

his work provides a welcome sense of the optimism and conviction that infused a number of American artists in the '50s.

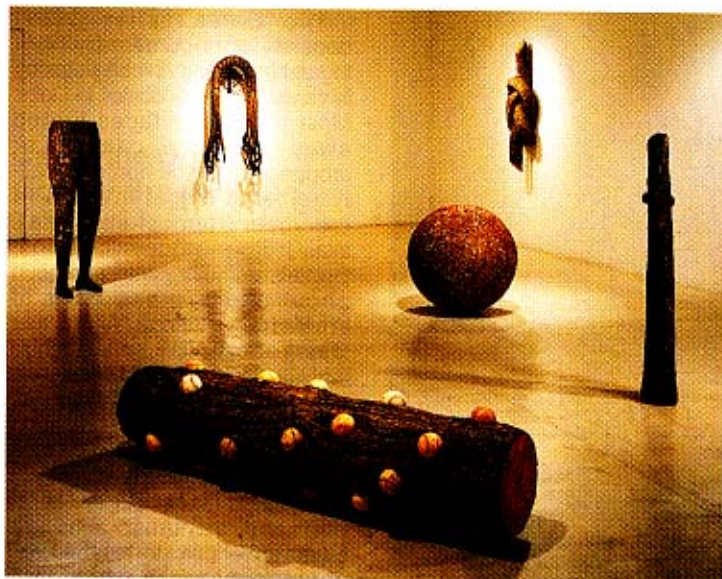
—Robert Taplin

Donald Lipski at Galerie Lelong

Donald Lipski's recent exhibition, "Exquisite Copse," was a collaborative effort with Jonquil LeMaster, a celebrated artificial-tree builder whose "Jungle World" is on permanent view at the Bronx Zoo. The show had its genesis in the monumental sculpture produced by the pair for the renovation of Grand Central Station. That piece, titled *Sirshasana*, is an inverted faux olive tree with crystal leaves that fills the domed ceiling above the entrance to the station's market. That public commission inspired Lipski to create similar but smaller works, mostly parts of trees, which were brought together in a forestlike configuration at Galerie Lelong.

Odd juxtapositions and assemblages have always played a major role in Lipski's oeuvre, including the American flag-wrapped scissors of 1990 and the salt-filled leather couches of 1993. (A show of his older work was simultaneously on view at John Gibson Gallery.) At Galerie Lelong, the rounding up of disparate objects was one of the primary themes. Lipski combines artificial tree trunks, made of polyester resin, with found objects such as machetes, pickaxes, shears and saddle racks. In one sculpture, baseballs cling to a tree trunk like fungal growths, while in another, a glass tube with typed text is submerged in a trunk shaped like a large dog bone. Another work consists of the stump of a tree that has grown around a rusty doorknob and lock. The combinations, all of which were dramatically lit, often create strange associations. A small branch that is pierced by a pair of garden shears and sits atop a classicized wall bracket with Corinthian details suggests a large-winged bird that has just landed. The tips of the shears morph in the imagination into feet, and the handles into wings.

Many of the assemblages are disconcerting, while others are witty. For instance, one log is tied in a knot and hangs from the wall; another forms a contin-



Donald Lipski: Installation view of "Exquisite Copse," 2000; at Galerie Lelong.

uous ring that hangs from a rack; one is shaped like a cone and sits on the floor. What makes these otherwise bland objects exciting is the absurd element, an idea crucial to Surrealists like René Magritte and Meret Oppenheim, the latter most renowned for her 1936 cup, saucer and spoon lined with fur. Lipski declares a link with the Surrealist movement in his exhibition title, "Exquisite Copse," a woody pun on the Surrealist exercise called "exquisite corpse," whereby an image was produced by several artists working on the same sheet of paper, one supplementing the previous artist's drawing with his/her own, without looking at the prior work. Lipski's version of Surrealism is innovative and refreshing. —Maura Reilly

Jeanne Dunning at Feigen Contemporary

Since the late '80s, Chicago-based photographer and filmmaker Jeanne Dunning has been investigating the body—in particular, the female body—and its physical boundaries. She has produced images of women sleeping peacefully in puddles of flesh-colored pudding, or naked and covered in vomitlike slime, or decorated like ice-cream sundaes with whipped cream and cherries. She has also photographed hands, fruits and vegetables in ways which evoke bodily organs and/or orifices.

In her new work she continues to explore the female body,

but with a new twist. Featured in all of the photographs (and one of three videos shown) is a "blob," an amorphous gel-filled, flesh-colored sac with which the models interact. In *Blob 3*, a woman hugs the sac while sleeping; in *Blob 4*, the soft sac lies on top of a sleeping woman and oozes off her body to one side; in *Blob 2*, a supine woman is pinned beneath it (in this instance, the blob has a phallic protrusion) and struggles to release herself. In *On a Platter*, the blob protrudes from the bottom of a woman's shirt and spills out onto a plate that she holds at her waist. *Bathtub 2* is a bird's-eye view of a woman taking a bubble bath with the blob.

Dunning's blob is a body without definition or structure. It is also unquestionably linked to fears of bodily excess and obesity. For instance, in a video titled *Getting Dressed*, the blob lies on a bed and is being clothed in a floral wraparound skirt and lime-green top by a blonde who kneels before it. She is clearly frustrated by the difficulty of squeezing this enormous fluid sac into tiny clothes.

The other videos feature the artist as protagonist. *Extra Skin (Adding)* has Dunning standing beside a chair to put on layer after layer of

flesh-color clothing until, appearing enormous, she hobbles off-screen. In *Trying to See Myself*, she attaches a video camera to her chest and aims it downward so as to frame her legs. She documents herself pulling on dozens of pairs of nylons, one on top of the other. We watch her sweat and hear her grunt from exertion. In the end, she removes the thick "skin" of stockings and drops it on the floor, where it creates an odd, anthropomorphic shape.

Dunning's exhibition was extraordinary, a probe into the depths of issues dear to feminism—self-image in general and obesity in particular.

—Maura Reilly

Gregory Crewdson at Lühring Augustine

Gregory Crewdson's most recent series of large-format photographs, "Twilight" (1998-99), explores paranormal wonders at work among the residents of a troubled New England subdivision. A bedroom community is transformed by the presence of the unearthly and unimaginable, acted out in tableaux reflecting Crewdson's absorption with the spiritual mysteries of Steven Spielberg's film *Close Encounters of the Third Kind* (1977), in which everyday people are transfigured by the radiant presence of unexplainable things.

Crewdson deploys his otherwise unremarkable subjects in and around the clapboard houses, yards, roads, mailboxes and vehicles of a Berkshires hamlet, where they are pressed into obscure tasks that suggest

Jeanne Dunning: Still from *Getting Dressed*, 1999, color video with stereo sound, 4-minute, 20-second loop; at Feigen Contemporary.

