

Review

THE CRITICAL STATE OF VISUAL ART IN NEW YORK

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Pauline Stella Sanchez

New Work

ChristineRose Gallery through June 26

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IT IS DIFFICULT TO EXPLAIN exactly what kind of work the "New Work" of Pauline Stella Sanchez is. It is a sort of sculpture, rather like an architectural model by someone who was a life-time user of chemical substances. It contains cabinets for gnomes and drawings hidden in drawers and drawers hidden in stands that are sculptural. Works on paper are spread out near some of the cabinets instead of kept in the storage drawers. Each object sits there mutely.

What they look like is a complex wooden stand - clearly a sculpture-in-being - that is a base for a city-like top filled of lots of little block-buildings and a model pond. The top, in part, comes off, and inside there is a drawer filled with paper works. What you get is not even what you see since some of the drawings are hidden in the drawers, but it is clearly an object of fantasy, a compulsive and weird world, but yet something curious.

While there is a high compulsive component - a private universe created - the work feels like what it is: "art objects." They may make use of a variety of forms, and offer at the end an object intriguing because it exists at all; it makes a dramatic visual statement. But the work is not dramatic - boxes and funny cube houses, paper work scattered about and odd thingies. In a way the visitor and viewer gets access to a giant toy made for unimaginable reasons in this bizarre form. Unimaginable aspects and the bizarre as shape have great attraction for toy people. But if these are Art Toys, then one is not sure just how to play with them. Boxes for drawings, sculpture

with hidden goodies, goodies to be display or kept hidden? All sorts of configurations here.

Once, however, the nature of the object has been determined, the art viewer is left to look at the art for art's sake, to be judged as sculpture or for the drawings within. Thus we get a truly mixed medium, not sprawled out across the floor, but loosely packed in and about a box. And perhaps the parts are more than the whole, but this would be difficult to assess when some of the parts cannot be seen except at the expense of the whole.

Whatever the case, there will be those entranced by the ambiguities, the look of the work, the concepts hidden and the concepts offered. There's lots of narrative here, lots to do - pull and push, unload and stack - lots to talk about, but it is not a singular compelling object. If you don't want to play, there's really not all that much to see.