Kiki Kogelnik, *The Human Touch*, ca. 1965, oil and acrylic on canvas, 30 x 24".

at the Kunsthalle Krems in Austria), and was included in the traveling exhibition "Seductive Subversion: Women Pop Artists, 1958–1968" a few years ago. For New York audiences who missed the Brooklyn Museum stop of that tour in 2010, this show of three paintings and nine drawings was an introduction to her clever, exquisite work, which feels newly relevant in the wake of contemporary critical reappraisals of Pop.

If Pop art's mostly male lions regularly tapped the domestic realm for imagery, Kogelnik's enthusiasms skew masculine, toward the space age, robotics, and anatomy. *Outer Space*, 1964, pictures two humanoid silhouettes (Kogelnik based these and others on life-size cutouts of friends and fellow artists) ascending in a depthless cosmos of shimmering bronze and silver discs, their unmodulated forms unchecked by gravity. Elsewhere, bodies and body parts jutted into the picture plane, seemingly at random, as in *Atmospheric Drag on Satellite*, 1965, in which a headless figure edged in paper doll–like tabs, a second truncated profile, and a pair of disembodied arms are adrift in a field that collides various pictorial novelties of the moment: moody mottled sprays, stenciled dots, neon spatters, and blue stripes in a hard-edge band. The bodies that fared best here were those that have been turned into machines. *Untitled (robots)*, ca. 1967, depicts a phalanx of androgynous beings, yoked together by yellow filaments, soaring heavenward, surpassing not only the reach of a silhouetted hand but the boundary of a planet. Their forms, like many skeletons and organs here (Kogelnik's husband was a doctor), were delimited using anatomical rubber stamps—mechanized physiques for the satellite age.

That space travel (for most of us) can be experienced only in mediation makes it a perfect Pop subject, and, like James Rosenquist's rockets and Robert Rauschenberg's NASA photos, Kogelnik's early work registers cosmic exploration as communal spectacle. Yet her abiding concern is the consequence for subjectivity of scientific and technological progress. The subject here may be automated (gear shafts and chem-set tubing replace the organs of *Female Robot*, 1964), imperiled (the words *rush* and *fragile* are stamped repeatedly across the bodies in *Robots*, 1966), or jumbled up (*Untitled*, ca. 1967, shows an arm on the visor of a space helmet, a diagrammatic baby in the throat), but it is not snuffed out. Nor is it wholly superficial: For every simplified contour, one finds an X-ray-like outline; for each anonymous feature, an autographic glyph. Manual traces accordingly counterpoise signs of the machine, both thematically—in recurrent depictions of hands—and in the drawings' intricate graphic patterning and hand-colored effects.

And while human anatomy here is (literally) rubber-stamped, desire has not been fully colonized by the mechanical: The vagina in *Untitled (erotic drawing)*, 1970, is penetrated by a finger, not a nearby phallus in the guise of a rocket. Kogelnik's art, like that of a number of her contemporaries, testifies to the complexity of representing self and other, and connecting self to other, in the era of Pop, and finds its interest and poignancy in that very effort. A third of the works in this show have the word *robot* in their title, but it is the name of one canvas, ca. 1965, that tips its maker's hand—*The Human Touch*.

—*Lisa Turvey*

Goshka Macuga

ANDREW KREPS GALLERY

If Poland—"God's playground," in historian Norman Davies's pithy phrase—didn't invent black comedy, it has surely produced some of the wryest examples of tragic-absurd performance throughout its fraught post–World War II period. Take *Two Men and a Wardrobe* (1958), one of Roman Polanski's early films, in which two men emerge from the sea carrying a large wardrobe, only to be beaten with a dead cat by a group of local toughs, or Tadeusz Konwicki's novel *A Minor Apocalypse* (1979), which follows the slapstick tribulations of a hungover middle-aged man who wanders the streets of Warsaw, gas can in tow, harassed by cops and others as he considers his fellow dissident artists' petition that he self-immolate before the party headquarters. As the site of the public's curiosity and abuse, the city street is central to this tradition, and artist Goshka Macuga has returned to the Polish legacy of enigmatic public actions by focusing on a 1967 event by another practitioner of the darkly absurd, artist and theater director Tadeusz Kantor.

