

KATE WERBLE GALLERY

83 VANDAM STREET NEW YORK, NY 10013



BALLS
DAVID HUNT
AUGUST 2000

The operative word in this focused group show is “balls”: golf balls, Ping-Pong balls and basketballs in the most literal sense; shiny rounded orbs, gellike capsules and faint intimations of testicles in a more poetic mode. Either way, the 14 artists smartly assembled here force one to reflect upon the ubiquity of the sphere. And since freewheeling artists like Matthew Ritchie and Bonnie Collura have been remapping astrology, astronomy and quantum physics in diagrammatic constellations of whirling planetoids that would make Pixar blush, it’s refreshing to see a show that employs the ball as a building block for more ordinary cosmologie.

Taking up a form that’s more flexible than the grid (for obvious sculptural reasons) and better than the ever present Modernist cube, “Balls” offers a malleable postminimalism that often hints back to the artist’s body. For instance, the collaborative duo Type A positions two flesh-colored athletic cups beside each other on the wall. The cups seem to stand in for the artists themselves, hiding as well as “protecting” their identity and corporeal presence. Both cipher and calling card, *Prize* (as the piece is titled) is made in the manner of Matthew Barney’s cast-resin blocking sleds--at once a trophy and a reminder of the often unacknowledged physical sacrifices that are part of ball-oriented games.

David Hammons continues to connect the Duchampian dots in a ten-foot (the height of a regulation NBA hoop) “drawing.” By dribbling a sooty basketball on paper, Hammons leaves faint traces of the ball’s pebbled surface, and with them his random, if controlled, actions. It’s a gritty urbanism that capitalizes on the contextual shift from playground to gallery. Also looming large, and actually starring in his work, is **Chris Chiappa**. In a diaristic series of photos mounted sequentially on the wall, Chiappa documents himself playing mini-golf on a putting green that’s laid out in a luxury hotel hallway. Like Kubrick’s *The Shining*, without the creepy twins, Chiappa enacts a Chaplinesque parody of frustration that par is always unattainable.

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