



View of David Shapiro's exhibition "Everything Must Go," 2009, showing (center) *Port-O-San*, 7¼ inches tall; at Pierogi.

is that content is serious and the purely visual domain superficial. For Shorr, the literary aspect of her paintings constitutes, in effect, an elegant but secondary element. The more fundamental, determining force in her work, the combined act of seeing and painting, has not changed over her long career.

The title of *La Tasse Rose C'est Moi* (2007) refers to the painting's central, eponymous pink cup and makes explicit Shorr's personal identification with her objects. Here, the literary extensions of her thinking include Flaubert's famous identification with Emma Bovary and a possible nod to Proust's tea and madeleine. Surrounding the cup, in an off-symmetrical, centrifugal arrangement on bright green grass, are two bowls—one a dark blue, footed majolica and the other a light blue Delftware—along with some slender birch logs and, in serendipitous disarray, fruits and flora. Brushstrokes declare themselves, although in a subdued way, their opaque applications capturing translucencies, reflections and the optical splash of bright sunlight.

Shorr has always been on closer painterly terms with beautiful artifacts—fabrics, decorative platters, china figurines, cut and artificial flowers—than with the natural world. Reflected images of reproductions and her own paintings figure throughout her work, establishing an Epicurean domain of sensuous and intellectual pleasure. The major opus of this show, over 11 feet wide, titled *Objects of Use to Me Nearly All My Life* (2008), lays out Shorr's beloved cast of

characters on sun-struck sand backed by gently lapping wavelets. Watteau's *The Pilgrimage to Cythera*, an image Shorr has reworked in the past, springs to mind. Its celebration of the sweetness of life, however fleeting, seems to preside—without sentimentality—over these paintings as well.

—Robert Berling

DAVID SHAPIRO PIEROGI

The 102 works of art in David Shapiro's "Everything Must Go" were meticulously arranged on three capacious drop cloths spread out on the gallery floor, mimicking low-end street vendors' preferred method of merchandising their stuff. Among the selection of exactly crafted, small-scale sculptures—cast bronze pistachio shells, minuscule black trash bags, life-size condom and Unicef boxes, and many altered found objects—were numerous drawings, and these too were displayed flat, most unframed.

With global economies in turmoil and financial survival precarious, Shapiro's wry commentary on the elasticity of exchange values was timely, and disconcerting. But beyond commentary on the art object's shaky status as a commodity in a tanking market, the show was memorable for the genuine comic strangeness of individual works, and for their cumulative poetic resonance.

Many pieces were somehow derived from earlier or ongoing projects. *Friends and Enemies* (1989-99) collects a dozen dusty plaster casts of faces in an old milk crate, recalling the self-portraits

in tofu Shapiro showed (in refrigerated cases) during the 1990s. The diminutive painted-Plexiglas *Port-O-San* (2003) is culled from his previous Pierogi outing, a big tabletop model of the stage for a corporate-sponsored benefit concert titled "Rock Iraq." Depicting the deadly earnest documentarian, *Ken Burns* (2008) alludes to Shapiro's parallel practice as a filmmaker. It is among several drawings executed on month-at-a-glance calendar pages ("Success" brand), contributing a diaristic note to this self-portrait of the artist.

But far from soberly recapping Shapiro's creative evolution, the show's retrospective flavor added both urgency and self-deprecating humor to the spectacle of a moderately well-known artist displaying in such an abject manner the shards of his career past, present and future. (Abjection did not extend to the price list, which was serious.)

An ambitious, large-scale thinker, Shapiro is mad for maquettes and fanciful proposals. *Homeless Museum* (2009) is a corrugated-cardboard carton roughly fitted out as a repository of tiny hand-lettered signs ("Need food Please Help"). *German Brain* (2008-09), a decades-old anatomical diagram cut and collaged into a Picassoid arrangement of interpenetrating planes, is just 10 inches high but could be monumental. The artist's Lilliputian conception in three dimensions of the installation itself, *Everything Must Go* (2009), underscores his interest in scale, and suggests a metaphysical dimension to his focused attention on fabrication.

Such an exhibition calls for a quiet show-stopper, and Shapiro did not disappoint: *Obit Ship* (2007) is an almost embarrassingly affecting work. It is a model three-masted gunship, fully rigged and nearly 4 feet long. Each of her sails is embroidered with a line summarizing a life: "Four decades spent decoding fragments of a long-lost ancient text"; "She saved music from the past that faced an unclear tomorrow"; "A monarch who oversaw a new dictionary also lost nearly 200 pounds." These nameless luminaries once vanquished obscurity, but their achievements are written on the wind.

—Stephen Maine