



Left: Fred Sandback, *Untitled (Sculptural Study, Twelve-Part Vertical Construction)*, ca. 1987/2012. Black, blue, and yellow acrylic yarn, dimensions variable. Below: Fred Sandback, *Untitled (Sculptural Study, Four-part Mikado Construction)*, ca. 1991/2012. Aqua acrylic yarn, dimensions variable.

drawings on view simple to the point of absurdity, proving that sometimes less is less. But the overall tenor of this wonderfully re-created, important historical show clearly demonstrated that Sandback is a sculptor of major stature.

—Jonathan Goodman

NEW YORK

Allison Schulnik ZieherSmith

Widely acclaimed in Los Angeles-oriented group shows in the U.S., Europe, Russia, and Israel, Allison Schulnik is a good example of a young artist coming out of the CalArts experimental animation program. Her third New York show, which combined sculpture, painting, and animation video, took on the atmosphere of a dark and threatening circus sideshow, the works all bound together by an utterly individual, somewhat funky West Coast sensibility.

At the center was the large-scale projection *Mound*, a 4.5-minute videotape of dozens of animated clay figures accompanied by the 1969 British pop tune "It's Raining Today," sung by transplanted American musician Scott Walker. Choreographed like a ballet with archetypal fairy-tale characters assembling and decomposing before our eyes, the film includes a heartbreaking passage involving what appear to be three scarecrows in tutus dancing in a chorus line. In the background, piles of sludge rise into individually sculpted figures, complete with moving phal-luses, both flaccid and rigid. With scowling faces and frantically waving

limbs, they rush toward exhausted collapse and return to primordial lumps.

In one sense, Schulnik depicts the fashioning and dismantling of sculptural figures, the continuity and corrections of art-making. Nothing is permanent or real; everything is part of an organic flux and entropy. On another level, hers is a hermetic narrative of birth, human interaction, and demise. With a studied lack of finish, Schulnik's work retains a fresh, improvisatory air that belies the painstaking hours of fabrication, perhaps spoofing the idea of artistic permanence again, but without any sense of deliberately poor materials as in Arte Povera. Instead, oil paintings are built up with thick layers that reveal a single central image, and ceramic sculptures, hand-built with a vigorous directness, project an endearing ineptitude common to the art of the disabled.

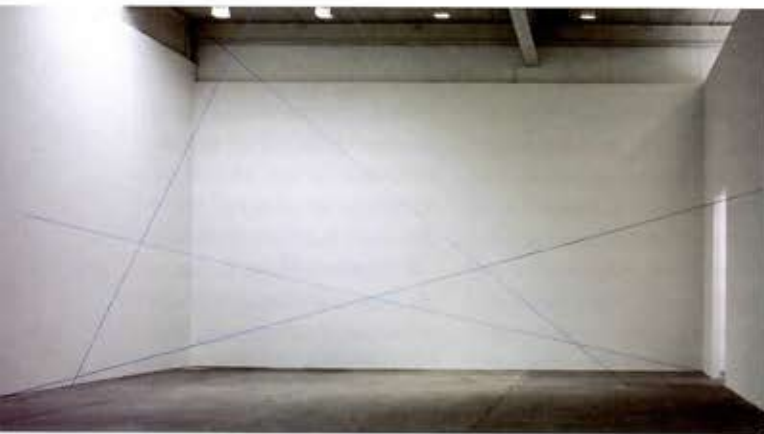
The energy and stupefying banality of the sculptures offered the show's greatest strength after the video, extending the building-up and tearing-down of the characters in *Mound*. A seated cat with raised paws, *Standing Gin #3* (2011), appears in stark white, glazed porcelain with black, hollow eyes. At 19 inches high, it matches the size of many 19th-century European animal statuettes, but with far greater informality. Perked-up, alert ears seem to serve as the blinded animal's only sensory organs. Startling in its vulnerability, *Standing Gin #3* rescues the kitsch cat figurine from tacky oblivion through an undercurrent of danger and damage.

