

MITCHELL-INNES & NASH

Art in America



\$12 APRIL 2017 COVER BY ANICKA YI

the silent digital video depicts an unearthed poppy plant. Its roots are exposed and caked with dirt, and two of its vibrant pink petals are torn away, while the others seem to float in a dimensionless black void. At first, the projection appears motionless, as if it were a photographic still. But knowing it's a video loop changes one's experience of seeing it. The viewer peers more closely, searching for movement, for patterns. Only after several minutes of seeming stasis does one begin to feel sure: yes, that thin filament of root has twitched. Meanwhile, we imagine narcotic chemicals coursing unseen through the poppy's veins.

D 11 (1998–2002) is another silent video loop of what appears to be a static image. Is it a close-up of an X-ray? A detail of a blurry black-and-white photo? Staring at the expressionistic swirl of black, gray, and white, viewers become alert to movements that may or may not be happening and grow suspicious of their own perceptions.

In a separate gallery was a recent untitled video installation (2011–15). The video is a fragmented and looped projection of a spinning carnival ride in motion. The ride seems to freeze and restart because the video repeats the same three clips, each lasting less than a second, according to an indecipherable pattern. The result is a dynamic riot of abstract color in which the occasional face or foot is glimpsed. An audio track—a repeating sample of a short, unidentifiable sound—is synchronized to the rhythm of the cuts.

Coleman has experimented with tensions between still and moving images for decades, and several of his early color films (all circa 1970) were projected in another room. A different film played each week for the run of the exhibition. *Work Apron* consists of a fixed view of a woman's apron draped across the wrought-iron railing of a balcony. As the projection rolls, the apron billows from a gentle breeze; nothing else happens.

The film is dull and repetitive at first, but it soon invites the mind to fill in the blanks. Who fills the apron when the breeze does not? What is her life like? By slowing down and focusing on a single image, the imagination, with little prompting, goes to work. One is reminded that even form—to say nothing of meaning—is not conferred from artist to viewer but is mutually constructed.

—Austin Considine



ANTHONY CARO

Mitchell-Innes & Nash

English artist Anthony Caro left an enormous legacy when he died in 2013 at age eighty-nine. He was celebrated for his sculpture in Britain by the late 1950s, and internationally beginning in the early '60s. Among his important aesthetic advances were his decisions to remove sculpture from the constraints of the pedestal, to use industrial materials, and to apply color to his abstract constructions.



This exhibition, "Anthony Caro: First Drawings Last Sculptures," spanned more than six decades and occupied both the Chelsea and Upper East Side branches of the gallery. In addition to eight large-scale sculptures and a number of smaller pieces, the presentation included nineteen of Caro's earliest drawings. Most of these medium-size ink-on-newsprint drawings are dense with thick lines and bold planes that describe figures or animals. Several, such as *Figure* and *Warrior* (both 1955–56), contain passages of brilliant hues that correspond to the colored plexiglass in some of the late sculptures. The drawings were created when Caro worked as an assistant to Henry Moore, and the simplified forms of the figures reflect the older artist's influence.

In his final years, Caro became fascinated by the properties of glass. The earliest example in the show, *Display* (2011–12), consists of a glass box resting on a steel pedestal. Resembling a museum vitrine, the box holds a bronze plate, several bronze bars, and two frosted-glass vessels cast from the artist's clay pots. The satisfyingly rough-hewn contents of the box seem like castoffs from the sculpture studio. Caro ultimately found glass to be too fragile and cumbersome for his larger sculptures. In a 2014 catalogue essay, critic Alastair Sooke explained that Caro came to plexiglass after Michael Fried told the artist about Brazilian Waltercio Caldas's use of colored planes of the material in a series of abstract steel works he began in the late 1990s.

Some works on view employ plexiglass in ways that evoke passing light phenomena. In the approximately six-and-a-half-foot-

Anthony Caro:
Blue Moon, 2013,
stainless steel and
Perspex, 54 by 103
by 90 inches; at
Mitchell-Innes &
Nash.

James Coleman:
Still Life, 2013–16,
digital projection; at
Marian Goodman.

tall *Autumn Rhapsody* (2011–12), bent and folded sheets of steel, painted pale green, form a semicircular enclosure with a small, rectangular entryway. Slabs of chartreuse plexiglass attached to the structure cast golden-yellow highlights on the green metal surface like flickering leaves in early fall. In *Blue Moon* (2013), a large disk of deep blue plexiglass is angled amid a low-lying structure composed of long steel bars and tubing. A slightly concave canopy of clear plexi covering the piece creates a shimmering light.

