

ARTFORUM

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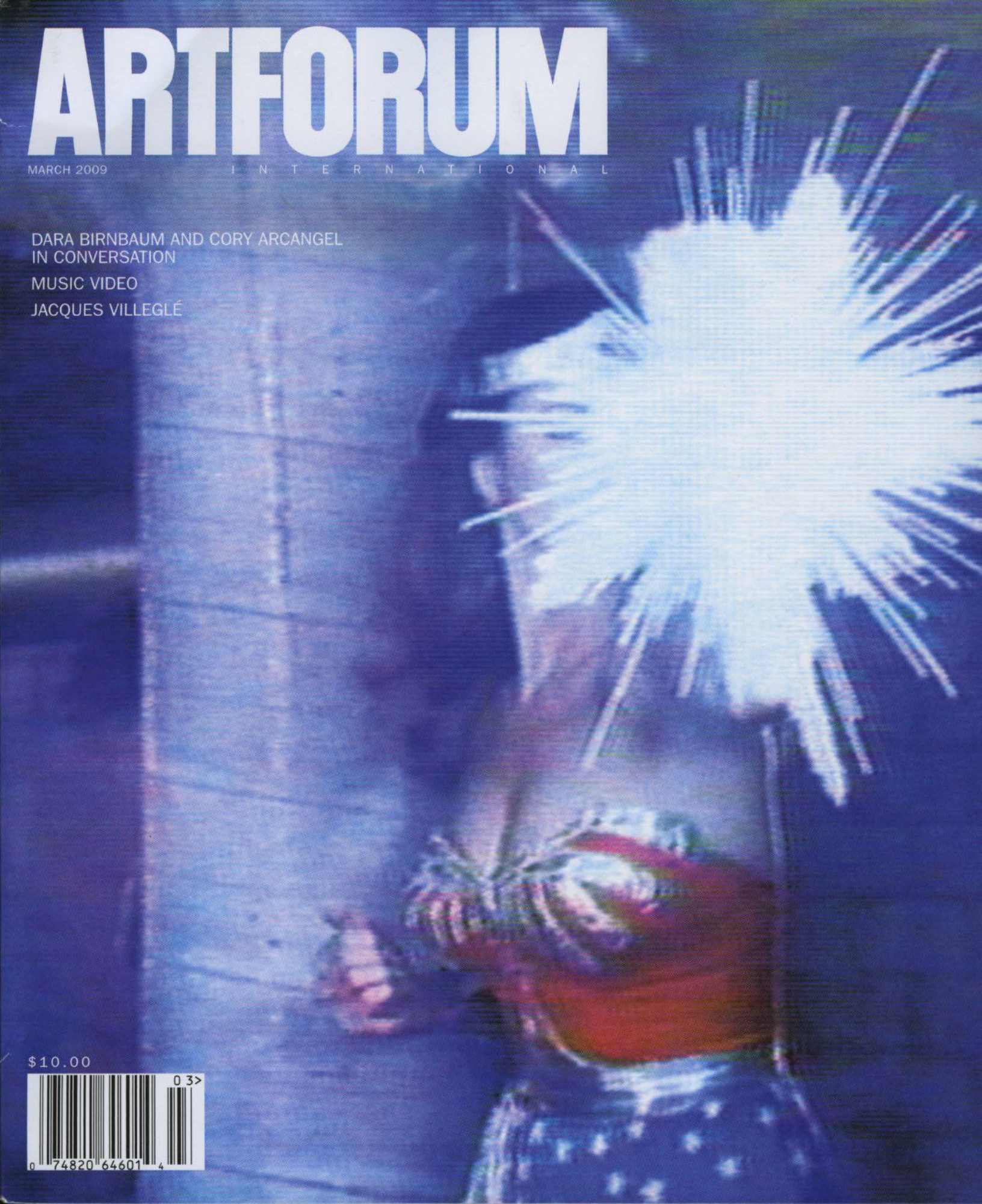
I N T E R N A T I O N A L

DARA BIRNBAUM AND CORY ARCANGEL
IN CONVERSATION

MUSIC VIDEO

JACQUES VILLEGLÉ

\$10.00



manifest destiny. Today, as foreclosures and failed businesses spread like flesh-eating bacteria, that landscape is shifting, psychically and physically, becoming blighted with vacant houses and big-box structures.

