

“Looking at Words” at Andrea Rosen

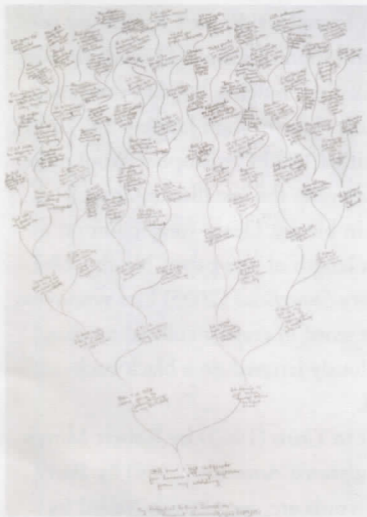
That this gallery, known for being a Conceptualist stronghold, has mounted a group of visually distinctive works should hearten formalists. Rosen’s current salon-style exhibition of some 340 works makes for a bustling, bulging holiday-time showroom (on view through January 14, 2006). An untitled 1990 Christopher Wool piece aptly describes the installation: it spells RIOT, in blocky, bleary spray paint on a six-foot length of rice paper. Nearby, Mel Bochner’s *Superficial* (2005) lists synonyms for that word in crayola-colored acrylics, meticulously lettered on a black background.

But in *Crisis* (1962) by Robert Morris and *Sculptured Activities* (1986) by Barry Le Va, words are, respectively, veiled by layers of paint or disguised as hieroglyphics. Unstated subcategories emerge from the morass. Networks of words or phrases

joined by lines unite Beth Campbell, Fred Tomaselli, and the Royal Art Lodge; a dark knot of Teutonic angst centers work by Anselm Kiefer, Jorg Immendorff, and a contorted 1943 newspaper headline by Austrian artist Herbert Ploberger. Comics-style fusion of word and image is represented by Peter Saul and Richard Prince, and twisted a bit by Mike Kelley and Raymond Pettibon. The autographic impulse propels Cy Twombly's *Reflection* (1964), which conveys a distinctly, atypically Pop feeling.

Amid the fearsome company of Georges Braque, Marcel Duchamp, and Jasper Johns is *Untitled (E.P. Spraypaint)*, a 2002 pastel by L.A.-based Julie Becker that shuffles rudimentary tree branches and street signs; stuck to the center is a tiny Post-it with the cryptic words "Bed-frame Blue—Mini air Brush." Words as linguistic abstractions add immeasurably to the punch of Ellen Gallagher's *Watery Ecstatic* (2001), with white-on-white letters spelling hairstyles: "Pixette," "Mini Flip," "Spiral Luster." Among the dozens of works hung too high to view properly are those by Albert Oehlen, Karen Kilimnik, and Brad Kahlhamer—especially regrettable, as some lesser works occupy prime space, such as *Untitled (Cadutta)*, a middling 1985 drawing by Jean-Paul Basquiat.

—*Stephen Maine*



Beth Campbell, *My Potential Future Based on Present Circumstances (10/14/05)*, pencil on paper (27 1/2 x 19 1/2 in.), 2005. ©Beth Campbell Image courtesy of Nicole Klagsbrun Gallery