

bulbous, bouncy, exuberant forms of these pictures (think again of that false beard). To view them is to be immersed in the colorfully human, and their cool palette does nothing to counter this effect.

—Michael Wilson

“Puddle, pothole, portal”

SCULPTURECENTER

“Puddle, pothole, portal”: Repeat the title five times fast and you might have some clue as to this exhibition’s exuberant slipups. Not just the tongue trips: You must always watch your step here, a feat still easier said than done around the slow-motion jerks of Antoine Catala’s motorized post-word emoji shapes (part rotisserie, part toy) or Win McCarthy’s delicate glass sculptures surreptitiously installed all over the place, which resemble spurts of gushing water paused in time. (Robert Gober’s shadow stretches from the Museum of Modern Art, New York.)

Co-organized by SculptureCenter curator Ruba Katrib and artist Camille Henrot (and remaining on view until January 5, 2015), the exhibition ponders the ways in which objects act in, animate, and manipulate space, drawing hypotheses from nostalgic pop-culture precedents: early slapstick films, cartoons, daily comics, and mechanical toys; Saul Steinberg drawings; and the 1988 movie *Who Framed Roger Rabbit*. Its checklist, featuring more than twenty artists, reflects this eclecticism through sculpture, painting, drawings, video, film, and installations, all very assured in their physicality.

“Puddle, pothole, portal” is the ideal project to inaugurate the institution’s renovation: It shows, without showing off, the connective flow of the revamped and expanded galleries, and encourages you to prowl dark tunnels and open-air courtyards, to look for art in unexpected spots (e.g., thirty feet up in the rafters of the building’s subway-repair-shop bones, where Allison Katz’s acrylic stained-glass windows, *The Set-Up* [all works cited, 2014], are installed in gothic glory). As it turns out, *we* become the true cartoon, inhabiting the sets and frames of a three-dimensional strip: spluttering over titles, shifting in scale depending on the object encountered, sidestepping Plasticine puddles and walking through invisible walls, or taking measure of the hand-sanitized-ad-infinitum perspective of that desk job (Chadwick Rantanen’s twenty-three-foot leaning office sculpture *Well*, complete with hand-sanitizer sprites).

Such warped vanishing points underscore the clever inclusion of Steinberg—particularly since Mick Peter’s wonderful character-sketch cutouts and Judith Hopf’s Brutalist block sheep all seem sprung from his page. But Steinberg’s drawings get no help from the turquoise wall they hang on (a work by Maria Loboda) in a back room that poses the draftsman as more retiring godfather than active destabilizer of visual and proprietary laws. In fact, Steinberg giddily spliced abstraction into

witty representation, disrupting literal space with universal form; a deeper study of what this suggests in today’s illusory technological scape might have helped moor the stunning watercolors of Joachim Bandau and the film animation of Mark Leckey more closely to the show. (A rare instance of this line of inquiry comes from Henrot herself, who has an uncanny eye for the ways in which virtual space rejiggers anthropological taxonomies. For her visual essay “Fan Fiction,” published in the exhibition’s catalogue, the artist made printouts of screenshots tied to digital realities—whether the black hole of a Wikipedia search or a serial-TV binge in bed—and then manually cut and pasted these paper fragments into a scrapbook of collages.)

Inducing a frenetic energy edged with the comic-strip kineticism of ticking clocks and unknown ends, some artists made work in situ. Olga Balema’s cleverly sited “Interior Biomorph Attachment” series of sculptures made from latex and poly foam stretched across steel frames bend up and along and around the catacomb walls of the ground level in a 1970s-bathroom-fixture palette. (They could also be relics of a defunct amusement park, or the result of what would happen if Gumby turned into an abstract sculpture.) And I can’t explain my fascination with Camille Blatrix’s mailbox-cum-radio-cum-polished-mystery *Alison*, 44-19 Purves St, Long Island City, NY 11101, though on my first visit to the show, I was hardly alone in my enthusiasm. The work seems to have traveled a great geographic distance while maintaining the aura of a secret artistic process: a time machine waiting to be unlocked.

Indeed, this show suggests we aren’t so much always slipping up as slipping *backward* in space. Lina Viste Grønli’s stacked *Youth Sculpture I* puts culture in a mortar (and mortal) vise, its tableau evoking the aftermath of an absurd scenario in which cartoon bricks have fallen from a great height to flatten someone’s stoop sale of baseball gloves, a VHS tape of *Footloose*, and Converse sneakers. Like memories of bygone teenage years, it’s at once funny and crushing.

—Prudence Peiffer

Henry Flynt

AUDIO VISUAL ARTS (AVA)

The philosopher, artist, musician, and one-time hard leftist Henry Flynt has engaged questions of bourgeois culture, formalism, and modernist aesthetics since at least 1961, when he coined the term “Concept Art” (not to be confused with Conceptual art) in a text published in the George Maciunas–designed *An Anthology* (1963). He is still hard at work undermining the ideology of dominant cultural forms today—long after abandoning his rigorously anti-art stance and confrontational protest tactics. Liz Kotz named him, in the pages of this magazine, the most elusive avant-gardist, and he is perhaps best known for his influential collaborations with various prominent figures, from Maciunas to La Monte Young, Jack Smith, and Walter De Maria. That Flynt has resisted the patriarch’s mantle within any movement—a particularity that also points to his uncompromising intellect—has certainly had implications for his art-historical absorption. Although he resumed making object-based artworks in the mid-1980s, until earlier this autumn, Flynt had not had a solo exhibition in New York since 1993. The truly unromantic consequence risked by those who adhere to such committed critique (via utopian refusal), then, is obscurity.

After rare retrospective exhibitions staged in Europe in 2013, Flynt returned to New York with a show at the East Village gallery Audio Visual Arts, a circumstance resulting from his ties to the avant-garde music scene. The artist presented an excerpt from the work *Esthetics of Eeriness*, 1992, which consists of MDF plaques, each printed with an ambiguous phrase. Flynt hallucinated the bulk of these nonnarrative

View of “Puddle, pothole, portal,” 2014–15. Floor, from left: Antoine Catala, (::: (:::)), 2014; Antoine Catala,), 2014; Antoine Catala, >////<, 2014; Antoine Catala, </3, 2014. Wall: Win McCarthy, Long Drain, 2014.