Particularly timely, then, are Jake Longstreth's nearly photorealistic paintings of anonymous, generally unpopulated built environments. Whether portraying a swimming pool, tennis court, chain-store facade, or other man-made monument, each of this exhibition's nine canvases contains an eerie quietude resonant with our current defaulted moment.

Longstreth tends to portray architecture in simple geometry, and foliage and landscaping in controlled, abstract tangles of small brushstrokes. Such is the approach in *Campus*, 2008, a composition in which a detailed strip of verdant lawn and trees acts as a barrier between a cloudless sky

and an empty, pale gray parking lot—perhaps, as the title might suggest, belonging to a corporate complex, the setting shown on a weekend, or post-layoff. The paint application in this and the other works is flat, a quality that befits the evacuated subject matter. Although the life force has been sucked out of Longstreth's structures, they maintain their identity, holding their own within the landscapes they helped to shape.

Some of the scenes feature lively minibursts of color, including *Sacramento*, 2008, with its flowering shrubs surrounding a vibrant green tennis court, and *Dealer*, 2008, in which parti-colored bunting enlivens a bleached-out stretch of dirt with an ominous white van parked in the distance, its doors ajar. These two compositions appear awash in uniform, unfiltered West Coast light, which lends the subjects preternatural clarity; others have the more humid, slightly dusky atmosphere of points east.

A sense of stillness pervades. *Appalachia*, 2008, and *Small Town In-Ground*, 2008, feature swimming pools that are placid and emphatically splash free, the canvases serving as dour distant cousins to David Hockney's early LA paintings. Longstreth's works have a number of photographic precedents, including Robert Adams's melancholy shots of parking lots and housing tracts, and, in their typological objectivity, Lewis Baltz's series "New Industrial Parks Near Irvine, California," 1974. Longstreth himself practices photography, perhaps a more common medium for the type of social commentary his work tilts toward, but he's most deeply engaged with the discourse of painting. His canvases recall Robert Bechtle's obdurate views of San Francisco streets, and, with their curving shapes, Richard Diebenkorn's compositions. A tightened version of the latter's geometric abstraction is seen in *Crematory*, 2008, which features winding paved pathways and a manicured lawn that has taken on a plaid pattern, suggesting well-regulated mowing.

Another type of regulation is suggested by *Sonoma*, 2008, which depicts the pale yellow and gray side of a big-box structure hung with a three-dimensional sign: PHARMACY. A solitary pine grows from a small traffic island, resembling a generic Christmas tree. Pills and religion. The combination inevitably evokes Damien Hirst, but here what results is less brash spectacle than demure critique, the two compositional elements relating in a serene, nearly seamless landscape.

—Glen Helfand

LOS ANGELES

Mark Flood

PERES PROJECTS

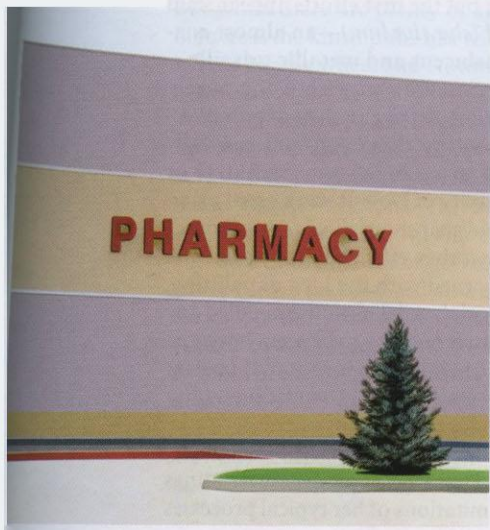
Mark Flood's works unsettle the viewer as they teeter between seediness and seductiveness. The artist was born in Houston and has worked there as an artist (and, in the 1980s, as a musician) for three decades, but at first glance it would be easy to imagine the producer of such objects as a scavenger of Southern California's flotsam, unearthed along Hollywood Boulevard or at a gas station near a freeway off-ramp. (Living in the epicenter of the entertainment industry, one tends to forget that mass culture isn't just a local phenomenon.) Celebrities, or at least their images, often treated to cruel alterations by an X-Acto knife, have long played a role in Flood's career, though in recent years they've been kept backstage while series involving other, less caustic subjects enjoyed the limelight.

