

**Tony DeLap, *Injog*, 1996. Wood, canvas, and acrylic, 33 x 35.5 x 4.5 in.**

accenting the subtle optical drama. What might appear to be a friendly setting eventually turns discordant because of the overpowering presence of the swollen balloon forms. One's disorientation is further heightened in the two adjacent rooms titled *Infinity Dots Mirrored Room* and *Repetitive Vision*. Each space is identical in size, 10 by 12 by 12 feet, and is entirely filled with mirrors on the walls and ceiling; pulsating, colorful dots comprise the floor's pattern. An unexpected camouflaged mirror door connects the two chambers; the former space is dimly lit, but the adjacent room is brighter. Entering this space the visitor interrupts the silence of this setting and confronts white, painted goddess-like mannequins surfaced with cherry red dots, which are repeated on the floor. A sensibility of infinite regression is experienced in each of these alien settings; here viewers recognize that they have entered into a type of time warp in which they become simultaneously observer and ephemeral form. Throughout Kusama's work she addresses the privacy of experience. Her installations are perceptual vehicles through which the artist encourages an experience that transcends the mere act of just plain looking.

Despite autobiographical focus and employment of the female body as a sculptural form, Greer Lankton's art is neither sinister nor trendy. When her figurative forms were presented in the 1995 Whitney Biennial, Lankton's art appeared to be grotesque, naive sculpture. The Mattress Factory demonstrates that these works are part of a larger whole,

assisting in illustrating a heartbreaking story about bodily abuse.

Through this installation, Lankton, who has died since the opening of the exhibition, affords her viewer an opportunity to step into the world of a transsexual who is obsessed with a stereotypical female image—the kitsch, doll-like woman of the 1950s. Before entering the inner space of the installation, one notices Goyer-like legs mysteriously extending out from the exterior wall. Once you have passed through the door into a dimly lit interior, an actual recapitulation of the artist's bedroom in Chicago, one realizes that this is no ordinary setting but a chamber of horrors. A life-size, anorexic, female mannequin, covered with pill bottles that continue to cascade onto the floor, serves as a key element of this work. The walls of the room have carefully been divided into shrine-like sections; the astutely arranged symbolic, miniature still-lives provide insightful histories about Lankton's life. Presented in a dignified yet cluttered manner, the artist's arrangements of dolls, jewelry, scraps of paper, pill bottles, and portraits of bulimic women is powerfully captivating.

Unlike much identity-oriented, politically correct art that is agenda-driven, Lankton's confusion reveals a psychological interaction between real life and art. Once the puzzle parts come together, Lankton's multidimensional installation reveals a tortured portrait of a soul who dares to share her sad vulnerability.

A colossal pair of legs wearing theatrical sandals and checkered cloth trousers fill a large portion of Andre Walker's installation. A headless, Goliath figure, whose upper torso penetrates the ceiling of the space, is

momentarily sensational, but the artist's intended punch rapidly dissolves into an obvious statement about design, setting, and appearance. Despite the artist's meticulous treatment of this installation, it reads as a work that needs more resolution. Perhaps at a later date, Walker will integrate his elements and delve a little deeper into the subject of his obsession.

—Elaine A. King

### Santa Monica

#### Tony DeLap

Mark Moore Gallery

In a recent exhibit, Tony DeLap presented sculptural reliefs that were dazzling in their simplicity, yet demanding in their visual play of shape, form, color, and illusion. DeLap, who came to prominence in the 1960s as a Los Angeles finish fetish artist along with John McCracken, Craig Kauffman, DeWain Valentine, and others, evolved his abstract visual rhetoric at the same time artists such as Ellsworth Kelly, Donald Judd, and Frank Stella were emerging on the East Coast. The visual kinship of artistic developments on both coasts at that time remains compelling, in part because ideas and influences moved in both directions.

While the works of DeLap and Kelly, for example, have often been cited as sharing visual resonance, their individual explorations reveal as many differences as similarities. Whereas Kelly's works are inherently flat, exploring spatial planes in space, DeLap's constructions define space both as planes and as volumes. Indeed, while surface was regarded as central to the Los Angeles "look" of the '60s, DeLap's new works established provocative tensions between planar surfaces and volumetric forms.

Thus in his new work one quickly skims across the flat top surface of the form, landing at the perimeter of the work where the edgy visual vitality of these pieces lay. For it is at the edges that these pieces both define their contour and their hybrid definition as painterly sculpted reliefs. Even though the pieces were wryly mounted on the wall, suggesting that meaning could be determined by viewing these objects from the front, in truth DeLap's works yielded their richest meanings when viewed from the side in a process that often initially involved an accidental glimpse of the work from an unusual angle.

Exploring the interrelation of binary concepts such as geometric and biomorphic abstraction, analogically associated with rationality and intuition on the one hand and technological culture and nature on the other,

MARK MOORE GALLERY, SANTA MONICA, CALIFORNIA  
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DeLap's work addressed substantive issues in a subtle, yet detached manner. Exploring, for example, the tenuous nature of the art object in the post-industrial age, DeLap created works that at first glance appeared to be industrially fabricated. In actuality, however, the flat frontal surfaces of his works are meticulously constructed of three to four layers of gesso, followed by several layers of hand painting, and subsequently several layers of roller painting. It is a process of painting that ironically updates Renaissance Venetian techniques.

