

Radujko, Gabriella, "Mythopoeic LANY Group Show at Peter Blum Gallery in Chelsea," ARTCARDS, 19 July 2011.

ARTCARDS Review



LANY, pronounced L. A. New York, is the high functioning group show at Peter Blum Gallery in Chelsea where seven artists from both cities have ample space to show their work. The non-thematic (beyond bi-coastal geography) show, organized by Mario Diacono includes work by New York-based Daniel Rich, Andy Cross and Benjamin Degen and Los Angeles-based Kara Tanaka, James Melinat and Kevin Appel. There is also a show within a show by New York-based Luisa Rabbia.

In the front gallery, Tanaka's cowhide maps, *Whisper from Meru (the Every-Mountain, the Axis Mundi)* and *An Earth with Many Navels (Distribution of HolyHermitages)* are paired with one of James Melinat's paper sculptures *A Portrait of a Black Hole (Shadows Cast in Total Darkness)*. Here the names of mountain systems like Putucusi, Machu Picchu and Huyanu Pichhu of the Peruvian mountains are carved into hide. They interact with Melinat's large scale origami influenced sculpture, capturing the notion of shadows.

Two more works from Melinat's, *Obsidian Eye of the Abyss* and *Dark Heart of the Cosmos* are cootie-catcher contemplations about the future. Benjamin Degen's 2011 *Actor, Diver, and Palustric*, three oils on linen, are reminiscent of Richard Bosman's *Man Overboard, DrowninMan, and Waterfall*. Kevin Appel's work riffs on architectural themes against a backdrop of nature. Daniel Rich's luxuriously precise *Saddam Grand Mosque*, and Andy Cross' *The Future in Un-Painted: Three Hikers and Walking Liberty*, all recall national icons Johnny Appleseed and Lady Liberty.

In the "side gallery", is the show's centerpiece by Luisa Rabbia. The floor sculpture *Crowd* dramatically represents a clutch of humans. A massive crowd of heads is supported by elongated torsos that extend to form roots covering the floor. The viewer is drawn inwards as one would be to outstretched arms or the sudden presence of a choir about to sing.

Rabbia's humanistic focus on the immigration issues challenging the west, Italy in particular, turns *Crowd* into an androgynous messenger whose faces and recycled clothes speak to our collective identity. The piece reinforces the notion that there is but one race, the human one. Potentially, "we are all immigrants", says the artist. This piece accompanies two particularly strong works on paper. *From the Within Out* situates a heap of people and pillows on untethered wheels, making itinerant that which is most closely associated with domestic safety. *People* depicts a strip of cranial masses rising from a dark block of roots so tightly packed they eliminate white space

LANY is less an exploration than an exploration of our unified, mythopoeic identities driven by the many ways these hard-working artists tell stories of understanding and explanation.