In the artist's recent show, his first at Peres Projects, the mutilated celebrities—this time including Johnny Carson and Lauren Bacall—made a triumphant comeback. In *The Plumber*, 2008, which introduced the show, a canvas screenprinted with the face of infamous silent film actor and probable but nevertheless acquitted murderer Roscoe "Fatty" Arbuckle has been cut to ribbons and hung limply from a skeletal painting stretcher, a pornographic playing card stapled to the forehead—somewhat recalling Richard Hawkins's earlier, similarly creepy shredded Halloween mask outfitted with clipped images of androgynous rockers.

In *Wild Card*, 2008, Flood has collaged together, in a playing-card pattern, images of Heath Ledger, River Phoenix, and Wallace Reid—three heartthrobs from different eras who died young from overdoses. *Green Box*, 2008, which features an image of Lauren Bacall against a forest green background, her bloodred lips extended down to her chin, courtesy of the artist, suggests a cross between John Stezaker and Ledger's Joker from *The Dark Knight*—black comedy that is unquestionably sadistic, though it seems Flood's target is more the phenomenon of celebrity than any particular star. The celebs mingled here alongside several stunning lace paintings and a number of works with stenciled text, many sprayed atop cheap ads. The lace paintings, which constitute a large portion of Flood's output from the past decade, are made by applying paint-soaked fabrics to canvases and then removing them, leaving thick, ornamental traces. *Rill*, 2007, and *Spring Puddle*, 2008, are as unabashedly lush and pleasing as the disfigurements of Bacall and Carson are acidic and horrifying.

The text paintings are exercises in crudity in every way: In *Commit Suicide/Win Everyday*, 2008, the first phrase of the title has been sprayed in black over a cheery yellow Shell gasoline ad displaying the second; in another work, BE A WHORE has been painted on an orange construction sign warning ROUGH ROAD AHEAD. Such works recall John Carpenter's Reagan-era, Los Angeles-based sci-fi film *They Live*, in which special sunglasses reveal slogans hidden in seemingly innocuous media (and also expose ghoulish aliens in business suits); but as wall-bound objects they flirt with thinness and cliché.

Mark Flood, *The Plumber*, 2008, painting and collage on canvas mounted on wood frame, 48 x 36"



Jake Longstreth, *Sonoma*, 2008, acrylic on canvas, 36 x 36"

The text works and the violent collages are largely informed by Flood's background in punk and industrial music. In the '80s, he fronted Culturcide, an unclassifiable Houston band that incorporated drum machines and samples of then-current pop songs (e.g., Bruce Springsteen's "Dancing in the Dark") into their live act. But his most obvious artistic precedent is the late Bruce Conner, a gifted collage artist who made as well some spooky, lacy assemblages from everyday debris—work that still unsettles. Flood's best efforts, past and present, manage to do the same, and likewise appear perfectly situated on the West Coast.

—Michael Ned Holte

Lecia Dole-Recio

RICHARD TELLES FINE ART

Lecia Dole-Recio's loosely constructivist works on paper and vellum have long demonstrated her deftness at mixing gesture and structure in measured and unpretentious ways. Patterning line and shadow from tactical cuts, cardboard shapes, hand-drawn details, and heavy washes of pastel, fluorescent, or metallic gouache, the Los Angeles-based artist has cultivated a trademark abstraction that seems poised somewhere between the cohesive surfaces of hard-edge painting, the hasty marks of expressionism, and the shifting planes of collage. While Dole-Recio's fourth solo exhibition at Richard Telles Fine Art builds upon this familiar style, it more notably introduces an unanticipated approach into the artist's practice; in six of the eleven works on view, the artist foregoes mixed media for paint alone, a move that may happily complicate an increasingly recognizable body of formalist work.

