

ARTFORUM

LOS ANGELES

Aaron Curry

DAVID KORDANSKY GALLERY

Day-Glo, both as color palette and modern invention, tricks the eye into believing that inanimate objects emit inherent electricity. "Two Sheets Thick," Aaron Curry's recent show of sculpture, collage, and painting, uses this trick liberally as if to articulate (or scream out loud) the "hotness" of his formal choices. Two of Curry's six new sculptures (all works 2010), for example, are towering, freestanding constructions of hot pink (*Mammut*) or fluorescent yellow (*Becklmmmppe*) coated aluminum that cause visual vibrations throughout the main gallery. Flat geometric panels bolted together, jigsawlike, to form hooked shapes fastened to arcs, jagged protrusions sprouting from sweeping bows, bulbous planes incised with oculi—these smooth, interlocking forms create monstrous biomorphic abstractions, bringing to mind radioactive Noguchis, high-voltage Picassos. But with Curry's signed name (the artist's touch) and the date welded onto the surface of each sculpture, there's no mistaking the maker of these objects or their historical moment of creation.

Though art-historical specters are always lurking behind Curry's aesthetic—whether glorified signatures, obvious modernist references, or printed images of classical art defaced by expressionistic primitivist gestures—this latest body of work uses cultural signifiers with a newfound restraint, at times even attempting to camouflage them completely. Curry placed his work against a 360-degree backdrop, fashioning a cohesive and ordered installation: The gallery shell was outfitted floor to ceiling with white cardboard panels speckled with silk-screened images of drops of liquid that Curry had drafted on a digital drawing tablet. These same panels were also cut, torn, and rearranged into abstract collages or used as matte board in framed gouache and ink paintings. In perhaps the slickest use of this pattern, Curry even silk-screened the black and white droplets onto the interlocking wooden components of three additional sculptures. Crafted from anthropomorphic shapes similar to the artist's towering neon sculptures, these



human-scale constructions were installed around the perimeter of the gallery so that, from certain vantage points, their planes nearly disappeared into the tessellations of the adjacent walls.

That Curry can effectively make a three-dimensional figure recede into space while simultaneously establishing it as part of the pictorial ground demonstrates his acute attention to the viewer's perceptual experience of the work. And while similar trompe l'oeil gestures have been common in his two-dimensional pieces—namely, his rendering of illusionistic liquid drops that he has likened to beads of sweat (but which also evoke tears, saliva, and ejaculate)—Curry's ongoing development of these pretexts in his sculptures is a stirring proposition. Moreover, the development of his sculptures toward total environments signals Curry's reconsideration of how to deploy his referents; the installation subtly suggested Kurt Schwitters's *Merzbau* or Dalí's set design for Hitchcock's *Spellbound* while remaining unexpectedly exotic. And whereas in this show, the artist's typically generous recourse to borrowing from popular source material is seemingly subdued—such appropriation was limited here to three understated collages, one (*Vision Revision [Donkey Lady]*) mimicking the show's incandescent palette with a fragmented ad for the Disney Pixar movie *Monsters Inc.*—his characteristic scrutiny and bastardization of "the modern" is approaching monumental loftiness in his sculpture.

—Catherine Taft