

BOMB

AND CULTURE ARTISTS, WRITERS, ARCHITECTS, DIRECTORS AND MUSICIANS

SPRING 2003 NO. 83

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Music

62 MESHELL NDEGEOCELLO

by Marc Anthony Thompson

Since her groundbreaking debut album *Bitter*, bass player and songwriter Meshell Ndegeocello has been cultivating a unique blend of jazz, funk, hip-hop and R&B. Her latest project, *Cookie, An Anthropological Montage*, boasts an exciting array of collaborators, from Talib Kweli to Missy Elliott, who justify the album's ambitious title. Musician Marc Anthony Thompson, aka the Chocolate Genius, catches up with Ndegeocello over the phone to discuss her position as a musician who, despite having earned her seventh Grammy nomination for *Cookie*, still finds herself on the outskirts of the mainstream.

Film/Theater

38 DAVID GREENSPAN

by Steven Drukman

Playwright David Greenspan is a veteran of the downtown New York theater scene. Known as much for his masterful performances on stage as for his sharp, complex and darkly funny plays, Greenspan has concentrated on acting for the past several years, appearing in the 1997 revival of *The Boys in the Band* and in Richard Foreman's 1998 *Benita Canova*, for which he won an Obie. As he prepares to open his first production in almost a decade, *She Stoops to Comedy*, Greenspan is joined by fellow playwright Steven Drukman to discuss gender, the state of contemporary theater and the notion of the disguiseless disguise.

56 NEIL LABUTE

by Jon Robin Baitz

The prolific playwright and film director Neil LaBute has a reputation for freezing his characters in moral headlights, exposing their initial reactions to turmoil or devastation and unapologetically documenting the aftermath. LaBute's own motives and methods are spotlighted by playwright Jon Robin Baitz in this recent email interview. While LaBute's unrelenting determination to sort out emotional conflict feels universal, he works from what he regards as a distinctly American perspective. Two major productions out this spring, *The Mercy Seat*, a play, and *The Shape of Things*, a film adaptation, demonstrate this insight as a rare force—one specifically crafted to be reckoned with.

Artists on Artists

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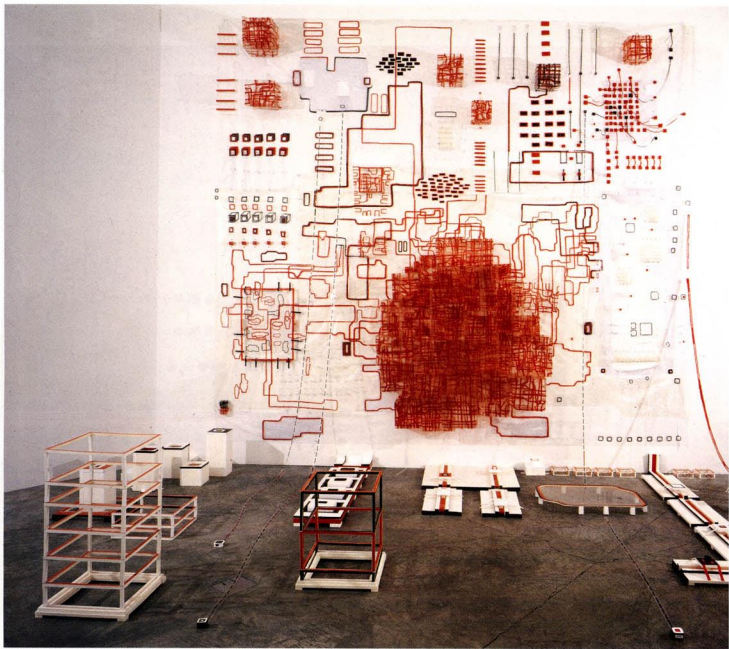
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JAMES CARROLLE MAGILL was born February 2, 2002, to Blanche Baker Magill and Mark Magill, who designed BOMB's first 10 issues.

