

View of Susan York's exhibition, showing *Corner Column*, 2008, and *Untitled (Bisecting Wedge)*, 2010, both graphite; at James Kelly Contemporary.



In *The Days of My Life* (Nov. 2nd, 1975 through Nov. 2nd, 2010), Refi methodically inked in one tiny square of a tightly drawn 22-square-inch grid for every day she had been alive from the day she was born until the opening of the show, which was held on her 35th birthday. Cycling through seven colors (green, pink, yellow, blue, brown, purple and orange)—one for each day of the week—resulted in a bold, rippling geometric pattern.

She also exhibited 34 spare graphite-on-paper drawings. Refi placed a sheet of 10-by-12-inch paper over each *New York Times* crossword puzzle published on Nov. 2 from 1975 through 2010, and solved as much of the puzzle as she could. Some are quite complete, others have large empty spaces. One work is completely blank, due to a printer's strike in 1978. Installed chronologically in a grid, *My Solution to the November 2nd New York Times Crossword Puzzle* is an exploration in mark-making, which results in text-based patterns that vary in density.

These two works created the conceptual foundation for the photo-based series in the main gallery. Scrolling through microfiche and the Internet, the artist selected seven photographic illustrations published on the day of her birth. They range from the historically important, such as *President Gerald Ford Greets Egyptian President Anwar Sadat in Florida* or *Film Director Pier Paolo Pasolini is Murdered*, to the more trivial, like *Chris Hall Poses with Dr. Lewis' Lamborghini Miura*. She also included a post-birth hospital picture of herself. Refi redrew each of the photographs in charcoal (if the original

was black-and-white) or pastel (if it was color). Her incredibly rich depictions are not photo-realist copies; they're more expressionistic, imbuing the image with an emotional, first-person quality. In fact, some of the drawings have more detail than their degraded microfiche predecessors. The eight-part series is like a self-portrait that encompasses historical events, bringing them back to life with a personal twist.

—Rebecca Dimling Cochran

MIAMI CLIFTON CHILDREE DORSCH

In a trio of installations (all 2010) at the Dorsch Gallery in Wynwood, Clifton Childree led us along a carnival midway of the past, celebrating oddities, eccentricities and showmen. The assembled environments produced full sensory experiences and included two- and three-dimensional visual imagery, text, music, sound, black-and-white silent movies and even a faintly musty smell.

At the center of each tableau stood, or tilted precariously, a bizarre piece of furniture, built from found materials—old breakfronts, china cabinets, wardrobes—with a moving image inside it. Childree shoots 16mm film, using stop-motion animation and hand coloring; he scratches, draws and writes titles on the film, and transfers the results on DVD, which he then presents on flat-screen monitors mounted inside the furniture. "I'm an analog artist in a digital world," he says (all artist's quotations from an interview with gallerist Tyler Emerson-Dorsch). The settings

are completed with vintage rugs and pictures, antique postcards and objects significant to the narratives.

The themes of all three installations spring from Childree's identification with the lives and dreams of dead composers: Scott Joplin, the American ragtime pianist who played in bordellos and went mad from the effects of late syphilis, finally dying after falling off the chair in which he habitually sat and played "air piano"; Alexander Scriabin, the Russian who developed a theory of an ultimate synthesis of all the arts for the sake of inducing states of mystic rapture and who died after a picked scab on his lip led to a fatal infection; and Richard Wagner, whose patron, King Ludwig of Bavaria, is the subject of the third piece. Childree uses fragments of Wagner's compositions as "movie music" for the film component of the installation *Gesamtkunstwerk*, in which the artist appears, nude, in a bawdy enactment of the madness and murder of Ludwig. The *Gesamtkunstwerk* as a form seems close to Childree's aspiration too, except that his genre is melodrama—that late 19th-century emotionally exaggerated type of theater usually accompanied by music, adopted by the early silent moviemakers, which so easily slides into slapstick. In his presentation of the tragic deaths of his subjects, Childree characteristically finds an element of comedy, affectionately mocking their ambitious delusions. "I like madness," he notes.

