

THE SAATCHI GALLERY

Published on 06-04-2009

MORGAN FALCONER ON AARON CURRY AT MICHAEL WERNER, NEW YORK

As every undergraduate knows, it was New York that stole the idea of modern art from Paris. The East Coast Americans had been mooning after the City of Light for long enough, and when they got it they made good use of their booty. But just supposing Los Angeles had stolen from Paris first: that's the feeling one derives from Aaron Curry's work. In his first New York solo show he's displaying a series of irregularly shaped and painted plates of steel that are tricked out with a mixture of spray-painted graffiti and zany motifs like ropes, as if were bodywork from custom cars. One thinks of John McCracken and Billy Al Bengston: Curry is L.A. and proud. But the free-standing sculptures that make up the bulk of this show suggest entirely different sources: they employ a series of pieces of steel or wood cut into flat, biomorphic forms which slot together to form loosely figurative designs that are vintage Dalí, Miró, Picasso and Dubuffet.



Aaron Curry, 'Face Face Socialite (Harlequin in Grisaille)' (2009)

'Face Face Socialite (Harlequin in Grisaille)' (2009) is one of the latter, and it has been given a smudged black and white chessboard pattern with the aid of a template and spray-gun; at the creature's head, the pattern falls away to give room for vividly volumetric images of eyes and ears. If this is reminiscent of the Cubist Picasso, works like 'Ohnedaruth' (2009), a similar assemblage of unpainted steel, are more reminiscent of the later Picasso of welded steel sculpture, of bull's heads and rearing horses. Here, a long neck supports the head, rather like a horse, while a tail comes up behind and legs with cloven feet reach forward. A few works are less readably figurative: 'Danny Skullface Sky Boat (Reclining)' (2009) is a radically abstracted arrangement of purple, anodised aluminium forms: one can understand the rectangular form at the base to be a bed or bench, and maybe one of the huge elliptical forms is a gaping mouth, but beyond that it's a guess.

Michael Werner 4 East 77 New York New York 10075



Aaron Curry, 'Danny Skullface Sky Boat (Reclining)' (2009)



Aaron Curry, 'Ohnedaruth' (2009)

Telephone 212 988 1623 Facsimile 212 988 1774

Michael Werner 4 East 77 New York New York 10075

If this work had issued twenty years ago from the studios of Mike Bidlo or George Condo, we might talk about renewed American challenges to Europe's high art. Curry's work doesn't carry that heft, but it does have the arresting flavour of a strange new cocktail - his sculptures strike magnificent profiles. But those objects offer neither the powerful sculptural sensations of moulded space nor the kinds of powerful pictorial pleasures that are guaranteed to endure; at the same time, by virtue of the sculpture being both emphatically two and three-dimensional, they seem to boast that they offer both. Curry certainly isn't incapable of making lines and volumes spark: accompanying the sculptures is a series of prints with peppery combinations of volumetric designs and flat colour. 'Cobwebs and Cosmic Knots' (2009) shows the apparently inverted form a cartoon monster with a murky mouth like the entrance to a cave. 'Dead Cloud (Smiling)' (2009) features a photographic print of a man's face - topped with scrawled horns - that looks almost as if it has been torn like skin from his head. It's the gruesome comedy-gothic of an artist like Paul McCarthy, with a touch of Picasso added for class. And this show does have class - it's just LA's kind of class.

MORGAN FALCONER

Aaron Curry: The Colour Out of Space

Until 25 April

[Werner](#)

New York

Telephone 212 988 1623 Facsimile 212 988 1774