View of "Goshka Macuga," 2012. Foreground: *Daybed for the Spirit of Polish Culture*, 2012. Background: *The Letter*, 2012.

For that performance, Kantor created an enormous fake letter, drawing stamps, an address, and cancellation marks on a ninety-foot-long banner, and hired seven uniformed postmen to carry it from the main post office in Warsaw to its addressed destination, at the nearby Foksal Gallery. While awaiting the banner's arrival, Kantor whipped expectant spectators into a frenzy and then orchestrated the crowd's exultant destruction of the ersatz communiqué. Macuga, for her exhibition at Andrew Kreps Gallery, displayed a large black-and-white photographic wall tapestry with an image of the men carrying the letter. (It was derived from her 2011 reenactment of the performance that culminated at her exhibition at the Zachęta National Gallery of Art in Warsaw). In front of the hanging sat a cushioned midcentury modern bench, upon which Macuga had screenprinted three letters, in the original Polish, from a member of the public to Anda Rottenberg, director of the Zachęta when Macuga had her show. Throughout the gallery stood several other chairs and stools, all upholstered in the same battleship-gray fabric and likewise featuring images of letters addressed to Rottenberg, some hectoring and even threatening, others congratulatory.

Even at their most acerbic, these missives contain abuse milder than that represented in a group of works in which Macuga takes up several highly theatrical examples of the defacement of art at the Zachęta in the post-1989 period. In *Triptych (Cattelan)*, 2011, she presents details of photographs of *La nona ora* (The Ninth Hour), Maurizio Cattelan's 1999 sculpture of Pope John Paul II felled by a meteorite, after it was destroyed in 2000 when members of a far-right-wing party removed the rock and tried to right the sculpture of the Polish pontiff. Likewise, in three images from the "Anti-Collages" series, 2011, Macuga evokes episodes at the Zachęta such as a 2000 incident in which a famous Polish actor entered the museum with a sword and slashed several portraits from Piotr Uklanski's *The Nazis*, 1998. In each *Anti-Collage*, Macuga blacks out a portrait of a figure (Rottenberg, Uklanski, etc.)

central to the controversy, leaving a ghostly, censored silhouette of a figure standing in the museum's galleries. That the word *zachęta* means "encouragement" here serves as a wry comment on the forcefulness with which the art on view inspired the public to "engage" it.

In Macuga's work, the censorship enacted by the Communist People's Republic of Poland seem merely part of a cycle of art desecration in the country, which includes the actions of today's public and right-wing government, closely tied to the Polish Catholic Church. Perhaps the artist and playwright Stanisław Ignacy Witkiewicz, a favorite of Kantor's, was right when he had the titular character of his 1923 play *Janulka* claim of Poland's recursive but somehow ever-intensifying past: "History has doubled back until its nose touches its backside, and now it's eating its own tail."

—*Eva Díaz*

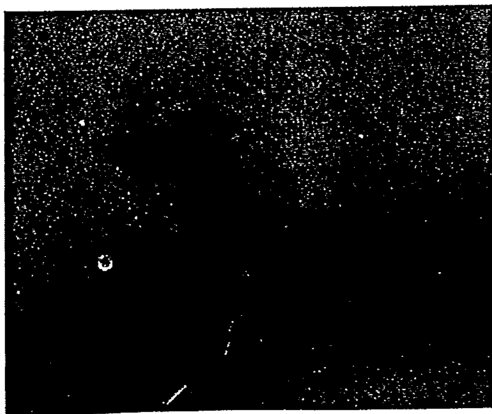
Darren Waterston
DC MOORE GALLERY

Grand, visionary landscapes unfold across the seventeen oil paintings from 2012 in Darren Waterston's exhibition at DC Moore, all of which appear on gessoed wood panels (with the exception of *Edifice*, which is on canvas) and vary in size from large to small. The exquisitely strange scenes are based on nature. Meticulously drawn pine trees proliferate throughout, forming a dark ring around the luminous center of *City of Sun*, growing from a spindly, desiccated trunk in *City on the Edge*, or looming above an outcrop of rock in *Island*.

