

Seen together in the context of their relationships, these works suggest a new genre, a sort of sculpture of landscape.

An explorer of cities and countrysides, Marcel brings back samples, which he reconstitutes through various processes (printing, casting) and modes of presentation (pedestals, frames) into subjects of observation. In them, he invariably reveals the traces, even the imperceptible ones, of the work of construction and destruction: that of nature, which shapes and differentiates forms, and that of man, who selects, constructs, or cuts. In this antiseptic atmosphere and in this suspended time, the presence of a “real” lemon has the ability to surprise; yet while it never stops being itself, its fine metallic display unit isolates it as an archetype and allows for every association.

—*Guitemie Maldonado*

Translated from French by Jeanine Herman.

ZURICH

Lucy Skaer/Anita Di Bianco

ELISABETH KAUFMANN

The work of Lucy Skaer and Anita Di Bianco is connected by the artists' strategies of appropriation and by their decontextualization and defamiliarization of appropriated materials. The two artists occasionally collaborate on projects; Skaer tends to use photographic materials as sources for works in various media, while Di Bianco's film and video work is frequently based on literary texts and figures. This show, “Minor Characters,” was an elegant presentation not of collaborative work but of five autonomous pieces.

Skaer often makes use of drawing and sculpture, and her four works here, all titled after cards of the tarot deck, provide a good example of her recent work. The large-format pencil drawing *Death* (all works 2006), presented as an installation, is based on a photograph of a whale skeleton. Made up of countless tiny spirals creating a kind of matrix, the framework of the bones can scarcely be differentiated from the overall texture of the drawing's surface. This fragmentary and skeletal language of form is characteristic of much of Skaer's work. The original image is removed from its context and subtly metamorphosed to arrive at something entirely different; indeed, one might have a hard time making out the source image. In the short film *The Joker*, produced especially for the exhibition, the camera focuses on the hands of ninety-eight-year-old Surrealist artist Leonora Carrington, whom Skaer visited at her home in Mexico. In *The Wheel*, a two-part cherrywood sculpture, the aesthetic appeal of the form contrasts with its blunt content. Half of the sculpture is a wooden semicircle that resembles a miniature amphitheater whose cross-section

delineates the silhouettes of figures instantly recognizable from a famous photograph taken at Kent State University after four students protesting the Vietnam War were shot and killed by the Ohio National Guard in 1970. That picture became an important symbol of antiwar protest and pacifist attitudes. Given the lack of any mediation here, however, the viewer is obliged to interpret the puzzling schema on the basis of his or her own experience.

Equally complex is Di Bianco's 16-mm film *The Dead Souls Scandal*. The literary foundation of this work is a textual fragment taken from Heinrich Böll's 1971 novel *Group Portrait with Lady*. A female voice offscreen recites the text throughout the film. A construction site and railroad tracks at a desolate “non-location” are shown in a documentary style, through wire netting; people appear only coincidentally. The netting covers the image with a gridlike structure so that the viewer perceives the scene in fragments. The nearness of the camera turns the fence into a blind spot that obliterates and blurs sections of the picture. This imposed pictorial framework has its auditory equivalent in the repetitive rattle of the 16-mm film projector and the train cars. Film, literary text, and title cannot be aligned according to any definite logic but rather lead the viewer to a series of associative readings.

—*Valérie Knoll*

Translated from German by Jane Brodie.

VIENNA

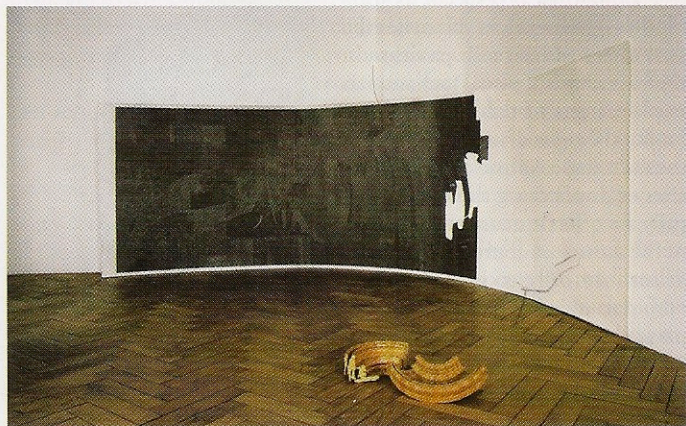
Lois Renner

MARIO MAURONER CONTEMPORARY ART

Lois Renner has become known for his large-format color photographs of interior spaces brimming with ordinary objects like fire extinguishers, ladders, workbenches, and tools. Only upon close observation can one see that these spaces are fictive constructs, photographed in a five-foot-high model made by the artist, who now lives in Vienna, of his former studio in Salzburg. Over the years, the artist's displacements and duplications of spatial planes have become increasingly complex—in addition to these views of the model studio, Renner has also been using paint to create his fictions. He photographs and digitally manipulates the paintings, inserting them into the world of the studio, where they are finally represented as photographs. The use of digital manipulation means that the figures in Renner's spaces—usually effigies of himself, though he also uses female models on occasion—can sometimes appear twice. A life-size female model shown lying on the beams over the studio in *Venus*, 2006, allows Renner, tongue in cheek, to bring the theme of “the painter and the model” into his work. His name has been carved into the wood, a succinct and humorous take on the fetish of the artist's signature.

In his latest exhibition, Renner showed some of these oil paintings—naturally, as photographs—as well as other recent works. These pieces are now so detailed and contain so many diverse spatial planes that there is no reliable way of differentiating between spatial-physical and pictorial reality, or between the internal and the external. Here, the stairway, a constant in his studio pieces, takes on a new meaning. Our perception is sent up and down flights of stairs that move between analog and digital pictorial worlds; just when we are sure we are seeing the model of the studio, we catch sight of the real studio space, which we glimpse through or behind the model. A photograph of the model studio turns up within the model studio; the entire picture is thus doubled, forcing our gaze back into the abyss and removing any point of reference that could possibly provide a reliable plane.

This shift means that photography no longer has a representational function, and we lose any believable reality. The physical studio and



View of “Minor Characters,” 2006. Background: Lucy Skaer, *Death*, 2006. Foreground: Lucy Skaer, *The Wheel*, 2006.