Hobo Clown with Long Nose suggests a ravaged Pinocchio in carved, unglazed terra cotta. His open mouth conveys panic or distress, and the crude, urgent hand-building underscores an uncanny, expressionistic sense of defeat. *Purple Cat-Possum* is seated like *Standing Gin #3*. Nearly two feet tall, this being could be an animal hybrid or weird

views occurred during the last 16 days of the exhibition. As the sculpture now stands, two small rooms are bisected by yellow lines, whose elementary placement results in a charged expanse all the more memorable for its ability to generate sculptural tension with such modest means.

The vertical black, blue, and yellow acrylic yarns of *Untitled (Sculp-*

tural Study, Twelve-Part Vertical Construction) (ca. 1987/2012) form both an open and closed structure in which the cords establish—momentarily—a fixed relation to the space around them. The viewer's movement holds particular promise in this work, since the lines change as we make our way past them. In comparison to the fine distinctions of the cord sculptures, I found the





Left: Allison Schulnik, *Standing Gin #3*, 2011. Glazed porcelain and plastic pedestal, ceramic: 19 x 12 x 9 in.

Below: Allison Schulnik, *Hobo Clown with Long Nose*, 2011. Ceramic and wood pedestal, ceramic: 34 x 10 x 10 in.

cross-species. Its brown-red-purple "fur" and odd features are frozen into another supplicating pose with plaintive outstretched paws. The creature is ominous, but also absurd.

As wonderful as the video and paintings are—thick, funny, and endlessly morphing into something else—*Purple Cat-Possum* could be worth expanding upon, leading to other animals for a mythical realm of Schulnikland, a world where everything is unstable and uncertain yet intensely mesmerizing and materially pleasurable.

—Matthew Kangas

PITTSBURGH

"Gestures: Intimate Friction" Mattress Factory

It was no surprise that "Gestures: Intimate Friction," guest-curated by Mary-Lou Arscott, a British architect living in Pittsburgh, included architects and designers in addition to visual artists. In her statement, Arscott explains, "Our physical reality bumps up against us and then disappears from view...The process of creating the installations in this exhibition will be collapsing, constructive, and collaborative." "Intimate Friction" aimed to engage viewers on several levels, going beyond the visual to encourage physical experience and participation. Nina Marie Barbuto, Dee Briggs, Nick Durrant, Jeremy Ficca, Pablo Garcia, Jenn Gooch, Ling He, Matt Huber, Nick Liadis, Gill Wildman, Spike Wolff, and the collective Transformazium were given several weeks, extensive support, and the freedom to produce new works.

Briggs's *Art You Can Get Into...if you have \$12*, an indoor/outdoor piece at the 1414 annex building, was both critical and lighthearted, motivated by the artist's interest in public space and museum pricing and accessibility. Strikingly red, galvanized steel tubes made by Noftz sheet metal, which resembled periscopes, wrapped around and scaled the two-story building before penetrating the walls. Portholes tempted visitors and passersby to seek glimpses of what was housed inside.

In the first-floor gallery, Ficca tore up a section of plywood flooring to create *3X4608*, a work that addressed time, past and present, by exposing the building's underlying structure. Three curved wooden planes hovering over the site resembled birds in flight. The exposed sub-floor (made of aged wood) set up an alternate story about materiality, function, and use. This elegant piece disjointed the flow of space and demonstrated how ordinary plywood can be a practical substance as well as a transformative one.

On the second floor, Ling He's interactive *Wish exchange dandelion* consisted of a pristine white room housing a tangle of white helium balloons held down with small lead weights. Visitors were invited to write down a special wish and attach it to a balloon string. The pull of gravity and the loss of air created a cacophony of varying heights and forms. Participants not only left subsequent viewers with a glimpse of themselves, they also augmented the visual dimension of the setting.

Gooch's illusory *Home Splice* installations turned up unexpectedly throughout this former townhouse, interacting with the space in eye-catching ways. *Home Splice: Doorway*, for instance, made you think that you were seeing a woman on the other side of an open bathroom door. Descending the stairs from the third floor, *Home Splice: Stairs* offered a startling apparition. On

