



Pictured: George Stoll Untitled (43 tumblers in a holiday arrangement) [Forward and reverse views], 2008
Beeswax, paraffin, and pigment on a painted wooden shelf and painted wooden pedestal 74 x 100 x 12"

PALE FIRE

New Sculptures by Rachel Whiteread and George Stoll by Hunter Drohojowska-Philp

After filling the Tate Modern's gargantuan Turbine Hall in 2005 with random stacks of rectilinear forms cast from packing boxes, the British artist Rachel Whiteread wanted to pursue works with greater potential for intimacy. And in her first show in Los Angeles, on view at Gagosian Gallery in Beverly Hills, she does evoke a certain poignancy. In the high-ceilinged central space of the Richard Meier-designed gallery, she has placed three lithesome works, each using the spare steel support of a modern stacking chair as its base, combined with pastel-colored cast-plaster shapes, notably various-sized cylinders and home-base-shaped slabs.

In two works, Whiteread's nonfunctional chairs sit normally, and hold cylinders (cast from cardboard shipping tubes) placed where the seat would be. The sculptures look vaguely functional but deny utility. Another work, titled *Tumble*, features two chairs, one with cylinders where the seat should be and another that is upended with the cylinders lodged between its tubular steel legs. Still another work is titled *Sit*, though sitting is not really possible, since a stack of pale plaster blocks is placed on the seat.

Whiteread excels in combining formal simplicity with metaphoric punch. Those qualities are even more evident in the wall works, shelves that bear blocks, cylinders and spheres of colored plaster, wood, and metal. Cast from toilet paper rolls and cardboard boxes, they recall immediately Giorgio Morandi's paintings of humble objects. Whiteread trained as a painter before turning to her well-known sculptures of vacant space. Her signature sense of absence is not physically a part of the new works, but these 3D nature mortes do convey a poetic sense of loss.

In Gagosian's upstairs gallery, the star work is *Ghost, Ghost*, a translucent gray resin cast of a Victorian doll house. A viewer can barely discern the domestic details of stairways and doors, and the shimmering form suggests nothing so much as a memory made physical. Still rigorously formal in her interests, Whiteread says nothing directly about the recent death of her mother, who was also an artist, and the subsequent process of packing up the leftovers of a human life. But she doesn't need to.

In Whiteread's show, 18 multicolored cylinders cast from toilet paper rolls are lined on a single white shelf. In George Stoll's show at the Kim Light Gallery, a selection of multicolored beeswax and paraffin tumblers copied from Tupperware are displayed in an elaborate, multilevel white cabinet of minimalist design. While quite different in some ways, both works are concerned with the resonance of the humble objects of daily life.

Stoll inverts the usual hierarchies of production by painstakingly recreating by hand that which often exists in mass-production. His *Untitled (43 Tumblers in a Holiday Arrangement)* can be viewed from two sides, and in one view, the tumblers are hidden behind a white silhouette that suggests an urban cityscape, with glimpses of the tumblers visible through small openings, like light reflected through buildings windows. Stoll based the placement of the windows on a photograph of Christmas lights. An entire gallery wall holds a series of precise mechanical drawings with the same colored circles of light contained in architectural plans for the Pantheon, St. Ivo and other favorite works of Roman architecture.

Stoll went to Rome regularly for 25 years before winning the Prix de Rome, and his show is filled with reminiscence and longing. While ensconced in his large empty studio there, he started collecting an unusual Italian toy, a squeezable white rubber breast-ball, complete with lifelike nipple. After Stoll had filled an entire bowl with them, he decided to recreate the image in plaster. A large sculpture in the show includes two bowls of breasts, the nipples turning from pink to green, a reference to Bernini's *Daphne and Apollo*. (The choice of materials, however, is in homage to Bernini's rival architect, Borromini, who used plaster and gesso in buildings like *St. Ivo*.)

Another pair of breasts rests on a plate, in the style of depictions of the Catholic martyr St. Agatha, but most of the breasts function

as unspecified *ex votos*, along with ears, noses and numerous polished bones resting on platters or recessed into a niches in the gallery wall. Some are accompanied by skulls. They recall the capuchin monks' catacombs in Rome, where skeletal remains are embedded in the archways and walls along with the admonition that viewers one day will be that which they are viewing. Stoll, however, modeled his plaster bones after the Flintstone props from a Hollywood costume shop. His sister, Mink Stoll, was a regular in the John Waters movies and his work often underscores the ways that fantasy intersects with the concepts if not the facts of history. Yet, like Whiteread's works, Stoll's memento mori are both heartfelt and humorous.

KIM LIGHT

2656 S. LA CIENEGA BLVD
LOS ANGELES, CA 90034
T 310.559.1111 F 310.559.2911
info@kimlightgallery.com
www.kimlightgallery.com

LIGHTBOX