

REVIEWS ● (continued)

Colorless but for a wash of umber paint that seems to be splashed everywhere—more jungle camouflage for this interior urban jungle—it suggests a more violent rupture of the space. Overall, the violence here is simply spent and dissipated, not latent—evidence from an archaeological dig (albeit a recent one). The “hole” contains other explicit elements hanging amid the cables and rubber strips: effigy fragments; legs in women’s footwear. A cluster of text paintings placed in one corner toward the rear of the installation—“I LOVE RAPE PORN” (alternatively I [heart] RP), and “IT’S MY FAULT IF YOU HURT ME”—added yet another spin.

Yet it is still unclear how the artist’s (or gallery’s) gloss alluding to an “alien race” alighting in Lincoln Heights connects to these moments. It seems, at the very least, disingenuous.

If there is anything “alien” to Deville’s installation, it is the round painting and mixed media “tondos” dispersed toward the rear of the installation (two in a small annex in the gallery) by Christine Wang, which offer their own brilliantly cheeky visual comment on the hole, alien or all too distinctly carnal. Composed of long latex strips in livid purplish-reds, pinks, off-white, threaded through with glitter in tightly spaced parallel strips across what looks like a wood turntable or circular panel, they turn free-fall into full-stop. This is where it ends: the whirling (or wheeling) half-tone blur of a thousand blurred orgasms, a Catherine wheel firework (or diaphragm) for our misapprehended explorations. Wang’s titles are appropriately poignant: e.g., *Sewn by People from Craigslist: Different Color Bleeds the Same Red*. The deceptively cartoonish, demotic *Pool Painting*—emblazoned with the phrase “Who Needs Sex When There’s A Pool?”—effectively remixes the notion of word painting, to say nothing of “sinking” (or rising or falling) through a hole. It’s one way for her to stay afloat on a sinking ship.

ALISON SAAR

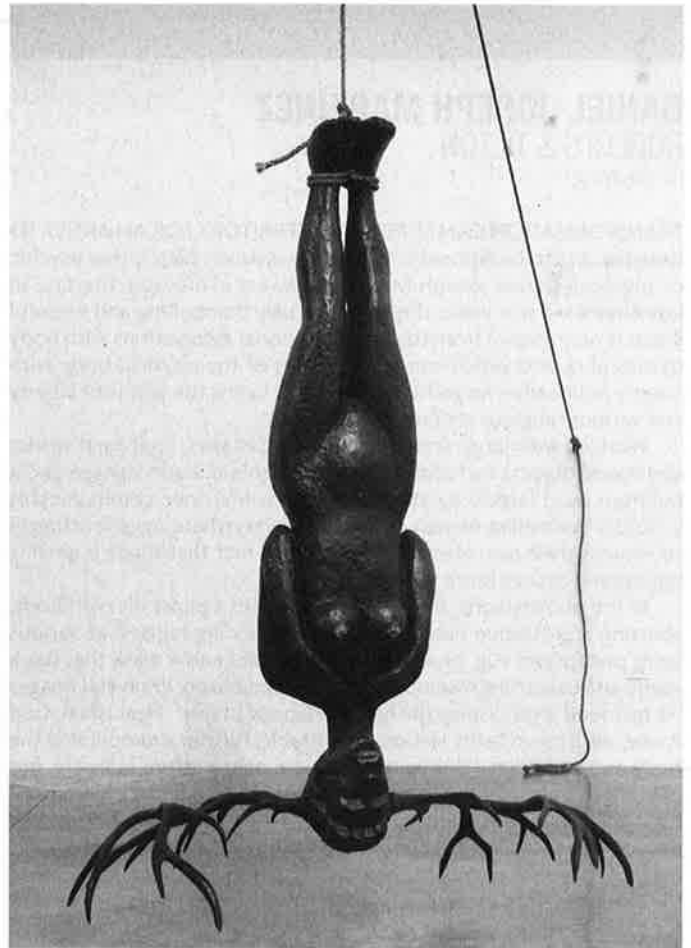
BEN MALTZ GALLERY OTIS ART INSTITUTE

BY GREG ANGAZA PITTS

AN IMPRESSIVE INSTALLATION, ALISON SAAR’S MOST RECENT exhibition “Still...” includes 10 thoughtfully placed sculptures: four glass works and six bronze and mixed media works, structured around a call-and-response system, specific to African-American congregations and Native American nations. The exhibit establishes a metaphorical scaffolding that supports a visual discussion of the “harder” issues concerning a culture rooted in racism, sexism, “colorism” (pigmentation politics), male chauvinism, white pride and contempt, and classism (personal entitlement), all falling within the index of strategies employed by Willie Lynch, a slave owner who claimed that the best way of controlling slaves was to identify, exaggerate and distort their differences, setting them against each other. Saar’s work serves as a vehicle to carry the viewer through the ravages of this history with critical observation and personal disclosures, using her unique autobiography as a lens.

Like Noah Purifoy and Judson Powell before her, Saar is an urban Zen master of minimum placement for maximum effect, as is evident in *Mammy Machine* (2012), which refers to a kind of politically sanctioned violation of women of color or black women’s bodies. By distancing a woman from her own humanity and reprogramming her as three-fifths of a human, her place in society is redefined through forced mechanistic reproductive behavior. The brown blown glass breasts hang over a tub from an apparatus like “strange fruit” on the vine. Saar’s concern about personal autonomy is shared with other black women artists such as Lavalie Campbell in her series of nipple-like objects and in Senga Nengudi’s wet nursing subtext in her “R.S.V.P.” series.

Saar’s *50 Proof* (2012) is an unflinching inquiry into the parameters of identity and mixed race duality. Here the artist fashions a glass head that approximates the shape of an old soap dispenser filled halfway with a black liquid (melanin?). The piece summons archaic visions of



Alison Saar, *En Pointe*, 2010

New Orleans infamous “race clerks,” “the paper bag test” and the “one drop” rule that defined blackness and multi-racial identities.

Issues surrounding the commodification, dehumanization and the personal value of women, are addressed in *Weight* (2012). Saar establishes a visual equation that juxtaposes a small girl on a swing next to a cotton scale, holding a set of objects that appear to have mysteriously reconstructed themselves into a loose replica of the girl.

En Pointe (2010) features a sculpture of a black woman hanging upside down with a crown of antlers on her head. Saar’s recurring use of the horns and horn-like forms reference several sculptures of Richard Hunt and others by Martin Puryear.

In its commanding presence, *Undone* (2012) is positioned as the first and last piece one encounters upon arriving at and leaving the gallery. This Black female figure gives the illusion of hovering. She is clothed in a white cascading dress with a long red cord extending from between her legs that transforms into a mini-bottle tree, a form traditionally used in West African cultures and their “down South” American counterparts to capture the “Spirits” and remind us, in the words of Maya Angelou, “Still... I Rise!”

IÑIGO MANGLANO-OVALLE

CHRISTOPHER GRIMES GALLERY

BY JODY ZELLEN

A HALLMARK OF IÑIGO MANGLANO-OVALLE’S IS A DESIRE TO bring together a wide variety of seemingly unrelated subjects through a vast range of media. Each exhibition could contain its own rhizomatic diagram charting these references but Manglano-Ovalle chooses to let the viewer freely associate and provides few clues.

In his current exhibition “L’Oiseau dans l’espace” (all works 2012), Manglano-Ovalle has literalized Brancusi’s 1920s sculpture, subjecting