



Judy Fox: *Snow White and the Seven Sins*, 2007, eight terra-cotta-and-casein sculptures; at P.P.O.W.

Clark. But the show's title, "you," indicated that whatever associations one makes, the visitor's experience—of disorientation, discovery and childlike glee—was the show's primary subject. What's more, when stepping back up to floor level through the anteroom doorway, which was only about 4 feet high, just about everyone bumped their heads. This purely physical experience seemed a fitting note on which to end one's visit.

—Brian Boucher

### Judy Fox at P.P.O.W.

A skilled technician with a flair for theatrical presentation, Judy Fox has earned kudos for her well-wrought, painstakingly realistic figurative sculptures, typically in terra-cotta painted with rich yet muted casein colors, usually representing babies or children in sensuous or sexual poses nicked from myth and art history. In these, she refers inconclusively to power relationships, for which she has been lauded as "subversive." Fox enlists quite different imaginative means to similarly ambiguous if illustrative ends in a major new work, *Snow White and the Seven Sins*. From the Grimm brothers and Bruno Bettelheim we know that the lapping shores of fairy tales give on to murky depths. Fox, to her credit, plunges right in. (A group of squishily primordial, palm-sized "fetishes" in clay, arrayed along a shallow shelf in the gallery's second space, reveals that she has been engaged in biomorphic abstraction at least since 1990.)

The tale's comely heroine is laid out naked atop her glass coffin, life-size,

pallid and appropriately comatose, her arms folded over her midsection and her ebony braids reaching to her knees. She is surrounded by seven dwarf-sized renditions of the cardinal sins, fleshy little monsters of immoderation as quick as she is inert. Each is about 2 feet high or long, and looks like a cross between a giant slug and a crustacean. They also suggest hybrids of male and female genitalia, reminiscent of the drawings of Hans Bellmer. Preening *Pride*, armless and with breasts for feet, arches upward to display its shapely butt-face. As if exhausted or regrouping, *Lust* sprawls luxuriously on its back, an amalgam of fleshy pink bosoms and oversized labia; *Greed* is a sagging brown sack, distended as if about to burst, balanced on a pair of ripe honeydews and topped with a tropical blossom. Its collar turned high and cowl pulled low, *Envy* steals a glance toward *Greed*, and seems about to scuttle across the floor on its bovine haunches.

It is tempting to link these bundles of cartoony selfishness, these bad influences, to

personality traits of the dwarfs in the 1937 Disney animated film, but that's a red herring. Sleepy is an easy match for Sloth, and the rotund Happy, who clearly enjoys a meal, could stand in for Gluttony. But Grumpy as Anger? Doc as Greed? Quite a stretch. (Besides, the deadly sins explicitly mentioned in the tale—anger, envy and pride—are committed by the evil stepmother.) Rather, the artist recasts the essential conflict of the tale, finding it not between the females but between the hapless maiden and her comedically ineffectual guardians. In Grimm, the dwarfs' offer of refuge is contingent upon the girl's housekeeping services; their counsel against talking to strangers repeatedly fails to convince; three times, they return to their cottage to find Snow White left for dead. Intentionally or not, they betray her rather than defend her floundering vulnerability. In Fox's tableau, their negligence becomes malignant, and her virginal purity is a casualty of their self-absorption and their appetites, as old as the hills they mine.

—Stephen Maine

### Wolfgang Laib at Sean Kelly

Wolfgang Laib's recent exhibition included rice, ghee and photos of religious sites in India. While Laib is known for his laborious practices (such as collecting pollen for his installations) and his attention to the evocative sensory aspects of favored materials (the smell and touch of beeswax, in addition to its look), this exhibition focused on Indian references as well.

The art world's increased multiculturalism of the last several decades brings up questions of what can be read formally in art and what must be known, and whether art can be a "universal" or even multinational language. Interpretations based only on viewers' contexts seem arrogant, yet absent catalogues, wall labels or advance research, viewers must rely on formal qualities. Fortunately, Laib's visual effects and consistent sensual interests carry across the cultural divide.

The exhibition included an installation, six small stone sculptures and one tall construction of lacquered wood, in addition to four gelatin silver prints and a drawing. The drawing, in pencil and oil pastel, renders a row of three small, rounded triangles—isolated on a 2-foot-tall sheet of paper—loosely occupied by what look like grains of rice, colored yellow. The less-than-sharp 14-by-11-inch photos might be enlarged snapshots taken in low light. They date from 1984, '98 and 2006; each shows a holy site or object, such as a flower-garlanded Ganesha figure or Shaivite saints (according to the title) with cloth wrappings.

View of Wolfgang Laib's installation *Without Place—Without Time—Without Body*, 2007, rice and hazelnut pollen; at Sean Kelly.

