

Wanxin Zhang at Bernice Steinbaum Gallery, July/August 2005
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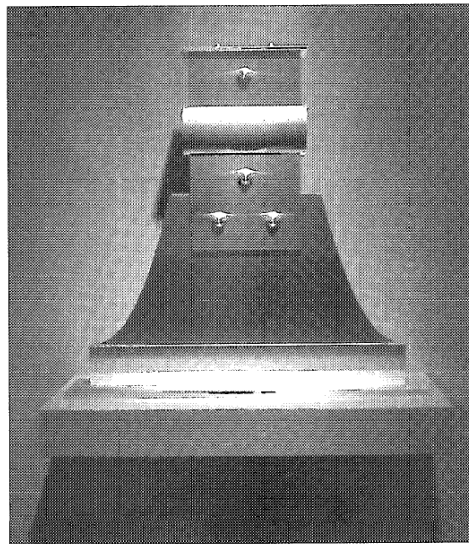
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Above: John Dreyfuss, *Trinity (Axe)*, 2004. Milled aluminum, 24 in. high. Below: Wanxin Zhang, *Sculpture Pit #5*, 2004. Ceramic, detail of installation.

light, to be altered and perfected to within an accuracy of one tenth the diameter of a human hair. Says Dreyfuss, "I have to know exactly what I want... I use the computer to help me make it better." The final computer program is then fed into a fabricator, which produces the form exactly, leaving no chance of error with the human hand.

While the fabricator can reproduce any style, Dreyfuss's vocabulary is spare and precise, benefiting from a process that does not, for a moment, betray its origins. As befits his newfound technological tool, in several works such as *Interrogation (Anvil)* and *Trinity (Axe)*, Dreyfuss explores the genesis of all tools. *Trinity (Axe)*, a stolid and weighty brushed stainless steel piece, has a wide trapezoidal base. It sits on a cantilevered wooden platform, which allows it, paradoxically, to float in mid-air. A rectangular solid riveted to the base rises above it and bulges hor-

izontally across its center; the cylindrical hollow this creates ostensibly allows for the insertion of a four-foot pipe. The work's feminine aspect is echoed in four soft conical rivets. Simultaneously male and female, the hard-edged *Axe* both repels and invites; the ax and the anvil dare you to touch their perfect skins with anything but the utmost respect.

Humankind's ultimate tool and the method of recording it, the word, is explored in the Brancusi-like piece *J'accuse (Quill)*. This 30-inch-high sleek vertical form references Emile Zola, the 19th-century French writer who, in his essay "J'accuse," defended the French army officer, Alfred Dreyfus, during an infamous anti-Semitic trial. The vertical steel form stands proud and tall in its isolation, expanding and opening as it rises; inviting the stroke of fingers, this tool-made form displays itself, the perfect tool.

—Nancy Ungar

Miami

Wanxin Zhang

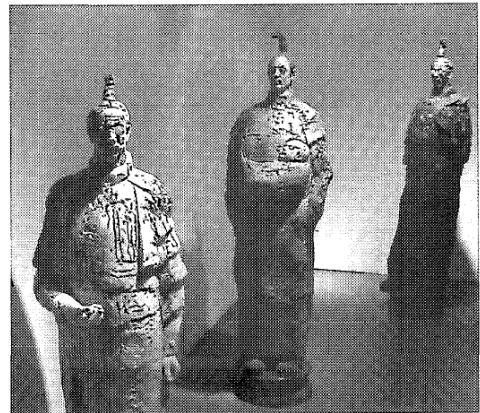
Bernice Steinbaum Gallery

At first glance Wanxin Zhang's tall male figures seem to have come from ancient tombs; they resemble the Xi'an warriors found in 1974 in the tomb of the first Chinese emperor, Qin Shi Huang (246–210 BCE). On closer inspection, however, one can see wire-rimmed eyeglasses reminiscent of those worn by John Lennon or Lenin and Trotsky—an incongruous addition that immediately sets the works in a contemporary perspective and at the same time invites dialogue with their ancient precursors. In Zhang's *Sculpture Pit #5*, his tall figures could stand in as contemporary surrogates for the Xi'an figures, just as Qin's thousands of terra-cotta warriors stood in for his army to protect him in the hereafter.

Singly, the figures are imposing and somewhat intimidating. Standing from 72 to 87 inches high, they all wear traditional Chinese dress, wonderfully stamped and incised with letters and symbols that appear unreadable to the uninitiated. Made of clay like the ancient Xi'an figures and created in much the same manner, Zhang's sculptures are built directly without molds, fired in pieces, and then glued together. Evidence of

flat, curved panels alert us to the artist's process, along with the strong colors and stamped and handmade incisions on the clay. One especially notices the top-knots on the figures' heads, the round eyeglasses, and the robes and postures. The shortest figure, *Blue Head Man*, holds his right arm as if offering a small object to the viewer; *Dustin* sports a hairstyle resembling a Mohawk and colored in terra cotta and blue; *General II* stands with his hands at his sides in erect military posture; and *Traveler* leans in a pose approaching contrapposto, wearing a deep blue robe.

