



Marianne Weil: *Los Millares*, 2007, bronze, 32 by 13 by 6 inches; at Kouros.

pale, metallic greens. The warm colors of the monotypes echo the patina palette.

Los Millares Uno (12 by 9 inches), the one watercolor in the exhibition (two others were listed but not shown), seems to have been an important precedent for the prints and many of the bronzes. Laid in with a washy orange that bleeds into pinker hues toward the top, and centering on an organic shape limned in orange pastel and redrawn in sanguine, the watercolor has a spontaneous look that carries over to the experimental quality of the prints. Its central form could be described as a ribcage sprouting two arterial extensions like those issuing from the heart's aortic arch. An inverted version balances above it so that each pair of "arteries" meets, creating a windowlike opening. The ribcage configuration also resembles an aerial view of a stone-lined enclosure at Los Millares, its top part formed by inverting that shape.

A handsome 10-inch-high wall relief, *Primo*, closely replicates the shape in the watercolor, though the former's more tapered upper parts look more like lotus buds. Taking it off the wall, the muscular, 32-by-13-by-6-inch *Los Millares* has real presence, with glowing patinas and tactile surfaces coming into full play. The elongated opening, formed by the two shapes meeting, could be a metaphor for the site's more than 80 passage tombs. The sculpture's lower part suggests drumsticks, its meaty sections joined at the base, bony parts reaching up into what looks like the original watercolor's lower shape.

In the prints, the same motif occurs,

stenciled in different combinations and positions, the overlaps left visible. In some, Weil incorporated the textural imprint of what look like wire mesh and burlap. A display case near the exit of the gallery contained *Twenty Six Madeleines (A to Z)*, petite, green-hued, shallow cups with copper scalloped wings, some with concentric circles at their bottoms. Weil's search for a personal vocabulary that reinvents the lost ritual functions of excavated treasures seemed implicit in that assembly.

—Elisa Decker

David Smith Gagosian

Fifty years ago David Smith made his first spray work with the recently invented aerosol can. He was aware of the prehistoric cave paintings of Altamira. Smith and the cave artist created images by blowing or spraying paint while shielding the ground surface—rock or paper—with a hand or with a piece of metal. In a reversal, the painted area became the ground, and the unpainted surface became animated. For his forms Smith used tools, machine shop templates, eating utensils and torn or cut pieces of paper, cardboard and/or metal. The circle is often a unifying element; the square, the rectangle and the diamond are other recurring shapes, sometimes intermixed with nonspecific forms. Smith's innovative spray pieces opened the door for painting done with industrial spray guns and compressors by his peers and heirs. In 1961 Yves Klein began spraying blue paint around nudes, and later in the '60s and early '70s Jules Olitski, Dan Christensen, Kenny Showell, Mario Yrisarry, this writer and, more recently, Christopher Wool made spray paintings, as did the graffiti artists.

This exhibition was devoted to Smith's spray works done between 1958 and 1964. Fourteen large paintings and one sculpture were on the gallery's main floor, and 29 drawings and two sculptures were on the floor below. The main space contained a group of vertical paintings measuring around 8 by 4 feet; two are 1 by 8 feet. A few contain sprayed stenciled shapes within a large, central enclosed area; the internal abstract forms are often arranged to imply a figure. A nonfigurative untitled painting of 1959 contains the most color: within two large enclosed forms, smaller internal overlapping shapes come to life with skillfully sprayed touches of yellow, orange and blue around the shape's edges. Smith was able to create a sharp-edged white shape against a soft-edged white shape; the surrounding ground is a burnt sienna with splatters of black paint.

In the center of the room was the

polychrome steel sculpture *Circles Intercepted* (1961), which is painted red, yellow, light blue and black—the same color used in the sprays. In the hall area, two small untitled Cubi paintings of 1964 stood out. One depicts five same-size diamond shapes joined to a central, diagonally positioned rectangle; three diamonds are cantilevered off to the right in a repetitive pattern. The other Cubi is a near-symmetrical totem composition.

Smith, who was interested in skeletons, flight and the sky, owned a photo of a bird's skeleton, mounted horizontally, its long neck and ribcage notable. In the '40s he made sculptures of bird skeletons, one of which, *Jurassic Bird*, refers to the period when reptile flight evolved. Several of the spray drawings include a horizontal bar that serves as a spinal support for the sculptural elements attached to it—an imitation of skeletal structure. The steel sculpture *Construction on Star Points* (1954-56) was exhibited with the drawings; Smith placed the work's focal configuration on top of an 8-foot stem; you have to look up, as you do when you observe stars, to see it. Some spray drawings seem to refer to outer



David Smith: Untitled, 1961, spray enamel on paper, 11½ by 17½ inches; at Gagosian.

space, with baseless floating forms, as in an untitled work of 1961 where a group of small and larger planes float in a diagonal orbit. In several of the drawings, spattered dots of black and metallic bronze enamel at times resemble stars. Together, the sprays reveal the cosmic aspect of Smith's oeuvre.

—Erik Saxon

Jacques Roch Kim Foster

Jacques Roch's series "Le Déjeuner sur l'herbe" (2007) consists of 15 abstract acrylic paintings overlaid with silkscreen imprints of Edouard Manet's favorite model, Victorine Meurend, as pictured in his famous plein-air dining scene. Roch creates a tension between modernism and

postmodernism through his appropriation of the iconic nude, his use of silkscreen and his titular appropriation of Manet's masterpiece.

Roch's process involves drawing the Manet figure from memory and mixing it with current and historical associations. Some of the artist's memories derive from his service in the Algerian War (1954-62), during which he drew portraits of his fellow soldiers. Indeed, his *Le Déjeuner sur l'herbe #1* alludes to that conflict, with an explosion of magenta bleeding into a peaceful tender green, while in the foreground one sees Meurand, Seurat's *Grande Jatte* couple sharing a parasol and a man pushing a hot-dog stand bearing the phrase "cold soup." On an orange area of the painting is a stairway that leads to a maid's room under a Parisian roof.

Starting his career as a painter in the early 1970s in Paris, Roch later turned to producing comic strips for the magazine *Hara-Kiri Charlie*. But after meeting American artist Pamela Wye, whom he married and followed to New York City, he returned to painting in 1980.

An exquisite draftsman, Roch seldom emphasizes drawing in his paintings, relying instead on repetitive imagery applied through silkscreen—a procedure that lessens the importance of the figures while highlighting the color-field ground. The silkscreened vignettes combine strange anthropomorphic creatures and cartoon versions of personages from master paintings such as Delacroix's *Liberty Leading the People*, Fuseli's *The Nightmare* and Munch's *The Scream*—references all brought together in this exhibition. Typical



Jacques Roch: *Le Déjeuner sur l'herbe #17*, 2007, acrylic on canvas, 64 by 58 inches; at Kim Foster.

of his deflation of grand narratives is a work that shows Titian's Adonis holding a cell phone instead of a weapon while Venus grabs his hand, persuading him to join her for a walk, rather than going to hunt.

Nihilist inclinations are often offset by absurdity in this body of work. With their bright colors and mechanical, mildly cynical figuration, the paintings engage in a delicate balancing act—one in which quiet despair, while never absent, is routinely overcome by the possibility of delight.

—Denise Carvalho

Per Kirkeby Michael Werner

Ever since he was ushered to international attention by 1980s Neo-Expressionism, Danish painter Per Kirkeby has burrowed ever more deeply into techniques of gestural painting, deploying its inchoate, visceral and unruly language with the specificity of a 19th-century realist who aims to describe. In a recent exhibition at Michael Werner, 10 vertical paintings from 2007 and one from 2005-07, all untitled, faced off on two walls and were joined by a single horizontal canvas (2005) displayed on an easel. The 11 vertical paintings have in common a prominent axis around which the composition is more or less symmetrically disposed. Varying in width and placement, and occasionally multiplied, this vertical axis can read as something in nature—a tree, the spine of a feather or a leaf, flowing water—or as a primal, almost childlike, compositional device. In this it raises the ghost of Newman's "zip," that iconic sign for the 20th-century romantic sublime, a tradition that is also very much Kirkeby's own.

In some of the most successful works, airy all-over painting braids itself like an open lattice from the canvas's edges to

the center or intrudes from the corners. Directed or trawling, the patterned marks obstruct any composition beneath, in the way that tree branches affect a vista. In nearly every work, nature's pervasive binaries—sky/water, light/reflection—are cast as abstract archetypes discernible in eccentrically oriented vectors and patches of vivid color. The application of diaphanous tempera to the backgrounds, and, over that, viscous yet resistant oil, produces a modicum of deep space—but also enhances the irresolute feeling of Kirkeby's awkwardly tactile and direct mark-making.

The lone horizontal painting, a melancholy presence, includes elements of still life and landscape; its striated expanse resembles both pooled water and the patterned wood grain of cut lumber. Two enigmatic objects, one seemingly near, the other far, measure a diagonal through an insubstantial space harboring at its center a rocky monolith, both intractable and ethereal. (Kirkeby's study of geology in the late 1950s and his visits to Greenland and the Arctic remain significant touchstones for his work.) The painting is a vanitas in mood, if not subject, and it performed like an emissary from a different universe; its slowly unfolding mystery offered a stark contrast to the wall-hung works, each of which presented a discrete, immediate sensation. A counterpoint to the rest of the show, its lateral reach worked insidiously to introduce doubt into the assertive verticality that prevailed in the group as a whole. The process by which abstraction both embodies and negates landscape was held in apparent and exquisite tension.

—Susan Rosenberg

NEW YORK AND RIDGEFIELD, CONN.

Gary Panter Clementine

and the Aldrich Museum

Gary Panter had two shows this year—a New York solo of various work from 1972-2001 and his first museum show, which featured paintings, sketchbooks (three dozen of them from 1980 to 2007) and music. Add to this his illustrious reputation in the world of punk comics, his three Emmy awards for the set design on *Pee Wee's Playhouse* (1986-90) and the abstract, colorful "light-shows" he makes and exhibits, and you get an idea of how energetic and prolific he is.

Panter came at you pell-mell as soon as you entered Clementine, dishing out images in such profusion that you needed time to catch your breath. Two large walls were painted black and covered with white chalk drawings: dogs, cats, bombs, pirates, bees, girls with guns, monsters, boats, lettering, trees, Donald Duck, robots, and on and on—from edge to edge and floor to ceiling. On top of the wall drawings were

Per Kirkeby: *Untitled*, 2007, oil and tempera on canvas, 45½ by 37½ inches; at Michael Werner.

