



Feodor Voronow, painting from "Relics," 2013, is currently on view at Mark Moore.

radiant Rabbit sculpture in the center by Jeff Koons, who is best known for auction records. Mixing bright colors, excitable forms, and a knack for cultural touchstones, the result is a pop surrealism explosion that doesn't disappoint (Western Project, Culver City).

GJD

Anguished by post-Katrina conditions she witnessed earlier this year while in New Orleans, **Alison Saar** was inspired to produce work that incorporates the themes of impasse and renewal implied in her exhibition's title, "Slough." While underscoring her acclaimed ability to convey both strength and vulnerability in her portrayals of women, Saar addresses issues of racism that continue to threaten to

diminish the dignity of people of color. In "Per-a-Port" she leaves a found suitcase open, inviting us to view the crumpled, paper-thin figure inside, suggestive of a molting snake. Saar pads the rear of a drawing of a nude female with patches scavenged from a sugar sack in "Backwater Blues." Standing ankle deep in water, thinly veiled behind a screen door that can easily be opened by those eager for a closer look, the figure conveys the vulnerability and exposure of victims of Katrina and black women in general. In contrast, the looming size and death defying athleticism of the muscular nude sculpture titled "Pearly" represents Mademoiselle LaLa, a black Victorian era acrobat famed for hanging by her teeth. As an expression of sheer fortitude the image brings to mind the valor of another determined woman recently in the news, Diana Nyad. Saar's ability to depict a range of emotional states is obvious here, as well as in the contrast between the stunning cast bronze figures, "Spring and Summer" (visible from the gallery's Skyroom), and the kneeling woman behind the chewed chair in "Milk Teeth." Of special interest is Saar's handling of glass, wood and ceramic figures holding brambles, thorns or cotton. Referencing the "Cotton Eater" in Greek mythology, these works allude to practices designed to appease the poor with non-nutritious, apathy promoting gifts; the work reinforces Saar's mastery of a broad repertory of materials particularly suited to her visceral depictions of humanity.

At about the time when there was so much interest in their "Mindful Awareness" meditation sessions that the Hammer Museum felt compelled to podcast them weekly, **Tom Wudl** went into training to prepare himself to sustain the consistency and concentration necessary to produce a series of richly detailed paintings exhibited under the title "Reflections of the Flowerbank World." Inspired by his interpretation of the admonishment to meditate encrypted in the *Avatamsaka* Buddhist sutra, the paintings Wudl produced are much more than an illustration of an age-old text. Long held manifestations of interconnections between beauty and glory are embedded



Mark Dean Veca, "Flag II," 2012, india ink, acrylic on canvas, 83 1/4 x 44", is currently on view at Western Project.



Alison Saar, "Milk Teeth," 2013, paper, glue, cast resin, tar and found child's chair, is currently on view at L.A. Louver.

in his work. The largest painting in the show, "Unattached, Unbound, Liberated Kindness," glows with gem-like colors highlighted in 22-karat gold against a rich dark background. Interdependency of all phenomena within a cosmos of infinite realms is suggested in the repetitive patterns and frame-within-a-frame presentation favored by Wudl. Hidden treasures lie waiting to be discovered by viewers patient enough to take their time to examine Wudl's rich imagery mindfully (L.A. Louver Gallery, Venice).

DC

"The Cyrus Cylinder and Ancient Persia: A New Beginning" is a small gem of show - just a couple dozen objects - based around one of the most famous artifacts of the ancient world, the Cyrus Cylinder, on loan here from the British Museum. The accomplishments of Cyrus II, ruler of

Persia 559–530 B.C., are told on this broken clay cylinder 9" inches long and 4" wide, through the Babylonian cuneiform incised onto its surface. It tells of how Cyrus conquered Babylon in 539 B.C. and set up reforms, restored sanctuaries, and permitted exiled peoples to return to their homeland – this included Jews who were permitted to return to Jerusalem, which is referred to in the Book of Isaiah in The Old Testament.

In 1879 the cylinder was found buried in the foundation of the walls of Babylon, and quickly recognized for the important document it is. So important, in fact, that in 1971 Iran adopted it as the official symbol for the 2,500th anniversary of the founding of the Achaemenid Empire in Iran. The image graced many coins, stamps, and medals. The exhibition, which has made previous stops at the Met and at the Asian Art Museum in San Francisco, also includes a choice selection of other objects that help tell the story of the Achaemenid Empire, such as coins, seals, gold jewelry, architectural fragments, and vessels. These reflect the primary concerns of the times – warfare and ritual. On one cylinder seal, a warrior in a driven chariot battles a lion. On a coin, another warrior kneels on one knee as he steadies his bow to shoot an arrow. One addition to the show unique to the Los Angeles venue is a new acquisition by the Getty - the earliest photographs of the ruins of the Achaemenid palaces and audience halls at Persepolis, from Luigi Pesce's "Album fotografico della Persia" (1860) (The Getty Villa, West Side).

Scarlet Cheng



Cyrus Cylinder, from Babylon, southern Iraq, ca. 539-530 BC, is currently on view at the Getty Villa. Courtesy of the British Museum.