



Best Of 2006

David Rimaneli

ARTFORUM CONTRIBUTING EDITOR DAVID RIMANELI TEACHES ART HISTORY AT NEW YORK UNIVERSITY. HE HAS ORGANIZED NUMEROUS EXHIBITIONS, INCLUDING, MOST RECENTLY, "SURVIVOR," AT BORTOLAMI DAYAN IN NEW YORK.

1 **Matthew Barney** (Museum of Modern Art, New York; Gladstone Gallery, New York) With *Drawing Restraint 9*, which made its New York debut at MoMA last March, the artist tendered yet another astonishing film, proving he wasn't about to relax after the *Cremaster*-cycle shebang; the Gladstone exhibition was his best "object-art" show in New York in years. But even in the absence of such stellar accomplishments, I would crown Barney with yet another diadem simply because I am sick to death of listening to know-nothing creeps trash him, their "critiques" rank with the fetor of invidium and sour grapes. Matthew Barney did something incredible in art since 1990. What have you ever done?

2 **Mike Kelley** (Gagosian Gallery, New York) "Day Is Done" engorged (I use the word advisedly) Gagosian's vast Chelsea space. The exhibition was hectoring and bullying and so much fun: a three-Advil show, but proferring misery of a kind that invited repeat visits. "Day Is Done" felt quite disagreeable overall—further testament to Kelley's position as one of the few truly inevitable artists of our time. Making my way through the forest of installations and videos, I assented to the spectacle completely, foregoing critical distance. Yeah, this is alienation, fun, contempt, socialization, cruelty; it's lousy life—get used to it, stupid.

3 **Park Chan-wook**, *Lady Vengeance* The final, supernal installment in South Korean director Park Chan-wook's "revenge trilogy" is possibly the best film I've seen in the last five years. I'm a relative newcomer to Asian Extreme cinephilia, but in recent years I've become convinced

that the best films in the world are made in (pardon me) the Orient—Hollywood and Europe seem pitiful by comparison. Less extravagantly violent than Park's *Sympathy for Mr. Vengeance* (2002) and *Old Boy* (2003)—the first two films in the trilogy—*Lady Vengeance* remains acutely itchy with suffering and disgust.

4 **Hanna Liden** (Rivington Arms, New York) American Apparel meets the northern European sublime: The results are synergistically effervescent, smart, snide, and gorgeous. In this top-drawer successor to her debut exhibition at Rivington Arms in 2004, Liden suavely manipulates her already signature imagery, preparing the stage for another startling act. She is fated to do great things in the coming years.

5 **Nate Lowman** (Maccaroni Inc., New York) Bang-bang, you're dead. Lowman has a flawless sensibility when it comes to the detritus—I mean, the substance—of contemporary American existence: celebrity and criminality, madness and glamour, Tom Cruise and Linda Tripp. I defer to rap artiste Shyne for a partial summation: "Money, cars, guns, hoers / Sniff some blow and I'm good to go."

6 **Brice Marden** (Museum of Modern Art, New York) This retrospective is the best exhibition MoMA has mounted since it reopened in 2004—a hopeful sign for those of us who met the museum's new building (and its lackluster initial programming) with heavy hearts. I know many people, smart and dumb, who exhale boredom whenever Marden's name comes up, but curator Gary Garrels's comprehensive selection of paintings and drawings

at MoMA demonstrates that the naysayers simply haven't paid much attention to the range and intelligence of these preponderantly gorgeous works. I lingered especially amid examples of the artist's "Grove Group" paintings (1972–76) and the two huge multi-panel works that debuted here. The former series suspires a becalmed pastoral, whereas the latest canvases shiver with a febrile, utterly contemporary attitude.

7 **Adam McEwen** (Nicole Klagsbrun Gallery, New York) McEwen made large-scale abstract paintings wherein gobs of chewing gum float by like Twomblyesque doodads, although each work bears the name of a German city firebombed during World War II—Dresden, Hamburg, Berlin, etc. The chewing-gum patches obliquely refer to aerial photographs of the devastation. Yet this ostensibly attenuated connection throws one back upon one's own quotidian environment. I never particularly noticed chewing gum on the pavements of New York before. Now I can't avoid seeing it, and the effect is stealthily unnerving.