In addition, what made the new reliefs so striking was that their forms were conceived as singular wholes, quite in contrast to DeLap's work of the early '90s that often sported tail-like appendages extending from a centralized shape. While most of the new pieces were either singularly biomorphic or singularly geometric in shape, some of the pieces continued to play geometric and biomorphic forms off against each other within a single work. The best organic forms, like *Manzini* (1996), and *Tahoma* (1996), hung like half-wings from the gallery walls. Attached along one or two edges to the wall, these works extended away from the wall along other parameters of their form, sometimes by four or five inches.

Equally compelling were the more geometric works that warped, tilted, or distorted the perfection of industrial form ideals. One small cobalt blue work, entitled *Flip/Flop* (1996), presented a perfect square which on the left side appeared as a flat painterly plane and on the right hung free from the wall by close to an inch. The work's physical essence as both a painting on the left and a sculptural relief on the right affected the perception of the form itself, which could only be ascertained as perfectly square from askance angles.

Investigating shape, form, and their relation

to illusion, this work and others thus posed witty visual riddles, suggesting that DeLap had reached a bench mark of accomplishment in defining and revealing the fluidity of relationships between shape, form, and illusion in art. Certainly an artist's artist, DeLap's subtle and poetic works are filled with a visual playfulness grounded in a knowledge of form that makes them simultaneously magical and satisfying.

#### Valeska Soares

Christopher Grimes Gallery

New York-based artist Valeska Soares represented Brazil in the 1994 São Paulo Biennale and has quietly shown in various U.S. cities since 1993. Making sculpture of abstracted body parts, Soares's work issues from the fulcrum where culture and gender converge. Soares has emphasized, on the one hand, the cultural construction of female identity aligned with visual markers such as long hair, milky-white complexion, and rich floral perfume, while also introducing in certain works concepts of essentialist feminist art that affirm allegedly immutable differences between the sexes.

Presenting industrial-looking cast body parts, Soares speaks forcefully to conceptual concerns regarding the cultural construction of female identity. Casting organic forms in an obviously industrial manner that retains casting seams and the hard, crisp edges of molds, Soares alludes to the manner in which the organic has been systematically metamorphosed into dye-cut cultural ideals. Often elongating and abstracting such alleged cultural ideals, Soares's work is often uncomfortable at first encounter. Bearing none of the symmetry or textural excitement of Giacometti's elongated figures, her works allude to the processes of reaching beyond established cultural criteria, seeking on another plateau to span by analogy the rifts that often threaten to margin-

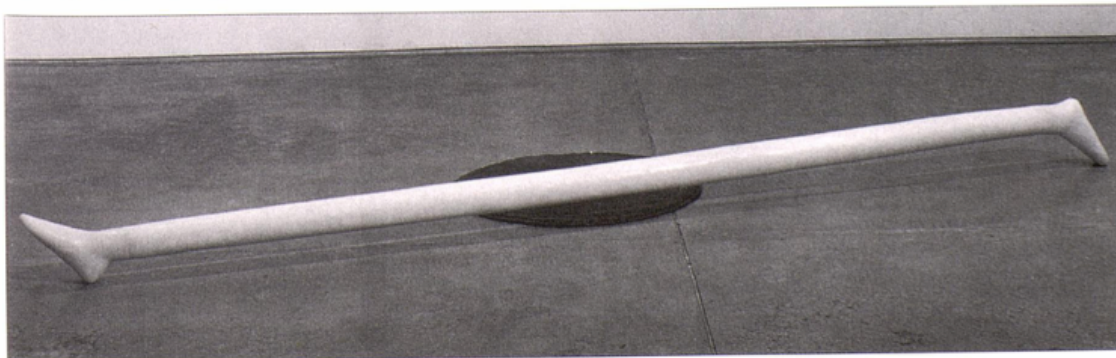
alize Brazilian artists generally and female Brazilian artists particularly. In addition, reworking the canon of figurative sculpture with a reductive feminist twist, Soares also addresses essentialist feminist art concerns that first came to prominence in the 1970s in work by artists such as Louise Bourgeois, Judy Chicago, Ana Mendieta, and others.

Distinctive from, yet resonating with, early '90s sculptural works of Kiki Smith or Sue Williams that seemed to comment upon the visual victimization of women during the 1980s male-dominated art scene, Soares's new works seemed more defiantly resilient. *Sissy* (1995), for example, presented an exaggerated and elongated right leg nearly touching a small puddle of honey on the gallery floor that was tellingly juxtaposed with a title that demeaned the Herculean, or better, Amazonian, feat of endurance and will presented in beeswax.

Approaching similar concerns with a more essentialist emphasis, Soares's slightly earlier and smaller work, *Entanglements* (1995), fused conceptions of female bodily form with notions of landscape. Featuring two opened mouths as lakes connected by a small ochre-colored river of sweet floral perfume, *Entanglements* filled the gallery room with a worldly, womanly scent. With its emphasis on translucent white mouths and earthy, colored perfume, this work swallowed, as it were, the historically male-constructed sculptural visions of the female body as a voyeuristic object. Conjoining an essentialist representation of women's identity with the cultural trope of perfume, Soares successfully alluded to conceptions of women as seductively and secretly powerful in subliminal and unseen ways.

Further informing these emphases was the translucent milky-white wax Soares chose as the medium for her sculptures. Associated, on

**Valeska Soares, *Jump*, 1996. Wax, metal armature, and rug. 9.5 x 4 x 3 in.**



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