



Left: Andrea Loefke, *Oh do let me help to undo it!*, 2006. Mixed media, installation view.

NEW YORK

Andrea Loefke

PH Gallery

German-born, Brooklyn-based Andrea Loefke's recent installation was intriguingly named *Oh, do let me help to undo it!*. It is hard to connect the title with the site-specific work, an informal but complicated construction consisting of ladders, blue cloud shapes on the wall, and red clouds painted onto canvases strategically placed on the floor. There were also vinyl-backed, red and white tablecloths. The atmosphere was generally one of whimsical kitsch, with three-dimensional objects rather abstractly arranged together. As a result, Loefke's environment played with elements that retained their identities even as they contributed to a larger gestalt, much in the manner of Jessica Stockholder.

One of the major questions to be asked of this and other loosely placed installations is: To what extent does the artist rely on his or her audience to do the work of mentally joining the disparate components? In fact, one of the major requirements facing Loefke's audience was that of piecing together objects that don't normally belong together and finding the beauty in their new patterns and forms. On a surface level, the installation didn't

make sense. At the same time, however, you could see how the piece was guided by intuitive processes, whose very awkwardness became an effort in the right direction, namely, because it implied a faith in the audience's ability to conceptualize a holistic work of art from the seemingly casual placement of discrete objects. Such a capacity gave viewers the chance to participate in Loefke's plans—from the vantage point of complete independence—governing the experience in ways traditionally left to the artist.

The inclusion of unaltered ladders and tablecloths did not so much mock as underscore our day-to-day reliance on the banal and the familiar, without which our degree of comfort in the world would be sorely challenged. The seeming simplicity of Loefke's construction acted as a denial of high culture, offering itself as a world in need of completion, without which there would be little to sustain visual interest or, for that matter, to survive without the active participation of the audience.

Once inside the gallery, viewers were treated to a brilliantly convoluted collection of disparate elements, whose appearance belied the deeper recognition of an installation composed with considerable technical skill. A panel connected the steps of one of the larger lad-

ders with a smaller one; the plank going from one ladder to the other held two small paintings of red clouds. On the wall was a group of light-blue clouds, from which fell thin lines of red string, apparently representing rain. Just above the floor were the red and white tablecloths, whose patterning connected them to the red clouds. Underneath the tablecloths, directly on the floor, were cutouts of white clouds. The gestalt was surprisingly easy to unify, though the disparate objects suggested a relatively complex abstract gathering of differing parts.

Set up as a kind of tableau or an interesting journey into a thicket of shapes and surfaces, the forms kept the eye pleasantly employed. This was truly a show larger than the sum of its parts, involving the viewer in a game of suggested meaning revealed by looking at and physically participating in the art.

—Jonathan Goodman

NEW YORK

Michael Steiner

Salander-O'Reilly Galleries

Michael Steiner's beautifully crafted sculptures consist of linear elements and geometric frameworks: four rectangles that form a standing box shape, two rectangles facing each other a few inches or feet

apart and connected by straight and diagonal strips that form H- and X-shapes, and triangular prism forms stood on end with each of the three sides framing a distinct linear pattern. All of the rectangular frames contain linear patterns in steel or wood—curved, diagonal, and straight lines meticulously connected to the framework.

These linear patterns play off the symmetries of the frames, creating a dynamic dialogue between perpendicular and diagonal lines. The congruent frameworks counterbalance the incongruent wavy, curved, straight, and diagonal lines. These sculptures have pockets of empty space in their centers, so that the viewer peers into and through them. Deployed in a careful counterpoise of depth and surface, the linear patterns change as the viewer circles each sculpture. Geometry becomes a consistent theme, while the intersecting and overlapping lines form endless variations. Steiner also plays with our perceptions by weaving steel and wood strips through the frameworks as though they were made of fabric.

Sculptures such as *Murmur in My Sleep II (and III)* (2005) and *Figure Turned Round* (2005) are juxtaposed screens, two rectangular frames held together by straight strips of steel or wood. From certain angles, the strips that join the two rectangular frames into H- and X-shapes, act as orthogonals, or lines running into depth. This same perspectival effect also occurs when the viewer looks into the triangular, prism-shaped sculptures in which the triangular base and the translated copy appear to recede into space while the lines within the three corresponding sides of the prism flat-