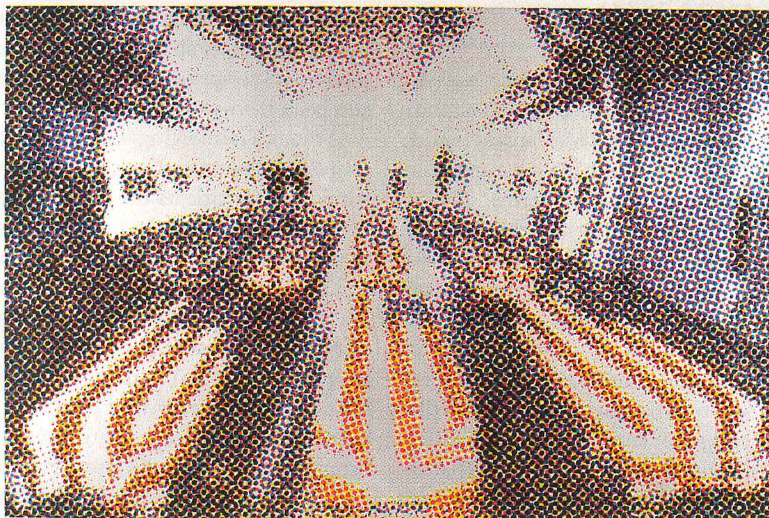
her almost sentimental attachment to found objects, Nevelson's idiosyncratic take on modernism may best be found in her romantic titles, for example, *Black Moon* (1959), which suggests the mystery and force of another world.

Like Louise Bourgeois, with whom she is often compared, Nevelson had a distinct, personal iconography that made her sculptures into minidramas—weighty totems of mortality, solitude, and isolation. Her insistence on matte, faded blacks—with the arid quality of charcoal—at the same time offered an asceticism and starkness that provide a crucial, decidedly nonpainterly contrast to the much-lauded monochromatic canvases made throughout the 1950s and 1960s: Stella's striped black paintings or Rauschenberg's white paintings immediately come to mind. But perhaps Johns's all-white encaustic flag and map paintings come closest to Nevelson's varied textures. It is precisely these sculptural paintings for which Johns has been much heralded, but Nevelson may deserve equal acknowledgment as a painterly sculptor, a feat unparalleled among others of her own generation—including Bourgeois.

While it has never been hard to find a Nevelson piece—her public commissions dot the urban landscape, abstract black curving walls that loom haughtily in the midst of corporate plazas nationwide—it has been nearly impossible to see them exhibited in New York museums. One revelation of this show is how much work Nevelson donated to the city's museums and how little of it is actually on view. (One wonders if the gifts were her attempt to secure her own legacy in an era of waning interest.) The greatest of these rarely seen pieces is a work she gave to the Metropolitan Museum of Art in 1985, the monumental *Mrs. N's Palace* (1964–77), which has been moved out of deep storage for this exhibition. Mausoleum-like in its structure, with black mirrored floors, it evokes the feeling of an inhospitable and inedible gingerbread house, which, by extension, makes Nevelson into a kind of witchy figure, almost frightening in her ability to repel and transfix the viewer simultaneously. —JENNI SORKIN

WAYNE GONZALES
PAULA COOPER GALLERY

Since 2001, when he became known for acid-palette paintings of Lee Harvey Oswald, Jack Ruby, and other photographic subjects tied to the Kennedy assassination, Wayne Gonzales has ventured into source imagery that is less iconic and often more quietly provocative. His new paintings of anonymous crowds, much like his 2005 series of landscapes populated by condominiums and resort lodges, point not so much to sinister political events as to a permissive climate of complacency in which such events find room to grow. His "Cheering Crowd" and "Waiting Crowd" series (both 2007) are based on unattributed images taken from the Internet and made into paintings that reference the look of reprographic media. He reproduces the same cheering crowd in dull shades of gray, white, and blue, sometimes inverting the image or creating multipanel works that give the illusion of a megagroup. In the context of an oeuvre built largely on references to political conspiracies, Gonzales's latest work brings to mind the enraptured audience of Photoshop-generated soldiers deployed for Bush's 2004 "Whatever It Takes" campaign and other more reproachable instances of voter manipulation. In the past, Gonzales used crisp Benday and halftone dots to bring the image into focus, but these new paintings are rendered in thick, discernible brushstrokes that are closer to Impressionism than to Pop and that keep things a bit hazy, to positive effect. Crowd imagery traditionally employed to suggest empowerment and the threat of collective political action here achieves the opposite—a fuzzy impression of blind enthusiasm and support. —STACEY ALLAN

