

and 19 . . . , both single images, the creative lady's skin peers through small perforations in her blouse that spell out the pieces' respective titles; completing the show's Gordian knot of logic, the press release trumpets her clothing as "technologically advanced."

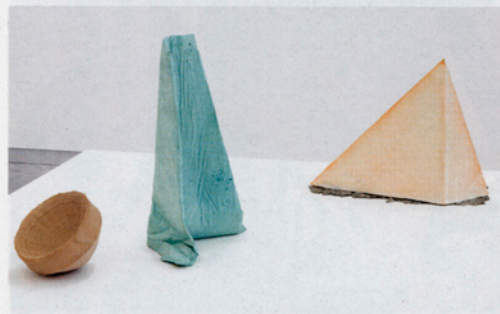
The effect of Pryde's nonlinear and yet not incoherent juxtapositions here recalls Godard's 1965 film *Alphaville*, in which a society of fragmentation and deletion (of vocabulary, of emotion, of joy in the social) creates for its subjects an effective decoy of emotional satiety. Yes, Pryde's baskets were handmade by the artist and some students—and now they rotate dumbly from the ceiling like the tchotchkes being sold in dollar stores down the street on East Broadway. For all the agency the press text imbues her with, the woman cited as the "guardian" of the ideas, images, and objects has basically been imaged as a model, one who glamorizes another's ideas, images, objects. What is purportedly therapeutic sure seems pathetic. The fixations of the gaze in these photographs cause the works to read as portraits of mental zone-outs: what the eyes fall and lock on when something else is on the brain. Maybe this is the defiant whisper against a deadening empirical and corporate notion of "productivity" embedded in these images. Or maybe the photos are more like illustrations of a twenty-first-century working condition that hovers somewhere between dismal and self-preservationist: the eye-mind divide of daydreaming.

—Nick Stillman

Molly Smith

KATE WERBLE GALLERY

For her third New York solo show—and her first at Kate Werble—Molly Smith grouped diminutive sculptures in casual table-bound cliques, with other, larger assemblages hugging the surrounding walls. Surprisingly evocative installation devices, these bases offered up their wares in a manner that highlighted the delicate formal specificity of each of Smith's structures, while simultaneously rendering the pieces all the more affective for their staged interrelations. For instance, the triangular, sail-like zenith of *Sink*, 2009, repeated the apex of the adjacent *Stand*, 2010; the former's cracked mirror base—though both wholly abstract and obdurately specific in its employment of this material—called to mind nothing so much as the undulating surface of water, whose hues reappeared as the color on *Stand*'s aqueous membrane. Then there was the intricate *Shell*, 2010, a small crepe paper bowl resting alongside them; it recalled a toppled acorn, or, more to the theme perhaps, a beachcomber's prize, with an interior positioned to reveal a dense, quasi-geologic moiré of striated concentric rings. Yet such a description (or associative train) risks overwhelming



View of "Molly Smith," 2010. From left: *Shell*, 2010; *Stand*, 2010; *Sink*, 2009.

these objects, for they also insist on their distantiated relation to meaning as only, at best, loosely referential things, more evocative than even obliquely representational.

In this, Smith seems to take seriously her show's title, "Whether," a qualifying phrase that additionally suggests a position of doubt relative to two possibilities—as in, whether x or y , z still proves unlikely. She frames the issue in her accompanying statement: "Walking to my studio, a discarded object I pass on the sidewalk is transformed in my mind, eliciting narrative possibilities through its gesture, condition and context. I am drawn to the enigmatic possibilities of an accidental scene. . . . The images waver between coming together in their specificity and falling apart in ambiguity. I explore this transition from image to abstraction, whole to part." Her work thus offers and retracts signification, more generally advocating for possibilities (i.e., whether a particular arrangement of objects or an interpretation might be viable, and under what conditions): a fiberglass fan crumpled just so over a wooden umbrella handle in *Pour*, 2010, or the ingenious curvature of a fractured CD case in *Wing*, 2010. Indeed, her use of Hydrocal, a white gypsum cement, evidences an emphasis on making that displaces, or at least forestalls, incursions of exogenous meaning—or meaning apart from finding, manipulating, and making.

Smith uses such quotidian mainstays as plastic bags and paper coffee cups as molds, and she dyes the plaster as it is being cast. The resulting pieces appear to be sketches in three dimensions. This tentative, ultimately vulnerable quality recalls the work of Eva Hesse, whose own ostensibly "non-connotive" paper, tape, and cheesecloth test pieces—christened "studioworks" by Briony Fer—were laid out on surfaces reminiscent of worktables at Hauser & Wirth in New York this past spring. Made in the late 1960s, they summon allusions to skin and anatomical parts (often quite literally, sometimes appearing to have been formed according to the precise contours of a body) while actively disavowing the biographical and biological anthropomorphism that this reading elicits. I couldn't stop thinking of them while looking at Smith's works, as they, too, articulate a rare openness regarding form and of meaning's only provisional but still possible opposition to it—or at least a desire to have it both ways.

—Suzanne Hudson

Tod Wizon

NICHOLAS ROBINSON GALLERY

Rarely has a series been titled more aptly than Tod Wizon's "Little Darknesses," 1996. The acrylic panel paintings that make up this suite of fourteen nocturnes are a uniform eleven by eight inches and lean on a somber palette of dense blues, punctuated by waves of gray and shafts of radiant yellow. Essentially abstract but strongly suggestive of oceanic vistas and drama on a cosmic scale, they were here secreted in the gallery's basement, as if they had been stewing there for years in their own doomy, romantic juice. Arranged in a numbered sequence loosely suggestive of narrative flow, these physically modest works can be imagined as illustrations of Genesis or Revelations, documenting epic mythical events in an unassuming style.

The New York-based Wizon has exhibited extensively since the late 1970s, but much less often over the past ten years. Beginning as a landscape painter, he moved gradually toward a more psychologically inflected practice and a less conventionally representational approach. It is hard, then, not to wonder what specific circumstances might have prompted this show's brooding mood, but more productive, perhaps, to consider the group a universe unto itself. The press release drops casual mention of Wizon's fascination with "Promethean creativity"