

Theresa Cha, *Aveugle Voix*, detail, 1975.

"The Dream of the Audience: Theresa Hak Kyung Cha (1951–1982)

Bronx Museum of the Arts, through Jun 15 (see Museums).

Fragmented voices, displaced identities and fugitive meanings permeate the small but jam-packed retrospective of Theresa Hak Kyung Cha at the Bronx Museum of the Arts. Cha worked for barely a decade—she came of age in San Francisco's experimental art world in the 1970s, but was murdered at the age of 31, in New York in 1982. Yet she tackled a remarkable range of media (including sculpture, video, performance, mail art, publications and works on fabric) and her interests remain current today.

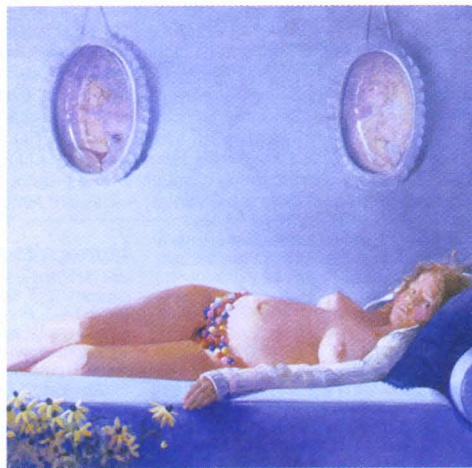
Gaps in communication and failures of language are central to Cha's oeuvre. An audio piece, *Audience Distant Relative* (1977), pinpoints the problem of artistic communication as Cha laments, "I can only assume that you can hear me. I can only hope that you hear me." In the Berkeley performance *Barren Cave Mute* (1974), represented here by 26 black-and-white photographs, Cha destroyed words by making them legible. At first the audience saw only three large sheets of white paper suspended in darkness. Then Cha held a lit candle to the papers to reveal words written in wax that melted and burned even as they appeared.

These works both resonate with Conceptual art of the '60s and '70s and speak to Cha's personal history. Having moved to the U.S. from her native Korea at age 12, Cha knew translation's slips and silences. Her most influential publication, *Dictée* (1982), offers a fragmented autobiography told in several languages through disparate characters culled from Greek myth, Korean politics and European history. For Cha, identity was always complicated and communication irredeemably flawed.—*Laura Auricchio*

Lisa Yuskavage Marianne Boesky, through Jun 27 (see Chelsea).

In case you missed the boat, the female nude is back and bigger than ever, especially in painting. A leading advocate of the genre's revival is Lisa Yuskavage, whose mix of Old Master technique and kitschy illustration seemed fresh initially but now has become practically academic. Her new output differs from her past work only insofar as it has ascended to new heights of mannerist luminosity. It is less pop-surrealist fantasy and more Georges de La Tour. The 18 canvases on view vary greatly in size and quality, the smaller ones more effectively conjuring the claustrophobic interiors that lend these pictures their suffocating air. But as in all Yuskavage's paintings, the women here exist only as ciphers of feminine ideals; every body part, even if slightly imperfect, appears drawn for maximum sexual use-value.

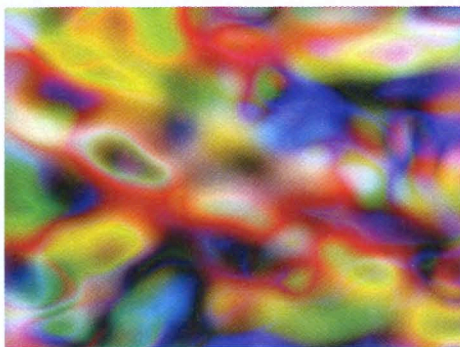
Critics (male and female alike) frequently praise Yuskavage and her peers, such as John Currin, for their triumph over the evils of "political correctness," as if their wholesale abandonment of feminism had restored art to its previous splendor by bathing us in

Lisa Yuskavage, *Couch*, 2003.

Thomas Ruff David Zwirner, through Jun 21 (see Chelsea).

A lot is happening for Thomas Ruff these days: a retrospective, currently at the Tate Liverpool, is touring Europe; a monograph of his "Nudes," featuring a story penned by French bad-boy writer Michel Houellebecq, is hot off the press; and now David Zwirner is premiering two new bodies of Ruff's work, "Substrats" and "Machines."

Like his "Nudes" (blurry beaver shots culled from X-rated websites), Ruff's "Substrats" rely on appropriated imagery that he digitally manipulates—in this case, from Japanese manga and anime found online. Ruff enlarges and distorts this source material until it dissolves into undulating fields of color. Here and there, vestiges of figures are apparent—like ghosts appearing and disappearing into a haze of primary and

Thomas Ruff, *Substrat 15 I*, 2003.

the (hetero)sexual titillation for which we all secretly longed. In essence, Yuskavage's work is the artistic equivalent of backlash "do-me" post-feminism, which suggests that a woman can be empowered by her sexuality as long as it conforms to patriarchal standards. But the idea that traditional sex appeal is the true path to liberation overlooks the very real power dynamics that govern our society. Rather than reinventing the nude, Yuskavage affirms its worst attributes, reducing subject to object and giving credence to post-feminism's most pernicious fallacy—a kind of neoconservative update of existentialist philosophy in which "being" has been reduced to "being hot."

