



Left: Mel Kendrick, *Markers*, 2009. Cast concrete, work installed at Madison Square Park. Below: Carmel Buckley, installation view of "Trace," 2009.

wire. *Toy Horse* features the kind of toy horse that bounces up and down and doesn't go anywhere, adds a bicycle frame with its wheels placed sideways to the frame, front and back, and three more useless wheels horizontally on top, just under a child's chair made of delaminating plywood. Simms uses the trick of wheels aimed at cross-purposes to each other more than once, implying both a migratory history and a stasis, a mired-downness. One might find further metaphor for this black artist in the fact that the sculptures are bound.

Simms's pieces are lashed together with a fierce, no-nonsense firmness. He likes to join things like bottles neck-first, and light bulbs base-first, to a larger section; probably no other method than his many wrapped layers of stout wire would hold such a precarious junction. The energy of the process manifests itself at first glance and persists under close examination.

—Marty Carlock

NEW YORK

Mel Kendrick

Madison Square Park

Commissioned by the Madison Square Park Conservancy, Mel Kendrick's multi-part *Markers* (2009) graced Madison Square Park's oval lawn for several months last fall and winter. From the start, Kendrick knew that he wanted to do a series, and he carefully chose the placement of and distance between the individual works so that they would be seen both as a group and as dis-

crete elements. The five works consist of black and white layers of poured concrete. The layering, which acts as a focusing device, suggests, subliminally or not, Italian Gothic cathedrals. As an inspired departure from Kendrick's usual working material of wood, *Markers* breaks new ground, while it continues the display of process that has been his hallmark for more than three decades.

This was Kendrick's first truly public work, and its success as a public project was obvious in that it affected passersby who might not go to galleries to see art. The sculptures were also featured in various blogs, demonstrating a response beyond the usual critical art world reaction. Views of the individual works with people conversing and children playing around them reveal that *Markers* supported casual interactions in the park and fulfilled the

requirements of a successful public work. The individual pieces are quite tall (about 10 feet high), so that their stature and mass, suggestive of monuments, became obvious when seen in conjunction with the human figure. Although *Markers* references long periods of time with its black and white strata, it also played out a specifically cultural significance in the middle of a park whose tall trees serve as a reminder of nature's presence in the middle of downtown New York.

As happens with Kendrick's wooden works, the individual *Markers* demonstrate impressively cut planes, which allow volume to be explored in terms of both interiority and exteriority, with intimations of weight and lightness. Holes and openings break into the solid walls of striped concrete, adding complexity to the overall gestalt, as well as offering playful ways to see through the

sculptures to the spaces beyond them. Each work consists of two pieces, one set on top of the other, and the disconnect between, or overlapping of, black and white layers results in a complicated visual display that intimates Modernist influences. The individual works are full of surprises. A walk around a particular piece reveals that its surfaces can change from solid wall to an exterior that isn't really there, consisting mostly of empty space. Kendrick is a meticulous artist, both in a formal sense and as an expert with materials. A practiced and original sculptor, he has used his wide experience and sharp eye to build works that manage to be sophisticated and accessible at the same time. He is working at the height of his powers.

—Jonathan Goodman

CINCINNATI

Carmel Buckley

Weston Art Gallery

In the entrancing exhibition "Trace," Carmel Buckley evokes the spirit of place through sculptural objects,



KENDRICK, JAMES TWING © MSPC 2009

drawings, monotypes, and video. By using objects and qualities discovered in a house and surrounding woods to which she recently relocated, Buckley set forth a project as an artist-cum-archaeologist. Rather than trying to re-create the entire environment, she offers a series of idiosyncratic fragments that blend the place to which she refers and the place in which the viewer encounters her work. Two videos of tree foliage with a soundtrack of the early morning breeze and birdsong are all that is needed to evoke a fairy-tale forest. The psychological tone of these layered, partial spaces is palpable.

The exhibition evades mimesis, offering a series of works that are first of all themselves, only further radiated by the honorific "art." Buckley is a conceptual artist insofar as a large portion of her creative manipulation of the recovered objects takes place in the mind and eye. Her deft and controlled placement and organization of mostly unaltered (and thereby unharmed) objects manages to imbue them with intent. To take a thing that has been at home in one location and simply display it in a new space would possess the sharp discomfort of the readymade, a historical precedent that is not recalled in Buckley's approach. Rather, what might be sensed as the displacement of these forms, such as the green tool shed uprooted from the artist's back yard and installed in the space, is addressed through tempered whimsy. The shed, for instance, is presented atop gold-papered cinder blocks that glow beneath its rickety structure.

Many of Buckley's alterations are almost hidden, such as golden thread wrapped delicately around areas of wire caging or the replacement of a broken area in a wooden basket with similarly colored and patterned paper. Buckley attaches magic to the discovery process; to find these minute details is to

become so involved with humble matters of reality that one finds poetic or transcendent attributes that were there to begin with.

The prints in the exhibition also operate as found objects in that they are impressions of different materials from the artist's life. Window screens and fly swatters have been inked with a mother-of-pearl shade, resulting in pale, hauntingly minimal traces. In another, grass-green print, a fabric embossed with leafy patterns testifies to the artist's hunt. The texture becomes all the more suggestive of the outdoors in such a color.

The spiritualized tone is summarized in a pair of five-gallon plastic buckets, overturned and fitted with fragments of rusted metal buckets. Like the other works, this piece is left untitled, inviting viewers to invent and intuit an explanation. As iconic and austere as high Minimalism, these twin forms are augmented by their unknown but apparent history, broken in by time and use.

—Matthew Morris

PHILADELPHIA

"State of the Union: Contemporary Craft in Dialogue"

Philadelphia Arts Alliance

"People often talk as if there was an opposition between what is beautiful and what is useful." Oscar Wilde's summary of the debate between craft and fine art still rings true, even as definitions are constantly redefined and artists blur the remaining lines between the fields. "State of the Union," which sought to comment on the dialogue that connects art, design, and craft, also attempted to demonstrate (in the words of curator Melissa Caldwell) that "craft has the potential of questioning the boundaries of its own conventions, even more so than other fields of contemporary art."



Jeanne Quinn, *A Thousand Tiny Deaths*, 2009. Porcelain, balloons, and string, 13 x 8 x 8 ft. Work shown in "State of the Union."

Many featured artists address the question of utility in craft, especially form dictated by function. In a series of spoons, *Fidelity I, II, III, IV, and V* (2006–08), Haley Bates modifies each form slightly, rendering her sleek modern designs useless and questioning how utility defines certain objects. Bates's *Dissection* (2005) offers another example of how perceptions of an object can be changed by small adjustments. Starting with a spoon, she eliminates one aspect of its form in each successive iteration, until it is reduced to a teardrop outline. Gord Peteran's *A Table Made of Wood* (1999), a clever comment on what constitutes a table, is made of numerous individual pieces of wood,

including the handle of a paintbrush. He focuses on the material rather than the object so that the viewer notices the wood first. Peteran's table may serve the familiar function, but he takes the focus away from utility.

Decoration faces the opposite critique, being merely pretty. For *A Thousand Tiny Deaths* (2009), Jeanne Quinn inflated approximately 50 balloons inside black vases and then suspended them from the ceiling. As the balloons slowly deflated, the vases dropped, crashing into pieces on a platform below. Quinn creates movement and anticipation in an object considered static, theatrically contrasting the permanence of classical forms with the