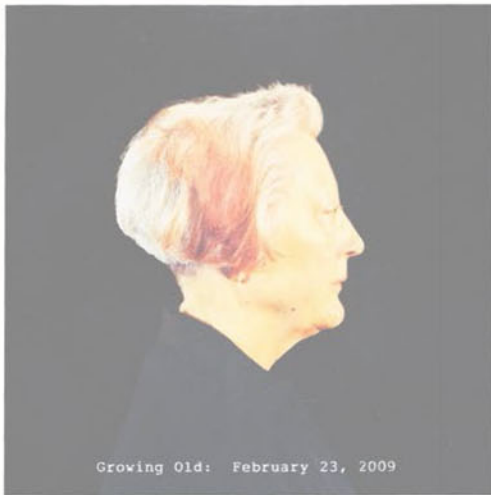




# Art in America

INTERNATIONAL REVIEW

**Dana Schutz**  
Maurizio Cattelan  
Clyfford Still  
Matthew Brannon  
Walid Raad



Growing Old: February 23, 2009

Martha Wilson: *Growing Old* (detail), 2008-09, pigmented ink prints on paper, 8 works: 21 inches square and 1 work: 35 inches square; at P.P.O.W.

Mureșan bound two of his own pencil drawings illustrating the 1975 Russian sci-fi novel *The Doomed City*, by Arkady and Boris Strugatsky. Thus, he disrupts the literature of the past with his contemporary interpretations of a futuristic novel.

On a monitor nearby, Mureșan's 9-minute video *The Invisible Hand* demonstrated his process, showing him as he bound one of his drawings into a tract by economist Adam Smith, coiner of the titular expression, which has been used by economists ever since to describe the supposedly self-regulating nature of the marketplace. Since the text appears in a Romanian translation and is borrowed from the library at the University of Cluj—the video shows Mureșan leaving the library with it—one couldn't help but think of the way market economies have been uneasily grafted onto formerly socialist nations.

To create *Untitled (Monks)*, consisting of a 12-minute video and 19 drawings, Mureșan pressed several artist friends into service to play robed monks in a monastery, dutifully hand-copying books, as actual monks did in order to preserve and transmit knowledge and religious doctrine. Rather than bibles, though, Mureșan's artist-scribes duplicate books on Beuys, Mondrian, Malevich, Duchamp and Sturtevant. The video shows them at their worktables, toiling away; a vitrine displayed the simple pencil drawings, with illustrations and text alike painstakingly reproduced. The piece slyly suggests art is a religion and art texts scripture. At the same time, as he does in *The Doomed City*,

Ciprian Mureșan: *Untitled (Monks)*, 2011, video, approx. 12 minutes; at David Nolan.



Mureșan pays tribute to the humble book—sensual, long-lived, malleable—in the age of the Kindle.

While Beuys, Mondrian and Malevich each were driven by utopian aspirations, Mureșan's inclusion of Sturtevant, who created precise simulations of others' works long before appropriation came into vogue, and of Duchamp, who made all such idea art possible, shifts the tone. At once homage and tender satire, this work targets not only the true believers but the skeptics too—not only the famous, and not only the boys.

—Brian Boucher

### “PURE CLAY: YOUNG SOOK PARK AND LEE UFAN” AND “CONTEMPORARY CLAY” RH GALLERY

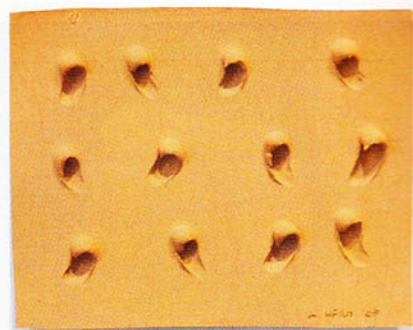
The eminent ceramist Young Sook Park has often turned to the past for inspiration, in particular the Chosun Dynasty (1392-1910), when pottery in her native Korea had a brilliant efflorescence. A pair of Park's large, gleaming white porcelain “moon jars” placed in the front windows of this Tribeca gallery drew visitors into an exhibition of ceramics by Park and her compatriot and frequent collaborator Lee Ufan, and, in the back room, a group show of 13 contemporary artists.

The moon jar was invented in the late 17th to mid-18th century; it is a large porcelain vessel used for a variety of purposes, in its round shape and milky white coloration evoking the celestial body. Only a few moon jars survive from

that period, for they are fragile and vexingly difficult to make, shaped in two parts and fired at high temperatures; frequent irregularities around the middle were esteemed. Park's looked fairly perfect, gleaming away. The moon jar was one of the few points of congruity with the group show in the back, where Arlene Shechet contributed two funkier versions of the type, one of them with a silvery green ceramic coil stuck in its mouth, the other marked all over its surface with splattered white glaze.

