

ART QUIPS

A NEW GENERATION OF UNCOMMON PERSPECTIVES

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Two Solo Shows at Smack Mellon | Review by Jill Conner



Kristen Hassenfeld and Jennie C. Jones present two separate exhibitions within Smack Mellon's expansive space. Hassenfeld presents a series of monolithic sized sculptures made primarily out of paper while Jones features a compilation of sounds that emanate from several speakers located at the back. When put together, the sound art and sculptural installation play off of one another to create an ethereal environment, transforming the massive gallery space into a cathedral-like setting.





"Dans La Lune," (2009) is a small French phrase that means "head in the clouds" and consists of large, white jewelry-like ornaments that hang at all levels from the gallery's extremely high ceiling as an elaborate visual obstruction. Using the glass crystal ball as her modeling source, Hassenfeld meticulously assembled each component to look like flamboyant, baroque chiseled forms that are held together by large, hand-made gems. Light emanates from just a few of the artist's handmade spheres lending the entire collection of paper works an ephemeral atmosphere. The choice of materials, moreover, evince a longing for the recent past that has been filled with non-stop parties.



During the art market's hey-day, when Williamsburg had taken off as the new destination for contemporary art, Hassenfeld created similar installations for Bellwether Gallery. But at that time, her work played upon the growing greed and fun that everyone was having while basking in the riches of art, since nearly anything was considered art, so long as it could be sold for an attractive price.



But shaking away from this memory, the light sounds of jazz and rhythm that play over and over again in Jones' sound piece titled, "The Walkman Compositions." (2009) Although Jones presents a series of drawings that illustrate the evolution of various Walkman designs throughout the 1980s, her effort at sound art is the most interesting of all. Emanating from four black rectangular forms that couch tightly to each other, Jones suggests an object as the basis for her sound piece, although the object itself is secondary and quite irrelevant to the medium of negative space.



As Holland Cotter recently pronounced the end of the art boom, he also suggested that contemporary art now has the chance to operate freely from the pressures of the conspicuous art market. Both artists in these two solo shows at Smack Mellon capture the aesthetic rather than monetary relevance of art. "The Walkman Compositions," for example, re-frames the art experience entirely since it is not just about looking but also about hearing. "Dans La Lune," on the other hand, is so large that none of it can be easily transported or sold as a marketable product. Both installations are what they are: art for experience and not spectacle.