

CRITICS' PICKS

CURRENT | PAST

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Laura Paulini and Jill
Sylvia
Desirée Holman

Berkeley

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Boston

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Dallas

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Houston

Lucas Johnson

New Orleans

Kara Hearn

Providence

Marcel Breuer

Mexico City

"Recursos Incontrolables
y Otros Desplazamientos
Naturales"

London

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"The Actuality of the Idea"
Thomas Helbig
Elizabeth McAlpine
Hussein Chalayan

Paris

Tobias Madison
"HF | RG"

Ile de Vassivière

San Francisco

Laura Paulini and Jill Sylvia

ELEANOR HARWOOD GALLERY
1295 Alabama Street
April 25–May 30

Laura Paulini and Jill Sylvia dissect Rosalind Krauss's assertion that the grid is a purely optical device free from the intrusion of speech. Paulini builds her grids organically, while Sylvia dismantles them to the point of collapse. In testing the boundaries of structural integrity, they simultaneously comment on the emotional repercussions of economic free fall, relaying quiet and anxious narratives of loss, faith, and accountability.

Sylvia uses a drafting knife to cleanly carve out the entry spaces in bookkeeping ledgers, leaving behind only a fragile lattice. The resulting filigreed objects are displayed as individual sheets recomposed in book form with pages held apart or, in the case of *Untitled (Vertical Installation)*, 2009, hung as a cascading scroll. These stripped-out ledgers suggest that our financial systems are incapable of transparency, as any tangible measure of profit and loss disappears along with the boxes. While Sylvia excavates existing arrays, Paulini constructs hers intuitively, applying uniform dots of egg tempera to panel, often working out from the center. She miscalculates points of convergence, encouraging seams to misalign and rhythms to fall apart. Often, the structure veers off course, as in *Kaleidoscope*, 2008, in which radiating arms clumsily shift and collide. Tension is exacerbated by lacunae peppered throughout her compositions, resembling random punch-card patterns.

Their differing approaches create distinct vantage points. The individual colors shimmer on close inspection in Paulini's paintings, but the overall palette is muted from a distance. Sylvia's objects resonate most when the skeletal forms come into full view. Both artists emphasize the grid's malleability, not its mathematical function and logic. However, the works on view depart from purely formal concerns to take measure of trust and intuition in a time of prevailing uncertainty.

— Patricia Maloney

PERMALINK TALKBACK (0 MESSAGES) E-MAIL PRINT

Desirée Holman

SILVERMAN GALLERY
804 Sutter Street @ the corner of Jones
April 17–May 30

"Reborns," the official name of hyperrealistic baby dolls lovingly created by and carried by a subculture of women, is a *This American Life*-ready phenomenon that's as fascinating for its psychological charge as it is for its materiality. Creating reborns is a codified and commercialized craft practice, like scrapbooking as though practiced by Ron Mueck. Desirée Holman entered into this milieu recently, meeting women and learning their craft, like a biased but not unsympathetic journalist. As evidenced by the video and drawings that compose this exhibition, she's fully aware of the hefty emotional and sculptural implications of her new work.

As she has done in previous projects, Holman blends allusions to psychotherapy, reenactment, dance, and music into a discomfiting



Jill Sylvia, *Untitled (Vertical Installation)*, 2009, hand-cut ledger paper, dimensions variable.



Desirée Holman, *Reborns*, 2008, oil on canvas, 10 1/2 x 10 1/2 x 10 1/2 inches.

Victoria Miro

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