The sense of presence one feels on entering *Pit #5* might come from the association with the Xi'an figures. The figures stand as if engaged in some kind of ritual. One holds a baby up close as if in a frontal baby carrier—Zhang offers the viewer contemporary postures and attitudes. Encountering the group of figures in *Pit #5* is a different experience than looking at an individual work. Zhang has created sculptures that combine his Chinese heritage with his contemporary world in San Francisco, embracing a combination of cultures. The quirky glasses and topknots, the bright colors and postures, stand in contrast to Maoist drab and even to



DREYFUSS: COURTESY HEMPILL FINE ART, WASHINGTON, DC



terra-cotta ancients. Zhang offers imaginary and incomplete narratives—our imaginations can provide the full stories.

—Ann Albritton

Chicago

Andrew Lord

Donald Young Gallery

Over the years, Andrew Lord has resonantly carved out aesthetic territory for his sculptures along the boundaries marking painting, sculpture, and the decorative arts. Most recently, he inaugurated the rich beginnings of a new body of clay sculpture, which also fluently traverses—and densely distills—art categories, this time reaching into the millennia-long traditions of figurative sculpture and vessel-making.

There's a lot packed into Lord's hybrid sculpture, into its explorations of technique and art history, but its success belongs to its uniquely synthetic qualities. Although it evokes multiple traditions, Lord's work does not resort to the tired convention of post-modern "quotation" of art historical eras or exhibit itself as a satirical grab-bag of deconstructed parts. Instead, Lord's is an ambitiously sincere stance—he constructs an art of fusion, seamlessly combining the practices of

drawing, ceramics, and sculpture into quintessentially fresh, three-dimensional objects. The satisfaction, for the viewer, is in paying attention to how Lord pulls it off.

Lord's new untitled work is as much about line as internal volume, with vibrant, hand-worked, lustrous, black surfaces that open out into sinuous, sketch-like profiles. The pieces also evoke other aesthetic objects that transcend art hierarchies: Pre-Columbian figurative ceramic vessels, for example, or the darkly expressive figurative vases sculpted by Gauguin in Brittany in the late 1880s—or even Cellini's famous 16th-century enamel and gold Salt Cellar, for the way its small but weighty human figures are disposed around a central axis.

Because of their human figures, Lord's sculptures also stand as enigmatic narratives entwined within the conventions and history of the vessel form. In one, for example, we see a nude (a Cézanne-like bather) precariously poised inside the edge of a flat dish, one hand grasping the vessel's serpentine handle, her left leg and toe disappearing into a hole at the bottom. In a double-faced Janus sculpture (one face weathered with a dented nose,

the other seemingly younger), an arm-like handle snakes up from the side and plops a hand at the top of the vessel's open head. The viewer is tantalizingly left to fill in the story surrounding these works—much as Lord, in a nod to ceramic history, has pointedly filled in some of the joints in his sculpture with silver leaf and epoxy, a reference to the ancient Japanese tradition of restoring the cracks or chips in ceramic objects with urushi lacquer and powdered gold.

Lord's dynamic art has an oddly iconic feel; its considerable energy comes from a condensation of many points of history, both recent and ancient. In this sense, the work captures both chronological time and physical matter. An art

of chronicles, its animated surfaces embody not only the physical record of their making, but also a conceptual base that is both wide and deep.

—Polly Ullrich

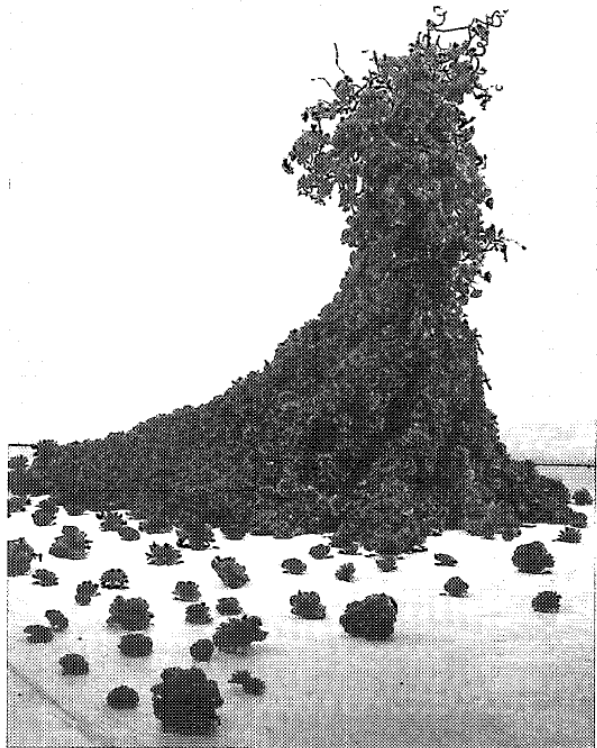
Long Island City and New York

Petah Coyne

The SculptureCenter and Galerie Lelong

Petah Coyne has long explored organic form with an eye to life's vulnerable nature. Not surprisingly, this focus links the work in her concurrent survey shows in New York. Multiple layers of delicate materials create the structure of most works, resulting in a fantasy-like animism, an eerie morbidity, or a startling blend of both.

Left: Andrew Lord, *Untitled*, 2004. Ceramic, epoxy, and silver leaf, 15.5 x 17 x 14.5 in. Below: Petah Coyne, *Untitled #1103 (Daphne)*, 2002–03. Wax, human and horse hair, ribbons, pigment, spray paint, rubber, wire, curly willow, chicken wire, silk flowers, bows, feathers, plywood, metal hardware, hat pins, and tassels, 77 x 83 x 86 in.



LORD: TOM VAN EYNDE. COURTESY DONALD YOUNG GALLERY, CHICAGO / COYNE: COURTESY GALERIE LE LONG