As if proposing rhetorical questions about the look and limits of painting, Dole-Recio installed her new canvases in considered relation to her traditional collages. Perhaps the strongest pairing was that of *Untitled (cpr.bl.lnn)* with *Untitled (bl.ppr.rd.crd.lns.)* (all works 2008). Hung almost as a diptych in the

main gallery, these relatively smaller works—each around twenty-six by twenty inches—share a palette of navy blue, salmon, and orange, with swatches of russet and cerulean, and have similar compositions of bold diagonal stripes. In the latter work, these stripes protrude and recede, since some are painted over, and at angles slightly askew to, barlike excisions in a layer of cardboard affixed to the surface. While the works' fluctuating depth is perceptible, the high-contrast colors make the multiple grounds difficult to differentiate, requiring careful shifts in vision. *Untitled (cpr.bl.lnn)* is similarly invested in compound picture planes, but unlike the collaged work this acrylic on linen has an identifiable background and foreground. An underpainting of gingery orange supports a dominant arrangement of dark, overlapping rectangles. Still, there is a certain amount of ambiguity and blending; Dole-Recio has painted over segments of the geometric pattern in orange shades slightly lighter than the underpainting. The pattern's dark edges remain perceptible through the brushstrokes, the various marks appearing to consume one another.

Recio,
rd.crd.
acrylic,
glue,
board,
9%".

While Dole-Recio's mixed-media pieces are structurally nuanced, her paintings are strikingly flat. The disorienting deep space that makes the former so alluringly complex has in the latter been collapsed; the shift might prove fruitful, but the first efforts appear staid and very much in progress. *Untitled (slvr.slvr.lnn.)*—an almost analytical cubist array rendered in translucent and metallic grisaille—evinces the artist's newfound experimentation with using purely acrylic; while the piece's most compelling details, such as exposed sections of unprimed canvas and silvery accents that catch light, playfully dabble in painted effects, the piece as a whole seems tentative or restrained. It is missing the polished laxity of Dole-Recio's usual materials (strategically visible tape, Polaroid snapshots glued to cardboard) as well as the dimensional illusions that they efficiently construct.

Dole-Recio has always been concerned with the idea of painting, and in many ways her multifaceted work has delightfully muddied any conception of painting as autonomous; it remains to be seen, however, whether her new, more conventional canvases can (or should) operate as an extension, or perhaps even a reversal, of her provocations. After all, her other works already simulate the conventions of painted "picture making" (in their surfaces framed by negative space, for example, or their shading crafted from paper). That Dole-Recio's new paintings might act as representations or even imitations of her typical processes is one dramatic possibility for these nascent works.

—Catherine Taft

Krysten Cunningham

THOMAS SOLOMON GALLERY

Perhaps it takes an artist who grew up on a commune and went to college during the (pre-impeachment) heyday of the Clinton years to make work as fundamentally optimistic as Krysten Cunningham's. In their forms, allusions, and artistic precedents, her sculptures seem unlikely as the products of anyone who didn't enjoy a certain amount of shielding and hope and all the other benefits of a (slightly) more enlightened era.

When Cunningham revisits past concerns in art and design, she does so without apology or irony. In this exhibition—titled, appropriately, "Time Machines"—the artist dealt in the sorts of forms found in vintage design manuals like Kranz and Fisher's *The Design Continuum* (1966). One work, *Bride's Cross*, 2008, which brings together woven elements, tripod-like supports, and a circular tabletop, might have been teleported from an Eames-era showroom. Its various forms—radial bursts, intersecting and interlocking planes—turned up throughout the exhibition, serving to illustrate conceptions of connectivity and expansion; the artist channels the visionary engineering spirit of Buckminster Fuller and of sculptors like Kenneth Snelson, utilizing design elements for their evocative potential as well as for their structural possibilities, converting them into modules, blocks, and building systems.

Cunningham's work ranges widely in its allusions, from lofty heights to kitschy

Krysten Cunningham,
Bride's Cross, 2008.
wool, wood, steel,
Gator Foam, felt,
59 x 61 x 38".