In the last of the works, a small, abstracted city sits beneath three trees. If the city is a synecdoche for the earth, the pustulelike red stars glowing in the sky may signal the planet's fate—feverish red being the color of a dying star. Likewise, the bubblelike "knots" that seem to grow on the trunk of the central tree may be cancerous tumors, suggesting that the tree will eventually expire, becoming a blurry ruin, as has the hazy treelike form to its right, or die, as the tree to its left has done. For the moment, however, that central tree remains triumphantly dignified, holding its own in the cosmic emptiness.

"Waterston has often engaged with mythological, theological, and natural histories," the gallery tells us. With this in mind, we might speculate that the three trees in *Island* allude to the crucifixion, as do the three trees in Rembrandt's famous print *The Three Trees*, 1643. The painting *Agony in the Garden* also appears to rework that famous theme, with twisted dead branches—one bloodred, the other gray—converging to form a sort of tormented figure, an invisible but felt presence that conveys Christ's suffering in ambiguously abstract and natural terms. Similar allusions appear elsewhere. *The Isle of Pines*, for example, references Henry Neville's 1668 novel of the same title, but it could also be read as a reworking of Arnold Böcklin's *The Isle of the Dead*, 1880.

Darren Waterston, *Island*, 2012, oil on wood panel, 16 x 20".



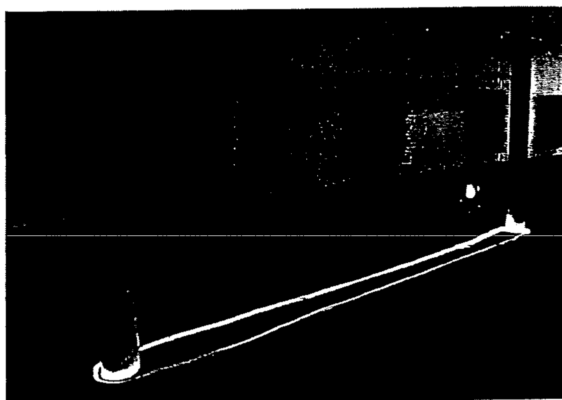
Waterston is elaborately equivocal. It is not clear whether he is mocking traditional religious motifs or using them to make the modern eschatological point that nature is dead or dying. And the artist's paintings have an undercurrent of angry futility, perhaps most explosively evident in the blackly humorous *Cathedral*, which looks like a ruin on a Martian landscape.

Waterston's aesthetic vibrancy compensates for the morbidity of his vision. His backgrounds are composed of luxurious, overlapping fields of color; painterly flourishes abound, among them artful drips that defy gravity; and abrupt shifts in perspective add drama to the scenes. He finds beauty and sublimity in trauma. I suggest that Waterston is a latter-day Romantic naturalist, as much on the sublime edge as Caspar David Friedrich and as obsessed with infinite space and radiant light as J. M. W. Turner—though the nature Waterston's images depict has seen better days.

—*Donald Kuspit*

Haroon Mirza
NEW MUSEUM

For his first New York solo exhibition, curated by Gary Carrion-Murayari and Jenny Moore, British artist Haroon Mirza stocked the New Museum's next-door storefront space with signal emitters. Studio speakers issue modemlike trills, junk-shop televisions flash syncopated bursts of white noise, and strips of LED lights intermittently douse the room in red, blue, or green. It is an installation that doubles as a concert, a pulsing electric fugue.



View of "Haroon Mirza," 2012.

Surprisingly, the installation also supplies an inadvertent comment on the legacy of Matisse, specifically the painter's characterization of his art as "for every mental worker, for the businessman as well as the man of letters, for example, a soothing, calming influence on the mind, something like a good armchair that provides relaxation from fatigue." Though it's debatable whether Matisse's first audiences actually found the perceptual eddies of his early painting "calming," this infamous statement furnishes a memorably haptic analogy for art's social function within modernism: as a cushion for compensatory repose. Mirza's ensemble includes nine paintings—or rather, nine fixtures rhetorically occupying the space of painting—that come off as lampooning Matisse's claim by literalizing it. Spaced evenly around the room are identical five-by-seven panels covered in black-foam spikes, a cladding common to recording studios. Here are monochromes as soft and padded as Matisse's armchair. Yet they aren't installed to swaddle mental workers, but to muffle errant echoes—that is, to reduce reverberation.

As science historian Emily Thompson explains in her 2003 study of early-twentieth-century acoustics, reverberation—the lingering of