8 **Tony Oursler** (Metro Pictures, New York) Oursler's Metro show took its title, "Thought Forms," from a 1901 tome by two influential leaders of the Theosophical Society, Annie Besant and C. W. Leadbeater. Through some manner of psychic divination, they visualized images, often quite abstract, that represented emotions; they then commissioned artists to realize their visions. Oursler proposed a sort of prehistory of Conceptual art, locating it not in Boolean algebra, Wittgenstein, or like highbrow inspirations, but rather in the kookiness of spirit phenomena.

(Theosophy worked for Mondrian and Kandinsky.)

9 **Sayn-Wittgenstein Collection: Photographs by Princess Marianne Sayn-Wittgenstein-Sayn** (teNeues) Princess Marianne, a descendant of the Empress Maria Theresa (Marie Antoinette's mom) sure gets around. The subjects of her photographs—some 240 of which, taken between the (glorious) summer of '38 and 2005 are brought together in this volume—bear names that recall European history from the Crusades through the Third Reich: Habsburg, Alb Fürstenberg, Metternich, Bismarck Ribbentrop, et al. Then for social swing there's Dalí, Warhol, Saint Laurent, Jackie O., Vivienne Westwood, Marisa Berenson, Larry Hagman, Iman. A genius picture from 1954 depicts two of the photographer's young children Yvonne swigs Dry Sack from the bottle while Alexander smokes a cigarette. Sayn-Wittgenstein is one artist I'd love to meet.

10 **Christopher Williams** (David Zwirner, New York) Years ago, before I had any notion of what Williams's photographs were "about," I was entranced by their stunning precision and beauty. He knows how to make a smashing picture—one that sustains a visual intensity that draws you into the elaborate, almost baroque conceptual snares he sets up within and between images. There's an unexpected tenderness in Williams's practice no less compelling than his cunning intellectual stratagems—a love for the medium, even if he identifies himself as a conceptual artist using photography rather than as a photographer. □

1. Matthew Barney, *The Occidental Guest*, 2006. Installation view, Gladstone Gallery, New York. Photo: David Regen. 2. Mike Kelley, *Heartthrob Split*, 2005, mixed media with video projection and photographs. Installation view, 2006. 3. Park Chan-wook, *Lady Vengeance*, 2005, still from a color film in 35 mm, 112 minutes. Lee Geum-ja (Lee Young-ae). 4. Hanna Liden, *Hairface (Self Portrait)*, 2006, color photograph, 25 3/4 x 22". 5. Nate Lowman, *Oops Maxima (Peach)*, 2005, silk screen on canvas, 30 x 30". 6. Brice Marden, *Lethykos (for Tontc 1976)*, oil and beeswax on canvas, four panels, overall 84 7/2". 7. Adam McEwen, *Dresden (Phosphorbrandbombe)*, 2006, phosphorescent paint and chewing gum on canvas, 90 70". 8. Tony Oursler, *Nix*, 2006, fiberglass sculpture, Harmc Kardon HS100 5.1 sound system, Sony XGA VPL-PX41 projector, Sony VPL-CZ70 projector, Sanyo PLC-XU48 projector, free DVD players, six DVDs, and

three master tapes. Installation view. 9. Princess Marianne Sayn-Wittgenstein-Sayn, *Majorca, Yvonne and Alexander Sayn-Wittgenstein on board Bartholomé March's yacht, 1954*, black-and-white photograph. 10. Christopher Williams, *Tropical House (Prototype)*, *Sun shutters, Produced at the workshops of Jean Prouvé Maxéville, 1949–51. Airlifted to Brazzaville in 1951. Shipped back to Maxéville in 1999. Los Angeles, October 4, 2005*, color photograph, 20 x 24".

