Wolfgang Paalen invented "fumage," a technique that consists of passing a candle under a freshly prepared surface and then interpreting the resulting smoky design. André Breton, writing the preface to Paalen's 1938 Paris exhibition, called it "an enrichment of the methodological treasury of Surrealism along with other Surrealist automatic techniques of collage,

rayogram, frottage, décollage and decalcomania." In the same year Paalen was one of the organizers of the "Exposition internationale du surréalisme" at the Palais des Beaux-Arts in Paris, where he installed one of the first environments, which consisted of a pond, water lilies, oak leaves and reeds. Duchamp placed a ceiling of empty coal sacks above it.

Two years earlier, at a Surrealist exhibition in Paris, Paalen had contributed a piece called *The Exact Hour*, which functioned simultaneously as a scale and a clock. Paalen's vanitas was to be seen later that year in the epochal show "Fantastic Art, Dada and Surrealism" at the Museum of Modern Art. This 1936 exhibition was the first major survey of Surrealism in the U.S.

Born in Vienna in 1905, Paalen was too young to have been able to partake of the great cultural flowering that took place there prior to World War I, but he got to know the powerful avant-garde art critic Julius Meier-Graefe, whose writing would later influence Paalen's own important critical essays. In 1919 his family moved to Rome where Wolfgang began studying painting. He continued his studies in Berlin, Paris and, with Hans Hofmann, in Cassis in 1927. He settled in Paris, where he came under the influence of Fernand Léger, joined the Abstraction-Création group and painted semi-geometric canvases. Soon he found this style to be limited in emotional range. He felt a close affinity to Kandinsky's painting and theories. But he declared his allegiance to the Surrealists.

This recent San Francisco exhibition included important fumages, such as *Ciel de pieuvre* (1938), in which octopuslike fantasy beings are seen against an indefinable space. They seem to be wearing masks and to be performing an imaginary ritual dance, which entices the eye while disturbing the mind.

At the start of World War II in 1939, Diego Rivera and Frida Kahlo invited Paalen to Mexico, where he was to spend most of the remainder of his life. He published the magazine *DYN* (from *dynamon*, Greek for "the possible"), in which not only Surrealists but also many other intellectuals of the early 1940s published critical essays. The journal also contained reproduc-



Franz von Stuck's painting *Sin*, ca. 1906, with Victoria Haven's altar, 2007, Mylar and paper; at the Frye Art Museum.

SEATTLE

Victoria Haven at the Frye Art Museum and Howard House

Over a decade ago, Victoria Haven's production was generally confined to oil painting. However, after returning to Seattle from graduate school at Goldsmiths College, London, she began creating delicate wall-hung constructions of cut paper, rubber bands, tape and Mylar. Although

tions of pre-Columbian art, and it was of great importance to the New York painters of the period, especially Robert Motherwell, who really became Paalen's spokesman and the editor of some of his theoretical writings. Baziotis, Rothko and Newman were likewise drawn to *DYN*.

In 1948 Paalen went to San Francisco, where, together with Gordon Onslow Ford and Lee Mullican, he founded the artistic group Dynaton. These West Coast artists, partly oriented toward the Far East, differed significantly from their contemporaries on the East Coast in their attitude toward art. Dynaton accorded nature considerable importance, and was more meditative than assertive in its inclinations.

A compelling painting from Paalen's Dynaton period in the exhibition was *Hammur Trilogy* (1947). The word "Hammur" is of Indian Vedantic origin, and "Trilogy" may refer syncretically to the concept of the Trinity. The central figure, the image of a king, is seated between

two standing figures in this mysterious and symbolic painting. The picture has the appearance of a mosaic with its tesseraelike brushstrokes, and it includes patches of gold. The measured rhythm of the large painting invites the viewer to experience it as an object of active meditation.