Diana Cooper, *My Eye Travels* (detail), 2001–2002, ink, acrylic and mixed media on paper, 114 x 77 x 11"

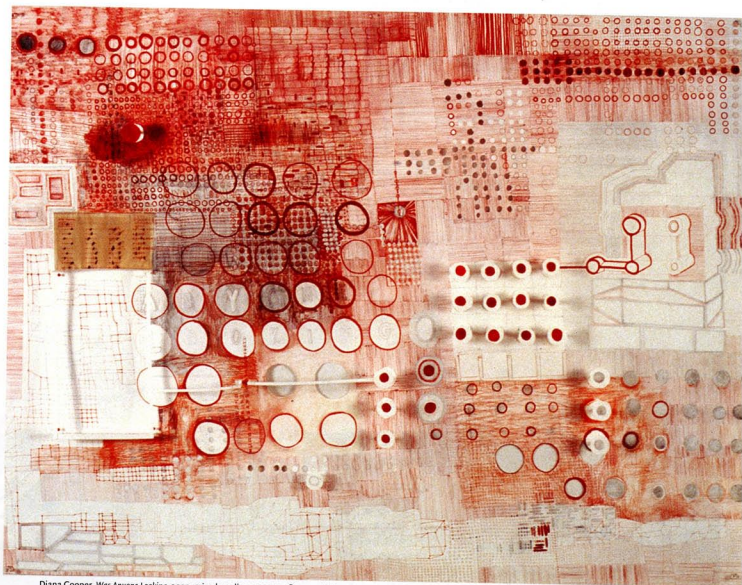
DIANA COOPER



Diana Cooper, *Hidden Tracks Sabotage the Random*, 2001–2002, vinyl, foam core, acetate, pom-poms and paper, 12 x 17 x 8' 4". All images courtesy of the artist and Postmasters Gallery, New York.

DIANA COOPER'S WORK is a high-wire act. It attempts to balance order and pandemonium in precarious constructions employing such materials as pipe cleaners, Post-its, acetate, Scotch tape, cardboard and photocopies. The intense and obsessive doodling or collaging that covers her surfaces expresses itself as a desire to organize excess and chaos against the insurmountable rationality of her chosen structures, which resemble models of imaginary building complexes or mechanical systems.

Vacillating between the ridiculous and the sublime, fragility and unrelenting presence, Cooper's works have a modesty and a nearly ephemeral quality regardless of their physical scale. Recently her work has become more three-dimensional, moving beyond her original reference of pictorial space, the canvas support of painting. Unstable structures that look as if they might collapse at any moment, the new works introduce a penetrable and programmed space alongside the picture plane.



Diana Cooper, *Was Anyone Looking*, 2000, mixed media on paper, 38 x 50 x 1 1/2".

These eccentric assemblages suggest an interdisciplinary approach to issues of interactivity, social relations, the phantasmagoria induced by technology and what could be considered the terms of high and low taste. But more pertinent is that in this day and age, when meaning is thought to have more significance than experience, Cooper does not shy away from aesthetic issues when questions of beauty and "What is it?" and "How does one judge it?" reassert themselves. Both formal and abject,

the aesthetic values that are recuperated in her work are associated with playfulness and humor as well as analysis of form. The ability to make these contrary qualities coexist supplies her work with its physical as well as intellectual content and constitutes its appeal. These qualities, along with the bodily pleasure we associate with experiencing them, resist the didactic and instrumental logic that has become a mainstay of what may now be identified as an academicized conceptualism.



Diana Cooper, *Speedway*, 2000–2002, foam core and mixed media, 77 x 69 1/2 x 14 1/2".

In place of the textual and instructive property of much of today's art, Cooper's work offers the type of experience induced by nondirected play, an engagement that is at once self-conscious, interpretative and fun. In the '60s this direction informed the works of artists such as Allan Kaprow, Robert Morris and Öyvind Fahlström, who used it to confront the tendency toward passivity and nonparticipation induced by mass media. For these

artists, as for Cooper, art is seemingly both a means of self-expression and a way to transform the anesthetized back into individuals who can actively experience all aspects of life. Cooper's complex and energetic works substantiate that art, which is poignant, provocative and, in its own funky and elegant manner, still capable of challenging not only our taste and judgment but our expectations.

SHIRLEY KANEDA AND SAUL OSTROW