

Badge of Honor, by Pepón Osorio features a spartan jail cell with a video of a father talking to his son; next door is a larger space—the son’s rococo dream bedroom crammed with sports equipment, a bicycle, and colorful toys. The boy’s video tells his father how much he misses him: things cannot replace love.

Finishing touches round out Hadid’s concept for the space: ceilings have interesting grille or grid patterns, floors are inlaid with lights or fine wood in adjacent bone and black hues. The members’ lounge is formed from two four-sided shapes that meet under a large window. The top floor is an Unmuseum, an interactive play area for all ages. It features objects that make weird sounds, a robotic tree that moves and sheds water in a kinetic response to viewers’ movements, and a “complex colors” room with plaid wallpaper, where one may sit in overstuffed chairs and watch the live video feed from the robotic tree room. The museum, by design, invites participation, and it even provides crayons and chalk. Since many of the objects are fragile and within touch, there are about 32 security cameras, just to be safe.

Cincinnati is proud of its architectural gems, old and new. The new CAC works on every level. If you believe art serves no function and has no use value, then a building is not art. Otherwise, Hadid’s CAC is a masterwork.

—Jan Garden Castro

San Francisco

Rainey Strauss

364 Hayes Street Gallery

One of the trickiest aspects of appreciating much recent art is understanding how its theoretical underpinnings dictate artists’ material and ideographic choices. While many of these choices appear to be a natural outcome of the performative and conceptually based art explorations that began during the 1960s and ’70s, a growing shift in art practice during the past decade has resulted in

an arguably “new” aesthetic, presently given various names including “relational art.” As Nicolas Bourriaud maps out in his *Relational Aesthetics*, written in the early 1990s, such art includes an expanded range of methodologies and forms that emanates from the synthesis of human relationships and their social context.

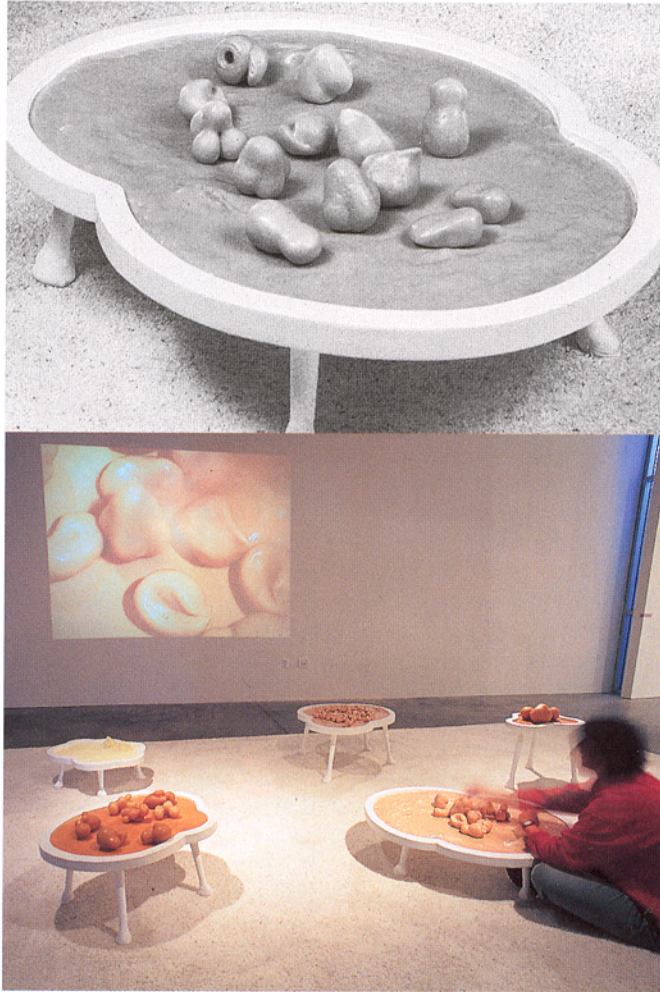
experiments, which abound in museums and galleries. Rainey Strauss’s installation *F.L.E.M.A.* (*Fluid, Language, Experience, Manifest, Attributes*) is an example of one such inquiry. Consisting of five low table-like forms, filled with beds of rubber or latex and soft fleshy forms that are intended to be tangibly explored, Strauss’s

and the very primal experience of holding and squeezing them. Intensifying the participatory, scripted, and self-referential nature of the art, while sitting on the floor on a soft gray cushion at one of the organically shaped tables and playing with Strauss’s “body parts,” viewers also have the experience of witnessing themselves engage with the body parts in the live feed video projection. The duality of the experience raises questions concerning our role in relation to the work. Am I audience or actor as I watch myself play with the blobby bionic forms?

In some ways, *F.L.E.M.A.—Station #1* is the richest, because in addition to witnessing yourself experience the sculpture, you also feel and hear a sound piece by Paul Scriver that emanates from speakers on the floor under the work, on the wall, and overhead in the center of the gallery. The spacey, primal tones, which are reminiscent of chimpanzee babbling (and are actually the synthesized sounds of human sexual encounters and insects recorded in Australia), reinforce the science fiction/filmic qualities of Strauss’s work.

It is ironic that Strauss named her exhibition “Aphasia,” because when I put aside the underpinnings and intent of the work, my experience of it was as a slow, somewhat meditative reconsideration of the body/self from surface (skin) to essence (intimacy). Strauss suggests that art needs to be more playful, and that one needs to reconsider and re-vision the experience of it. The project was successful in raising questions about and providing a model contradictory to consumer and technological freneticism—central artistic and social issues today. Perhaps nostalgic aesthetics and a retreat into the body are the only way to combat—or embrace—our aphasia, and slowly move forward into uncharted territory.

—Terri Cohn



Above: Rainey Strauss, *F.L.E.M.A.*, 2002. Mixed media, installation view. **Detail:** *F.L.E.M.A.—Station #1*. Mixed media, 15 x 35 x 25 in.

Artists exploring this mode of operation share an interest in claiming interaction and inter-human relationships, alternative social models, and collaboration as the essence of the work.

With the notion of representation up for grabs, artistic praxis has become fertile ground for somewhat self-conscious social

curious exploration of the body is propelled by her sense of the human inability to fully express the experience of corporeality. The effect of her work is both sensory and somewhat sensual; the flesh colors and sweetish smell of the organic forms augment their visual presence as an assortment of body parts