Sundown (2013) has the overall shape of an ancient Roman sarcophagus or an antique reliquary. Approximately seven feet long, the work consists of a reconfigured grain hopper set on an industrial tablelike support. The lilting curves of a piece of beige plexiglass spanning the sculpture give it a vaguely anthropomorphic quality, as if Caro wanted to suggest a human figure. Grand, but not grandiose, this elegiac object marks the culmination of a long career.

—David Ebony



Gladys Nilsson:
Vested Interest, 1987,
watercolor on paper,
approximately 60 inches; at
Museum of Modern Art,
New York City. Photo by
Garth Greenan.

GLADYS NILSSON

Garth Greenan

Figures big and small inhabit the stunning watercolors Gladys Nilsson made in the late 1980s. It's unusual to see the medium deployed with the forceful colors and monumental scale of these works, ten of which, all about forty by sixty inches, were on view in this recent show. Each depicts a few central characters framed by planes of color and surrounded by dozens of smaller humanoids who perform routine activities of everyday life, albeit with absurd twists.

Nilsson was among the original members of the Hairy Who, a group of young graduates of the School of the Art Institute of Chicago who, in the mid-1960s, established themselves as id-and-laughter-fueled excavators of commercial culture. Nilsson was among the first female artists to be given a solo show at the Whitney Museum of American Art, in 1973. She and her Hairy Who peers have received steady exposure in New York for the last few years, with much attention paid to their iconic

early experiments. It's refreshing to discover this suite of ambitious, mature works from a lesser-known period in Nilsson's career.

The Dicky (1986) portrays five women clad in diaphanous one-shouldered tunics happily clutching at the dicky (a false shirtfront) worn by an otherwise bare-chested male who struggles to hold up the yellow-on-red polka-dot boxers that hardly contain his bulging phallus. A tiny purple woman hangs off the hem of those boxers, tugging them down while staring up between the man's giant legs. Her other hand grips the garter holding up his single remaining sock, while her two legs and bare bottom frame an even smaller figure seated on the ground behind her. In addition to the main group centered on the dicky, a horde of about three dozen small figures romp around the edges of the sheet. Along the top, fourteen naked pink women carry nine green Doric columns, while additional tiny figures saunter along the bottom, filling out the playfully orgiastic work.

Nilsson demonstrates a keen awareness of the sensual, as well as of the signifying, possibilities of clothing. In *Vested Interest* (1987), six women take off their gym shorts and tank tops. A couple of them look up, eyes closed and mouths open, as if breathing heavily after a workout. The largest figure winks and sticks her tongue out while pulling her shirt down. Two tiny men caress her sneaker, and twelve additional little men are wedged into a gray triangle that extends along the bottom of the piece. Unlike the seminude athletes above, the males are fully clothed in suits and wide-brimmed hats. They resemble, perhaps, laborers of the 1940s—a time when Nilsson was a child—heading off to work. Meanwhile, the headband-wearing women in the painting's upper register evoke an entirely different era, place, and mood. Framed by bands of deep color and a few palm trees, they call to mind California in the 1980s.

The colored geometric shapes that form the backgrounds of Nilsson's watercolors were inspired by the aesthetics of German Expressionist film. Sometimes these abstract forms seem to tint the entire composition, like sheets of colored glass. Occasionally, they take on a more narrative role. In perhaps the most outré works, *chic.con.co* (1986) and the diptych *Léger Faire* (1986–87), they become elements in construction sites where all-female or all-male groups perform a sort of burlesque act. There are two forms of exuberance seen in Nilsson's watercolors: her evident joy in confronting the formal challenges of the unforgiving medium, and her playful imagining of narratives that cover a wide emotional range and animate an unruly fantasy world.

—Julian Kreimer

KATHARINA GROSSE

Gagosian

Since the late 1990s, German painter Katharina Grosse has worked almost exclusively with industrial spray guns in lieu of brushes, applying vibrant fields of atomized acrylic to virtually any available surface. For her project *Rockaway!*, organized by MoMA PS1 and produced last summer, she transformed the exterior of a beachfront shack ruined by Hurricane Sandy, covering not only the structure itself but the surrounding sand with diffuse streams of fiery red and white; for *One Floor Up More Highly*, installed at Mass MOCA in 2010–11, she created a vast landscape composed of Styrofoam