



strangled under the weight of the past.

*Tree* (2014) has a similar weight. Influenced by the African American tradition of hanging brightly colored bottles from tree branches in order to capture bad spirits, Leigh made her own protective talisman by hanging bottles and other glass forms from a fence-like structure made of steel rods. Anchored between two walls, the work acted as a barrier, cordoning off a corner of the gallery. The prohibited space contained a small bowl of ceramic plantains glazed in Wedgwood blue, a color that would have been found in stately homes throughout the South. Unlike *Cupboard*, this space offered no entrance. Were we being excluded and prohibited from experiencing the fruits of our labor? Or had Leigh isolated a past from which we are now safe?

Since Leigh usually creates highly finished ceramics, *Jug* (2014) is quite a departure. Using Lizella clay, which is indigenous to Georgia, she borrowed the form of a traditional face jug, with its broad base, narrow mouth, and small handle running from the mouth to the shoulder. Rather than portraying the likeness of a person, Leigh built up the surface with a pattern formed by the indentation of her finger. Uncharacteristically, she left this work unglazed,

as though unresolved about her place in relation to this time-honored African American tradition and to the material, which is found in the same ground once worked by slaves.

Leigh proudly acknowledges that her work comes from a desire to understand her identity as a black woman. Previous explorations have led her to West and South Africa, so it is a natural choice for her to consider the American South. *Face Jug* demonstrates this quest in relation to the region's rich historical culture in a profound way. It also points to the show's one downfall—as a whole, it felt heavily based in stereotypes. Never having visited the region, Leigh relied on research and mediated imagery, and her decision to focus on face jugs, bottle trees, Mammies, and Wedgwood china paints a picture that feels less about Leigh than about preconceived notions of the South. Fortunately, the individual works were thought-provoking enough to carry the show.

—Rebecca Dimling Cochran

#### NEW YORK

#### Anna Maria Maiolino

##### Hauser & Wirth

Anna Maria Maiolino's work stands out for its elegant aesthetic and gutsy use of homespun processes and materials. Born in Calabria, Italy,

Left: Simone Leigh, *Cupboard*, 2014. Steel, porcelain, stoneware, and wire, 18 x 12 ft. Right: Anna Maria Maiolino, *São 21 (They are 21)*, 2013. Raku ceramics, metal wire, metal table, and electrostatic paint, 125 x 35 x 35 cm. Bottom right: Anna Maria Maiolino, *Untitled*, 2012. Plaster, acrylic resin varnish, metal table, electrostatic paint, and clay, clay piece: 31 x 47 x 37 cm.

Maiolino grew up in Venezuela and Brazil. She and her husband Rubens Gerchman were among the original members of the New Objectivism Brazil movement (Nova Objetividade Brasileira), which exhibited at Rio's Museum of Modern Art in 1967. The group's platform included renewed interest in the figure and in Brazil's indigenous cultures. They were intent on changing the Neo-Concrete and Modernist directions of older Brazilian artists such as Lygia Clark, