

Andrea Maki at Jeffrey Wilkey Gallery

Quite aware of Pop art practices established by the likes of Duchamp, Johns, Warhol and Rauschenberg, Andrea Maki delineates her own pictorial identity. Maki's mixed-media works rely on painting, construction, assemblage, silk-screening, photography, collage, lamination, signage, replications and "jigging" — the title of her show. By juxtaposing disparate forms with content from ad logos, symbols, text and images, Maki fulfills the meaning of jigging according to David Pye: "placing one concept up against another." As a result, the context for each work, like a plot, thickens.

Maki's assemblages incorporate recurring emblematic symbols which identify her authorship. *Exploding Bullz-I*, *Tonto*, *Cleanliness Counts* and *After Catmandu (Self Portrait I)* make central a self-portrait reproduced by photographic techniques. With the exceptions of *Exploding Bullz-I*, where focus falls on a linen hand rather than Maki's countenance, and an abstract silhouette of herself in the nude placed on the median of *Cleanliness Counts*, what we see first is her "female gaze". In classic or twentieth-century self-portraits, the eyes of the subject usually meet the eyes of the viewer. Maki's self-portrait replicated in the various assemblages alludes to the "classic" deflected and self-possessed female gaze that originated in Hollywood. Playing off literal meanings of image, symbol and object, Maki consciously creates a kind of "synthetic cubism" by arranging found imagery to build a third surface. Laminated surfaces imply dimensions which in turn refer to



Andrea Maki, *Tonto*, 1988-91
Mixed media assemblage, 61 x 52 x 3 1/2 inches

space and distance. "Time" emerges, then, as a correlative entity. Uncannily, in *After Catmandu*, by creating a third dimension from duplicated images superimposed one upon the other — a close-up and blowup — Maki creates a temporal image of a "present" in the foreground and a "past" in the background.

The most recent mixed media assemblage to include a self-portrait is *Tonto*, in which Maki attains a sense of expanding space by creating horizontal planes that embrace quadrilateral objects of focus — a photograph where breast-peaks life a t-shirt, a hingeless red door nailed shut with a yellow knob, a metal sign that reads "day sleeper," and New Jersey license plates.

Maki perfects the technique she created for *Kangaroo Island* and the *Catmandu* series in the diptych *Lucky & California*. Here she transfers the photograph of an indigenous American on horseback to the surfaces of a clothing store sign cut in two. Maki successfully creates the illusion that lettering was stencilled over the blowups of the horsewoman. The opacity of the black letters function like bars in that the transparency of the image from emulsions and pigment wavers behind them, a mirage. Authentic to the cast-off sign, on one panel, the found surface texture (and tension) rears raw-edged from metal plating in multiple gashes to resemble cicatrices or stab wounds. Maki seamlessly fuses symbols of ravaged and ravaging cultures with the vestige attributes of the original sign in this evocative work.

When Maki paints, the surface builds up stucco-like. In *No Barefeet*, the only element not rendered in oils is a lower half-face of a Native American with a glo-orange backing laminated to a rich grey marked by each curve of limber brush strokes. In contrast, a vertical section shows a cold-war bomber in a dive. The volume of space in the composition enhances the power of the dominant image.

"Jigging" accurately describes the overall technique Maki engages to unify images and materials. In addition, it pertains to her conceptual stance: nothing is unto itself, nothing is disposable. This prompts the artist to calibrate interrelationships within a composition determined by what she decides to salvage and recycle. Ultimately, however, meanings derived from content expanding into a coherent context depend on the viewer's associations as much as those set forth by Maki herself. Reaching for maximum exchange of affect between viewer and work, she relies on faces — her self-portraits, indigenous peoples who defy extinction, and other personages, real or manufactured. Just as she does with visual material, Maki jigs the various feelings that permeate the layered surfaces; they are culture-based and therefore "objective." She uses symbols to initiate a process that reads for meaning; at the same time, she proves such symbols do not share equal status if impact remains the sole criterion.

— Zoe Anglesey