On view in the front gallery were many other exquisite vessels by Park from the past dozen years or so—dinnerware, teapots and cups in white porcelain with delicate cobalt touches, and clay bowls, plates and small pots fired with fern glazes to give them a pale green coloration, then embellished with iron oxide and copper. Lee executed the surface decorations in a number of additional works, sometimes marks depicting fruits, other times quite abstract, as in one giant, stormy platter from 1988, over 36 inches in diameter, with swirling, emphatic gestures. There were also two wall-hung, unglazed terra-cotta reliefs from 2005, around 16½ by 21 inches each, in which Lee pressed his thumb into tablets shaped by Park to create gouges that function both as image and material.

Among the offerings in the group show, in addition to Shechet's moon jars, were a couple of whimsical little cups by Kathy Butterly—one of them, the fierce *Mask 2* (2009), with a tiny pink gash lined with what look like minute teeth; a Janus-headed, blearily smiling



Young Sook Park and Lee Ufan: *Untitled*, 2005, terra-cotta, 16½ by 21 inches; at RH Gallery.

View of Pepón Osorio's installation *All or Nothing*, 2011, video and mixed mediums; at Ronald Feldman.

girl by Klara Kristalova (*Twice as Happy*, 2009); the cartoonish wall-hung sculpture *Tree (Pine)*, 2010, by Naoki Koide; a jar of 1,000 hand-painted porcelain sunflower seeds by Ai Weiwei (2009); a white clay chain by Julia Chiang (*Keeping It Together*, 2011); and a small white porcelain sculpture of a sleeping fawn (2011), almost frighteningly vulnerable, by John O'Reilly. It was a nice selection, modest in size, which nonetheless allowed viewers to sample the striking range of formal and iconographic possibilities being explored in clay today.

—Faye Hirsch

## PEPÓN OSORIO RONALD FELDMAN

Pepón Osorio is a storyteller of the first order. The Puerto Rican artist, who spent many years as a social worker, builds multimedia installations that address universal concerns while remaining grounded in the real-life narratives of the different communities he engages. In his recent exhibition, Osorio brought together four pieces that locate a profound sense of tragedy within the quotidian space of the family home.

The centerpiece of the exhibition was a rotating life-size diorama built on a circular platform that reconstructs a pair of opposing domestic landscapes: one rich, one poor; one outside, one inside. A tall wall separates the two spaces, which are rife with symbolic objects. On one side, a hospital gurney sits on a lawn, representing the exterior of an affluent family's home. Beside the gurney is a gold-painted heart in a display case, atop which rests

a pocket watch that no longer ticks. The inside of the poor household shows more signs of life, though it is in utter chaos. Kitschy trinkets and disused wall clocks litter the ground along with scattered puzzle pieces and toy police cars. A family is present—a mother and her two children—but they are absorbed in their own activities, existentially isolated. Their skin is composed entirely of Band-Aids. Conceived and created over a yearlong engagement with the communities of Williamstown and North Adams, Mass. (it was exhibited in both of those towns), *Drowned in a Glass of Water* (2010) refers to that stifling feeling one has when life's obstacles seem insurmountable. It's impossible to know the actual story Osorio started with, but the emotional tone suggests struggle and recovery.

Other pieces approach tragedy from the precursory angle of protection or prevention. For *Purifier* (2010), Osorio installed a glass of water just below the ceiling. Exceedingly discreet, it's in the same room as *Drowned* and very easy to overlook. Puerto Rican superstition holds that keeping a glass of water near the ceiling will purify the air and improve the health of those living in the house.

In *Todo o nada* (*All or nothing*, 2011), the gallery walls are covered in aluminum siding like the exterior of a house, but the focus is on a freestanding wall in the center of the space where a video monitor replaces a window. In the video, makeup is applied to the face of a young boy, creating the appearance of a bad bruising. Meanwhile a mother re-

counts the day her son came home with a concussion from a beating. Osorio's ever-present attention to contradiction comes through in the disjunction between the illusion of violence on screen and the reality of it in the mother's story.

The tragedy of these domestic situations is, perhaps, the breakdown of communication. Psychological trauma locked in silence cannot be healed, a lesson Osorio knows by heart.

—Charles Marshall Schultz

## MERLIN JAMES SIKKEMA JENKINS

Merlin James is one of those rare artists with a genuine appreciation for what it means to be part of a field, to be labelable, in his case, as a painter. Now on the far side of 50, James has been making paintings for over three decades, as well as curating, teaching, lecturing and writing—predominantly on painting.

His recent show brought together 22 paintings that can be split into two categories. There were those executed on canvas, which have the weather-beaten austerity of an old and often traveled road; and there were those that swap out canvas for polyester. Hanging beside their rugged counterparts, the diaphanous works imparted a sense of delicacy and fragility that lightened the otherwise weighty character of the exhibition.

Most of the paintings were completed in the last three years. They are all modestly sized and many take buildings—a familiar theme for James—as their subject matter. Some are figurative, and others eschew any representation at