Childree appreciates the look of the antique, the handmade. When he was a child, his musician mother gave him



Clifton Childree:
Gesamtkunstwerk,
2010, mixed
mediums; at Dorsch.



View of
Marnie Weber's
performance
Eternity Forever,
2010; at the
Mountain View
Mortuary &
Cemetery.

a copy of Max Ernst's "The Hundred Headless Woman" (1929), the Surrealist series that combined bizarrely unrelated images cut from a book of 19th-century black-and-white engravings. He loved it. "It made complete sense to me," he says. In this exhibition, "Orchestrated Gestures," Childree presented a complex spectacle drawn from a wide variety of sources that, while endlessly entertaining and puzzling, made singular sense.

—Paula Harper

SANTA FE SUSAN YORK

JAMES KELLY CONTEMPORARY

Santa Fe-based artist Susan York represents a new generation of minimalist sculptors. While her formal vocabulary of columns, beams and slabs is heavily indebted to such artists as Donald Judd, Robert Morris, Carl Andre, Dan Flavin, John McCracken, Ronald Bladen and Richard Serra, her choice of graphite as a material (cast solid, kiln-fired, shaped into irregular geometric forms with saws and files, then hand-polished) contributes a sense of warmth, mutability and body missing from the industrially fabricated work of the mid-'60s. For years, York has created contemplative spaces based on three-dimensional graphite forms installed in small rooms. This exhibition consisted of six discrete graphite sculptures from 2008 and '10, as well as related drawings, also in graphite.

In York's work, the smooth carbon-black surfaces both absorb and reflect light, softening the hard edges of the cast forms. The condensed and pol-

ished material creates a sense of weight and compressed energy (like that found in small Joel Shapiro cast bronzes, but without any narrative reference). Surrounding walls, floors and corners, subtly reflected, draw attention to the surfaces at the same time as they dematerialize solid form. That quality of being there and not being there may be a visual articulation of York's long-standing practice of Zen Buddhism.

Lucy Lippard has written that York's work "looks more like minimalism than it is minimalism." The geometric volumes are slightly skewed so that edges are not all parallel and angles are not necessarily at 45 degrees: a subtle shifting that activates the sculptures, creating a quiet tension more felt than seen.

York determines the placement of her sculpted forms through a site-sensitive response to a particular exhibition space, but her engagement with architecture is visual rather than functional. For example, despite their apparent weight, two identical 6-foot-tall "columns" of solid graphite from 2008, placed in corners of the gallery, appeared to float several inches above the floor, suggesting structural support while providing none.

Sculptures from 2010 feel more active than her earlier, more contemplative work. *Untitled (Bisecting Wedge)* dramatically pierces a custom-built, free-standing wall. Fixed at an angle in the wall, and above most viewers' heads, the approximately 500-pound, solid graphite wedge, slightly narrower and lower at one end, does not feel precarious, but rather thoughtfully placed and carefully

balanced. Engaging with but defying gravity, the wedge projects unequally from both sides of the wall—less bisecting the wall than emphasizing its two opposite sides, and therefore two points of view. Ultimately the wedge both traverses and unifies the resulting spaces on either side. In this way, York's reductive forms suggest agency and meaning beyond a minimalist redux.

—Harmony Hammond

ALTADENA, CALIF.

MARNIE WEBER MOUNTAIN VIEW MORTUARY & CEMETERY

Row upon row of white marble tombs and a sprawling graveyard provided an apt setting for Marnie Weber's exhibition "Eternity Forever," sponsored by the Pasadena-based nonprofit West of Rome Public Art. The show laid to rest the Spirit Girls, Weber's rock band and masked muses, who have provided inspiration for her multimedia work over the past several years. Since their 2005 debut, the Spirit Girls and friends—including circus bears and ghost-clowns—have appeared in Weber's performances, collages, films and sculptures. As their story has grown, so has Weber's expansive practice. Though she has at times collaborated with musicians and students and commissioned marble sculptures, her idiosyncratic vision and handmade esthetic have remained consistent throughout and are evident in the 17 cut-paper-and-photo collages and a new film, *The Eternal Heart* (all