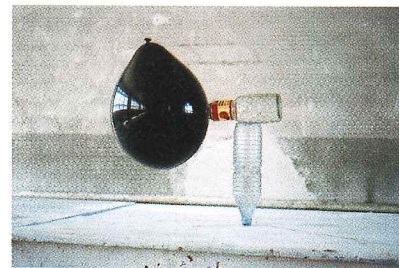


WAYNE GONZALES, **UNTITLED, 2007.** ACRYLIC ON CANVAS, 50 X 75 IN. COURTESY PAULA COOPER GALLERY, NEW YORK.

PETER FISCHLI AND DAVID WEISS
MATTHEW MARKS GALLERY

Ever since Bruce Nauman's mid-1960s videos celebrating messing around in the studio, studio play has developed into a thriving genre. Enter Peter Fischli and David Weiss, who similarly used the miscellany of their studio in "Equilibres," a series of 82 photographs taken between 1984 and 1987. Composed almost entirely of everyday objects in various states of improbable balance, the works cleverly animate and make good use of the random stuff that pack rats pile up.

Also on view was the debut screening in the US of the film *Making Things Go* (1987), a behind-the-scenes look at the nonsensical kinetic tinkering that went into the creation of the Swiss duo's masterpiece, *The Way Things Go*. In the latter of the two films (which was not on view), an extended chain reaction occurs between staged objects, resulting from a single absurdist gesture. *Making Things Go* is another carefully orchestrated domino effect done with low-budget resourcefulness. Witness, for example, the artists' painstaking engineering of a makeshift vehicle from tin cans and wooden dowels, all so they could nudge it merely an inch or two in order to bump a tire down a slanted two-by-four. In the still photographs and both films, Fischli and Weiss animate the mundane and charge the familiar with estranging potential, showing how objects are not only acrobatic circus performers, but also more serious actors in a drama of tranquillity, hesitation, outburst, and stasis. Once presented with photographs of a cucumber in a chance encounter with a patent leather pump, or a wine bottle cantilevered off a severely arched handsaw, you'll never look at the stuff lying around your house innocently again. —EVA DIAZ



FISCHLI AND WEISS, ***ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE*, 1984–86.** C-PRINT, 11 7/8 X 15 7/8 IN. COURTESY MATTHEW MARKS GALLERY, NEW YORK. © PETER FISCHLI/DAVID WEISS.

TRISHA DONNELLY
CASEY KAPLAN

Decoding Trisha Donnelly's medley of sound pieces, installations, drawings, and photographs is no easy task. This quality of being enigmatic—even strategically nonlegible—was evident in her third solo show at Casey Kaplan. The works included sound pieces that evoked the reverberations of chiming bells and the whirring blades of a helicopter; a heap of verdant, fragrant pine needles; stela-shaped floor pieces covered in gold fabric and embroidered with cryptic blue shapes; distorted C-prints the artist made by scanning a shipping tube with the image of a woman wrapped around it; a small photograph of the interior of a B-17 bomber; and an obscured depiction of a trumpet bell with the word *perlata* written on it (possibly a reference to the edible mushroom *Discina perlata*). This seemingly random collection did more than momentarily baffle; it actually transformed bewilderment into a model of aesthetic experience. Stranded within a labyrinth of non sequiturs, we were encouraged to embrace our insecurities before attempting a read of the work. Donnelly suggests that artworks function in ways that circumvent our rational understanding and invite us to play analytic games. While Donnelly's questioning of the limits of cognition can be confounding, resisting and challenging the viewer's expectations is the only way that art will continue to redefine itself. —NUIT BANAI