



Lee Bontecou: *Untitled*, 1997, pencil on paper, 22½ by 30 inches; at Daniel Weinberg.

in anticipation of violence. Bontecou's insectlike imagery seems in the tradition of that of Matta, Kurt Seligmann and Leon Kelly, but her fields of battle are more private, shadowy and nuanced. Consummate draftsmanship sharpens the depictions of the weird monsters, ominous armor and grasping mouths, so that the viewer has nowhere to hide. Bontecou's images are on the attack.

—Michael Duncan

Megan McManus at Post

All seven paintings in this entrancing show, as well as those shown here in 2000, conform to a single format that McManus has yet to exhaust. In each image, we assume the point of view of the artist, seated, looking down onto her own lap. The short span from crotch to knees fills most of each modest-sized canvas. Items of clothing, hands in different positions and qualities of light are variable.

The pose is private, self-assessing, and to anyone but the artist, whose body acts as a template here, it's a privileged view. The intimate perspective down onto the epicenter of physical sexuality makes for a certain vulnerability that wafts through the work, alternating with a more confident, performative air. In one image (all are untitled and dated 2001), hands press palm-to-palm between tightly joined thighs, the legs pale to the point of translucence. McManus articulates the raised veins at the base of the wrists in exquisite detail, and makes of the small dark space where the wrists don't quite meet a deep mysterious portal, surrogate for that beneath

the staid, white floral briefs. In another of the paintings, the young Los Angeles artist enacts a more calculated seduction. Her black, lacy undergarments form a batlike shape at the bottom of the painting, and swaths of red satin ripple over her thighs like a second skin.

McManus renders textures of fabric and skin with luxuriant credibility. Faint blue veins scatter just beneath the surface of the thighs; sheer crimson fabric drapes over the legs with convincing suppleness and opacity at the folds. In one painting, the legs appear mostly in shadow, but the sliver of space between them gleams beckoningly, a radiant destination. The emotional valence of the images is just as assured. Shifts in pose and props suggest an exploratory play of possibilities, using the body as matrix. McManus's trying on of selves is far quieter and more introspective than Cindy Sherman's, for instance, or Yasumasa Morimura's, but her enterprise is just as profound, and far more immediate. McManus sees her body less as an object for public consumption than as a private testing ground. Cumulatively, her work reads as an extended self-portrait, a compelling sequence of musings in the space between states of dress and undress, concealed and exposed. —Leah Ollman

LONDON

Ron Haselden at Mobile Home

There is a French road sign that reads, *Trop Vite. Levez le Pied.* (Too Fast. Lift your Foot.). Ron Haselden's version of that sign is

a small, white, rectangular wooden box, mounted to the wall and studded with blinking white lights, the size of pinheads, that spell out the French message. This was the first thing you encountered upon entering Haselden's exhibition. By gently but insistently telling you to slow down, *Trop Vite* (1998) suggested the approach the artist feels is appropriate to his work.

Haselden is best known for light and sound installations that combine extravagant scale and subtle means. For *Fête* (1990), he festooned the grounds of the Serpentine Gallery with strings of lights and played recorded music to re-create the atmosphere of a French country fair. Working with the four small rooms at Mobile Home, he necessarily adopted more modest means. Each room featured an amazingly slender neon tube that cut across the ceiling on the diagonal. The tubes proved too small to support their own weight in the longer rectangular rooms, so a single tiny wire loop helped secure them, an accommodation that emphasized their fragility. Using a specific gas or combination of gases in each tube, Haselden produced four distinct colors: orange, from neon; blue, from argon; yellow, from argon/helium; and lavender, from argon/mercury.

I saw the exhibition on a sunny afternoon. The strong

Megan McManus: *Untitled #7*, 2001, oil on wood, 25 by 12 inches; at Post.



lines of light cast the slightest glow on the ceiling and walls, yet they were clearly the dominant presence in each room, and I felt that their apparent reticence was a game played with the weather and the time of day. *Windvane* (1998), a wall work, engaged the weather quite differently. A small white wooden square contained a compass of sorts, made with the same pinhead-sized lights as *Trop Vite*. This very homemade contraption was wired to a weather vane mounted outside the gallery. Unlike the compass, the vane was clearly a scientific instrument, though the sort that comes in the Home Weather Kit you might give your dad shortly after his retirement. The changing sequences and colors of the compass's lights were activated by shifts in the wind's direction. *Windvane* is a humble and visually satisfying encounter between the realms of the do-it-yourself, the relatively high tech and the vast force of nature.

Charting change with light in response to powerful energies took on a different cast in the final piece. Behind a small square of translucent white glass stood an upright black form maybe 6 inches tall. Wires ran from the object to a CD player, and as the strains of an uncommonly beautiful rendition of Ave Maria began to play, tiny red lights appeared behind the glass, climbing up the form as the voice rose in pitch. The work is called *Castrato* (1994), and the singer, recorded at the turn of the 20th century, was the last of his kind.

—Charles Dee Mitchell

LEEDS

"Taking Positions: Figurative Sculpture and the Third Reich" at the Henry Moore Institute

This show of bronzes by Arno Breker and nine of his contemporaries, curated by Penelope Curtis, filled a significant gap in the history of 20th-century art and provided a rare opportunity to assess the merits of this maligned German period. Breker stole the show. While many people are familiar with his name, few have actually viewed any work executed by Adolf Hitler's favorite sculptor during the 1930s