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LOIS DODD + LEDELLE MOE + GREG STREAK
RICHMOND

Winter's starkness often feels contained rather than empty. It was interesting, then, to find in Richmond, in the dead of winter, three exhibitions that paralleled this dialectic of bleakness and fullness.

Despite differences in their media, subject matter, and ages, Lois Dodd, Ledelle Moe, and Greg Streak all turn their attention to the mundane and barely noticeable, elevating their prosaic subject matter to something strange, important, and composite. Each does so, in part, in work that posits *non sequitur* as the condition of much of human experience, which can be mined through exploitation or careful attention. Elegantly crafted, the work of these three artists also shares a kind of broken quality, an implication of damage or imperfection that imparts it vitality. It leaves you wanting both more and less. It is this dissatisfaction and their peculiar take on the mundane that keeps you looking, because the artists' reliance on a small range of gestures in approach and subject matter might otherwise feel too predictable.

Lois Dodd's work is certainly the most ebullient of the three [Reynolds Gallery, January 12—February 17, 2007]. Known for her insistence on painting outdoors, the eminent New York landscape painter could hardly be said to produce romanticized subjects. Her paintings stab at the landscape, as if the artist has turned on it a fierce assessing gaze, both approving and analytical. *Echinacea and Orange Dahlia*, 2006, for example, is almost luridly bright, the lavender petals of the echinacea flowers clambering up the picture plane, pushing the spiky aureoles of their orange centers towards the dahlias, a lump of orange, in the upper right. Despite its visual commotion, the painting is more like a graphic pattern than the idiosyncratic architecture of Dodd's usual notation of the landscape.

Gihon River Thaw—Johnson VT, 2005, is both more typical and more remarkable. Spare, geometric, and abstract while also dynamic and quirky, jagged blue lines convey shadows in a snow-covered landscape. When Dodd hits, she really hits. Her paintings contain the rest-

ful quality of the weekend in that her attention seems remarkably open, undivided, stimulating, and calm.

Ledelle Moe's sculptures were in exhibitions at two venues: *Ledelle Moe: Congregation* [Reynolds Gallery; January 12—February 17, 2007] and *Drift: Ledelle Moe and Greg Streak* [1708 Gallery; January 12—February 24, 2007]. Her amorously organic concrete heads, diminutive in *Congregation*, 2006-2007, and monumental in *Land*, 2006, convey in their simplicity a wide range of readings and emotions. As Virginia MacKenney's perceptive catalog essay, *Spoils of History*, points out, "[Moe] examines the constructs of power as embodied in fragments of monuments that might be religious or political icons. . . . As an artist interested in the fragment Moe is also invested in the whole; as image-maker she is also an image breaker."

In *Congregation*, tiny heads clustered on a wall in a seemingly anonymous crowd like a swarm of insects nevertheless reveal individualized visages. In *Land*, enormous heads dropped onto their sides appear as much like the buckled flanks of hills as fallen monuments. In both instances, the works lend themselves to vacillating readings—insignificant and important, natural and synthetic, classical and organic. It is impossible to firmly locate yourself within the work. Its minimalism and ambiguity are the source of both its strength and its weakness. It represents both universal and particular human tensions and thereby speaks with a kind of lyric suppleness. Yet, its indistinctness also lends the work a staged or theatrical quality that ironically parallels its literal hollowness. The heads become types whose universality and absence of specificity at times muffle the work.

Like Moe, Greg Streak is South African. On view in *Drift: Ledelle Moe and Greg Streak*, his video trilogy *Three Colours Red, Yellow, and Blue*, 1998-2000, features both art historical and cultural allusions and a transient sense of history and event [1708 Gallery; January 12—February 24, 2007]. Each of his quiet and

pared-down videos relies on the briefest of narrative and visual strategies, held together by the spread of a tinted liquid across the screen. In *Dreams in Red*, a swelling pool of red flows from beneath a prone figure only to stop and gradually withdraw, culminating in the work's only sound—a small gasp of breath. In *Leaving [blue]* a backlit, faceless figure moves into the reflection of a blue puddle, looms, and then moves away.

The barely discernable events in Streak's videos—the sliding appearance and disappearance of the reflected figure in *Leaving [blue]* or the tiny ripple of wind passing over the blue pool—suggest a finely nuanced attention to the narrative potential of events revealed by minute observation. This economy of images and events actually expands the three pieces in much the same way that the minuscule frame of the microscopic image opens up an immense range of texts. In Streak's case, you want more of this less.

—Dinah Ryan

ABOVE, LEFT TO RIGHT: Greg Streak, still from *Leaving [blue]*, 2000, digital video, color, 3 minutes; Ledelle Moe, detail of *Land*, 2006, concrete and steel, 9 x 13 x 18 feet [both images courtesy of the artist and 1708 Gallery, Richmond]