—*Chivas Clem*

secondary colors—but the works are essentially abstract.

Ruff takes a different tack with "Machines," which are based on advertisement photographs of the 1930s and '40s for industrial machinery. Instead of being taken in the photographer's studio, these images were shot on the factory floor, with assistants clumsily holding up white backdrops. Using Photoshop, Ruff imbues these antiquated objects with almost phosphorescent hues, juxtaposing crude photo techniques with cutting-edge digital ones.

One wishes Ruff had shown the nudes instead, which can be glimpsed in the new glossy tome displayed at the front desk. True, Ruff has shown them before, but in an age when everyone from Pete Townshend to Pee-wee Herman is in trouble for possessing various—often digital—forms of photographic erotica, the "Nudes" remain far more resonant than either the "Substrats" or the "Machines." The gallery statement tries to sell these new projects as digital-era explorations of traditional abstraction and Surrealism, respectively; but these are high claims, particularly for work that, unlike its avant-garde predecessors, breaks little new ground.

—*Martha Schwendener*

Listings

IF YOU WANT TO BE LISTED

Submit information by mail, e-mail (art@timeoutny.com) or fax (212-673-8382) to **Sarah Schmerler**. Include details of event, dates, times, address of venue with cross streets, nearest subways, telephone number and admission price, if any. **Deadline is 6pm on Monday, ten days before publication date.** Incomplete submissions will not be included, and listings information will not be accepted over the phone.

HOW TO USE THIS SECTION

The following is a selection of this week's exhibitions and events. For more museums, see the Around Town, Museums section.

★=Recommended

Museums & Institutions

Asia Society

725 Park Ave at 70th St (212-288-6400). Subway: 6 to 68th St–Hunter College. Tue–Sun 11am–6pm; Fri 11am–9pm. \$7, students and seniors \$5, children under 16 accompanied by an adult and members free; Fri 6–9pm free. **"Landscape of Memory: The Art of Mu Xin."** Writings and landscape paintings produced by Mu Xin—one of China's most significant contemporary artists—during two periods of imprisonment at the time of the Cultural Revolution. Through Sept 7.

Austrian Cultural Forum

11 East 52nd St between Fifth and Madison Aves (212-319-5300). Subway: E, V to Fifth Ave–53rd Street; 6 to 51st St. Mon–Sat 10am–6pm. **"A Design Now: Contemporary Design in Austria."** A show exploring the contemporary Austrian approach to design. Featured are such diverse objects as Zellform dishes made from new, plant-derived materials and Archiquant's nubuck leather handbag. Through Sept 20.

Bronx Museum of the Arts

1040 Grand Concourse at 165th St, Bronx (718-681-6000). Subway: B, D to 167th St; 4 to 161st St–Yankee Stadium. Wed noon–9pm; Thu–Sun noon–6pm. \$5 suggested donation, students and seniors \$3, members and children under 12 accompanied by an adult free; Wed free. **"Commodification of Buddhism."** From Richard Gere to kung fu movies, Buddhist philosophy has entered the media-saturated mainstream consciousness—but has it been altered too far from its original context? View the work of Sanford Biggers, Jennifer Zackin, Mimi Young and a host of others in this large group show. Then decide whether appropriation or appreciation is the reigning state of mind. ★ **"The Dream of the Audience: Theresa Hak Kyung Cha (1951–1982)."** Cha, who came of age as an artist in San Francisco in the 1970s and died at the age of 31, has long been a darling of the Bay Area experimental art scene. A wide range of work—including video and film installations and ceramics—plus documentation of the artist's performances, are on display (see Reviews). Both, through Sun 15.

Brooklyn Museum of Art

200 Eastern Pkwy, Prospect Hts, Brooklyn (718-638-5000). Subway: 2, 3 to Eastern Pkwy–Brooklyn Museum. Wed–Fri 10am–5pm; Sat, Sun 11am–6pm; first Sat of each month 11am–11pm. \$6, students and seniors \$3, children under 12 free; First Saturdays 5–11 pm free. ★ **"Pulp Art: Vamps, Villains and Victors from the Robert Lesser Collection."** More than 100 rare paintings, magazines and book covers from the 1930s and '40s are on display (see "Lewd Awakening," page 58). Through Aug 31. ★ **"Egypt Reborn: Art for Eternity."** BMA's holdings in Egyptian art are impressive—so impressive, in fact, that the institution ranks (alongside collections in