—Peter Selz



Wolfgang Paalen: *Ciel de pierre* (Octopus Sky), 1938, oil and smoke on canvas, 38 1/2 by 51 inches; at Frey Norris.

recent work has toyed with representation—such as her 12-foot-high lightning bolt (2006) crafted of Mylar-laminated polypropylene, the back of which Haven swooshed with colored inks that reflect faintly off the wall—her recent shows at Howard House and the Frye Art Museum favored abstraction.

Robin Held, chief curator at the Frye, invited Haven to inaugurate a series of shows designed to shed new light on important works in the museum's permanent collection, the majority of it 19th- and early 20th-century French, German and American painting. Held paired Haven with Franz von Stuck's 1906 painting *Sin*, which depicts a serpent encircling a naked female; both of them greet the viewer head-on with cool, calm indifference. Although intended as the main component of a raised altar, von Stuck's painting has been presented at eye level since its introduction into the collection in 1952. Held elevated it and invited Haven

to create a new altar. What she devised was not a conventional altar but a surround, in low relief, that is literally dazzling. Crafted of overlapping sheets of gold Mylar cut into geometric patterns and pinned approximately an inch off the wall, it radiates from the painting's frame. Haven's cutwork simultaneously evokes the seductive delicacy of lace and more ominous elements, such as the scales of a serpent. Her "altar," like von Stuck's painting, plays attraction against repulsion: its metallic sheen is alluring while its sharp edges and allusion to the snake are discomfiting.

At Howard House, in 12 recent works on paper and one wall-hung sculpture, Haven's focus on abstraction was even more pronounced. In an ink-on-paper work titled *Strobe*, multicolored dashed lines, like running stitches, pull the eye across a fractured field of elongated triangles, some of them visually associated in clusters by pale-yellow "shadows." Like the flashing light named in the title, the fugitive effect seems to appear and disappear. In *Miner* (Mylar and ink on paper), an angular, jumbled form appears to rise from a series of colored lines representing nested squares, like order giving way to chaos.

The sculpture, *lampaying-attention*, consists of white-rubber-coated formed steel that spells out the title in cursive. It is a nod to Bruce Nauman's 1973 lithograph *Pay Attention*, *Motherfuckers*. Haven's response is as subdued and subtle as Nauman's was aggressive, yet there is no loss of impact. Her text—barely visible against the whiteness of the gallery walls but throwing a legible shadow—quietly and amusingly extends her modest engagement with space.

—Suzanne Beal

PARIS

Lilian Daubisse at Arums

In his first solo exhibition, Lilian Daubisse revealed the depth of his imagination as well as his talent as a craftsman. Born in 1970, he graduated with a degree in design in 1996 from the Ecole des Beaux-Arts in Nantes. During the ensuing years, he has refined and

elaborated an esthetic project using a single medium: corrugated cardboard. In Daubisse's capable hands, this drab, utterly ordinary material produces astonishing visual effects.

The eight works on view (all 2007) confound traditional divides between design, fashion and sculpture. *Hedgehog* (an edition of 6) is a hooded waistcoat with billowing sleeves entirely covered in extra-long fringe resembling the quills of the mammal for which it was named. To fabricate it, the artist manually cut thousands of strands of cardboard, each only a few millimeters wide, painted them black and wove them onto a polyester shell. This labor-intensive process produced a tactile garment that suggests an Inuit parka, or an ultra-trendy gorilla suit. Opposite it stood



Lilian Daubisse: *Pottery 1*, 2007, corrugated cardboard, 13 1/4 inches high; at Arums.

Fish, a full-length, double-layered capelike getup, also with a hood. Its small, crescent-shaped pieces of overlapping corrugated cardboard are affixed vertically to a matrix of piano wire and monofilament, echoing the scales of an aquatic creature. This imposing one-of-a-kind confection also evokes the sort of extraterrestrial armor that might suit Darth Vader, or Grace Jones.

Daubisse's smaller works have equally rich associations. *Pottery 1*, 2 and 3 are fashioned from several nipped demispheres, calling to mind ceremonial vessels as well as mini satellites or spaceships. *Disk* and *Medusa* are pendant wall sculptures. In the former, long pieces of cardboard are curved tightly into concentric circles, with