



HUNT CLARK + DEBORAH MCCLARY KNOXVILLE

The two-person show *Hover* transformed the University of Tennessee at Knoxville Downtown Gallery's tall white-cube space into a tense and evocative sensory experience (June 15–July 27, 2007). Viewers entering the darkened space were confronted with Hunt Clark's video installation *White Noise*, 2007, a huge white rectangular screen flickering with out-of-focus images and a soundtrack's low-level buzz. Up close, the white wall looked like a suspended honeycomb created from rolls of white paper stuck grid-like into a clear Plexiglas panel. The images were no clearer when seen from behind. One of the room's corners provided the best viewing point. There, seen from oblique angles, the projected images penetrated the tubes to become almost focused. In Clark's video loop, trucks rumbling across swaths of road alternate with silent shadowless clouds floating in the blue void, suggesting a critique of our unawareness of our surroundings. Clark's videography switches from an ominously low vantage point just below the elevated slabs of concrete highway that pass through Knoxville to the unimpeded skies of the Tennessee countryside. He has captured the rather shocking contrast between the city's dense traffic and air and noise pollution and the dazzlingly unskilled country skies so common to many parts of the rural South today—a contrast commonly ignored by city dwellers who hail from rural environs, or workers who drive in and out of the city every day. The muffled sounds and bright sunlight add to the unreality, mimicking the disconnectedness of a dream, a state of shock, or a pleasant euphoria.

In the back half of the gallery, Deborah McClary's sculptural installation *Balance*, 2007, is a much more brittle cry for awareness. Her mastery of woodworking is evident in two near life-size calf sculptures, whose hides are rendered with realistic detail, such as wrinkles at the haunches, hair at the tip of the tail, and fur fuzz in the ears. But this smooth wood surface has been coated with gesso to achieve a startling pure matte white, which triggers an impression of unreality—a crisis situation, or

even a suggestion of death. Separated by a taut fifteen-foot rope that is also looped around both of their necks, the two calves strain away from each other. McClary has captured the tense moment when their gamboling has suddenly stopped, constricted by the rope. Like a punch to the gut, this installation transmits something fierce and immediate. *Balance*, the title, is something of a tease—how can external constraint represent balance? But that's precisely McClary's point. The practice of "breaking" a calf or a horse in order to make it obedient to humans may seem normal to some. It may seem of no consequence for the animal or for the trainer. But how can it not be? While the slightest perception of cruelty to animals affects many, most people seem to steel themselves against a similar response to the plight of a human. By presenting a pair of calves helplessly tied together by a rope and pulling against each other from blind instinct, McClary calls attention to the fact that animals constantly rely on danger signals triggered by their senses in their struggle for survival. By capturing this rare moment, McClary may also be pointing out that humans are now much less sensitive to this type of information, which has seemingly ceased to impact the daily flow of human activity. The world we share with animals is losing its familiarity as we are taken up with the cyberworld and other constructions of the human mind.

By titling their exhibition *Hover*, McClary and Clark have come up with a graphic term to illustrate their position as artists living and working both in and away from the mainstream. Their artists' statement describes hovering as "remain[ing] poised in one place, ... with slight but undirected movement." It seems a useful construct by which to consider the situation of artists living as much as possible away from the industrialized world. Insofar as it also means protective nurturing, the term may ultimately point to their innate awareness of the need to protect their creative abilities and innocence of vision.

—Susan W. Knowles

SAM BASU LONDON

Seventy-four years after the Bauhaus closed its doors in Berlin, Sam Basu has revived its ideals in East London. In *Basuhaus* (Kate MacGarry; May 25–July 1, 2007), the English artist's personal practice merges with the crafty, artisanal dimension of the Bauhaus' pedagogy, shirking the emphasis of the famous school for art, architecture, and design on simplicity, functionality, and rationality. Using materials such as cardboard, wool, wire, and metal, Basu transforms the Bauhaus' utopian aims into an informal cottage industry. His appropriation reveals the quirkier, more irreverent subtexts of the modernist movement, whose bid for objectivity dominated and, most probably, repressed the fantastic power of the uncanny.

HIVE Arrangement of Cells, 2007, an arrangement of multicolored plastic and cardboard cones, evokes the organic outgrowth of stalagmites and stalactites. Reaching upwards from the floor and hanging down from the ceiling, this flimsy, idiosyncratic structure is a far cry from the standardized architectural aspirations of Walter Gropius and Mies van der Rohe. If these iconic architects were building for the modernist man, Basu clearly has other ideas. Drawings of aliens populate his model for a new society. This filtering of the tenets of the early twentieth century through the prism of lowbrow science fiction is both sacrilegious and extremely droll. It extends popular culture and its psychodramas into the preserve of an art movement driven by its aspiration to a streamlined purity of form.

The floor piece, *Universal Demos*, 2007, presents a meditation on another legacy of the Bauhaus, namely its emphasis on handcraft. Made entirely of yarn, this work points to the possible realization of the Bauhaus dream—the fusion of fine and applied arts. Initially, this synthesis seems to be fully articulated. On second glance, however, the work refuses to add up to anything beyond its own chaotic messiness. Basu plays with the yarn for its own sake, without enlisting it for any lofty, social goal and without any mediation of technology. Nothing beyond the

ABOVE, LEFT TO RIGHT: Deborah McClary, *Balance*, 2007, wood and gesso, life-size; view of *Hover*, foreground: Hunt Clark, *White Noise*, 2007, video installation on Plexiglas and paper, screen: 84 x 180 x 11 inches (courtesy of the artists and the University of Tennessee at Knoxville Downtown Gallery)