

# Art in America

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bottom. Significantly, a shadow cast by the of the shaped volumes marks the line where the planes of fabric meet, a "horizon" that extends the fabric's width.

smaller white works substitute the series "Space": An Homage to Robert volumetric forms seem, jolly, to have been way from the rectangle, leaving behind a space that is filled with of transparent Plexiglas. Works recall the experiential volume, space and initiated by the Constructivists nearly a century ago.

—Michaël Amy

## Kraus

Recent exhibition featured shaped paintings, two spaces and a group of works by the Czech-born New York artist Pavel Kraus. Dominant display were large on transparent Mylar, titled "Levitations"

Each piece averages feet high, tapering from feet wide at the top to feet at the bottom. They cone-like wall sconces, colorful abstract shapes their surfaces appear like stained glass window installation, with the spot-lit and lining both the storefront gallery, medieval chapel. Add to show's ambience was component, an almost tical composition with movements of altered new-music composer ent Kraus collaborator's Bathory-Kitsz.

and abstract, the paintings result from unusual painting process which the artist starts by pouring sheets on the floor using fluid gestures of colored, poured and mixed pigments that flow together. Reversing the method of priming a canvas finishes with a top white that functions as ground to the colorful compositions, which can be embedded in the wood and are visible only on work's unpainted side. Usually, the sheets are rolled into half-cones and held to the wall, with

the narrower opening at the bottom; they protrude from the wall more than a foot at the top. Some works, such as *Levitation, Untitled #3*, contain several nested cone shapes.

Known for large-scale sculptures in heavy substances such as lead and marble, Kraus developed the light and airy new works partly out of physical necessity, after a shoulder injury in the studio last year temporarily thwarted his use of weightier materials. Included in the show was one of Kraus's large-scale minimalist sculptures, *Untitled* (2001-02), installed in a corridor leading to a rear gallery. Here, four large slab-like beams are made of wood covered in beeswax, each 8 feet high by about 2 feet wide and 8 inches thick. With two elements leaning against each wall, the piece has a heavy, somber architectural feel that served as an effective counterpoint to the seemingly weightless and light-filled paintings.

—Edward Leffingwell

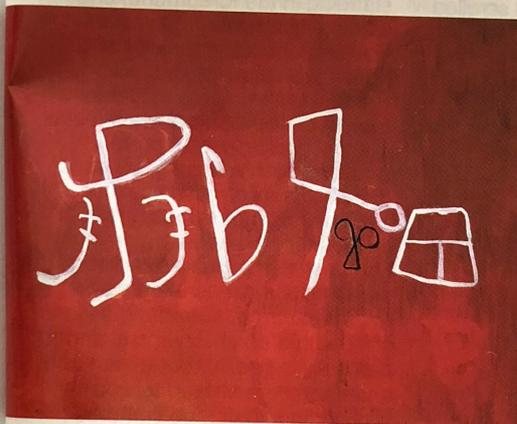
## Mangelos at Peter Freeman

Dimitrije Basicovic (1921-1987), a Croatian art historian, critic and curator who lived in Zagreb for much of his life, was also an artist who, although he began making work in the 1940s, did not show until the late '60s, under the pseudonym Mangelos. The subject of a 2003-04 traveling exhibition that originated at the Museu de Serralves in Porto, Mangelos's work was seen in a few examples at the latest Carnegie International. Curated by the world's expert on Mangelos, Branka Stipancic, a recent show at Freeman included some characteristic work—mainly small, intimate pieces of the size of book pages—from the early '50s to the late '70s.

Generally, Mangelos may be seen as belonging to the post-war European strain of "zero-degree" abstraction in which rationalism was pushed to its limits, collapsing into a kind of absurdity. For Mangelos, the "zero degree" lay in language, which he wielded as words or phrases scrawled in a variety of tongues, often on paper or cardboard painted black, or simply as letters—roman, Cyrillic, runic, and, most eccentric, Glagolitic, a primitive, disused Slavic script. He especially liked Glagolitic for its obscurity to readers and its easy adapta-

tion to geometric permutations. The show included, for instance, seven works in acrylic on board from Mangelos's 1978 "Glagolitic Letter" series, in which the letters look for all the world like some late, exhausted form of Suprematism, rendered in black, red and white (the artist's customary palette, along with, occasionally, gold).

Mangelos is most appealing when his sense of absurdity is at its strongest, or when his critique of a universalizing utopianism—the flaws of which could only be glaringly apparent to artists living in the Eastern bloc—softens into a kind of dream. For the first, one need only turn to a work called *Energija* (1977), an acrylic on wood panel in which the word "energy" is written in Glagolitic on a brushy red ground. As in many of his works, the ground looks as though it is obscuring something beneath (indeed,



Mangelos: *Energija*, 1977-78, acrylic on wood panel, 21 5/8 by 29 1/2 inches; at Peter Freeman.

Mangelos often worked on black paint brushed over pages from books). One suspects a hidden subtext, now irretrievable. In the failed-utopia vein, Mangelos produced a series of globes, flatly overpainted like his other works, and carrying texts of mystifying content placed within ledger lines. "Hegel=it's=nothing=" is the translation from the German of the red cursive text circumambulating a gold globe; the ca. 1977-78 work's title, *Hegel kritik der logic*, hints at Mangelos's philosophical drift. The promise of comprehensiveness and comprehensibility inherent in a globe is delicately undermined by the dainty script and the obliterating wash of color, making the object feel like a lost world, its secrets aphoristic at best, drifting in from some distant, perhaps more hopeful, era.

—Faye Hirsch

## Lindsay Brant at Haswellediger

Like artists David Altmejd and Liza Lou, Lindsay Brant uses craft to create a certain emotional distance from horrific subject matter. One pauses from the contemplation of mayhem and decapitation to admire the delicate skin of broken eggshells on a severed hand, or red plastic Chinatown beads strung together and arranged to suggest blood spouting from a slashed artery. This disconnect between medium and content is disconcerting. The slow, meditative process of piecing together small objects seems inimical to creating frozen tableaux of graphic, horror-film-style violence.

In the front gallery, visible through windows from the street, a pair of relatively quiet works from 2004 greeted the visitor. *Dead Deer* is a close-up color photograph of a deer's head resting

lifeless on the forest floor, surrounded by wildflowers. *Dark Deer* is a realistic painting of a live deer in the woods at night. Deer and surroundings are both so murky that the animal might be invisible but for its glowing blue eye. These themes of death and wildness seemed like preparation for the show-stopping works beyond.

*Broken to Break* (2005) presents a pair of fearsome, life-size wolf-dogs

fashioned from papier-mâché and painted black. One clenches a severed hand in its jaws while the other rolls on the ground, baring its sharp white plastic teeth. Around the corner from the dogs was an untitled installation (2005) presenting a nude papier-mâché figure rising out of a mound of old issues of the *New York Times*. The figure has apparently just been decapitated, its masklike head placed on the floor a short distance away and bead-blood spewing from its neck. It is in such works that histrionics are countered by the meticulous crafting of the forms.

More understated, and hence ultimately more effective, is a large stained-glass work that was placed at the very back of the gallery, the first in an ongoing series of windows titled "Cathedral of the Ethical Saboteur" (2003). Lit

Lindsay Brant, 2004.

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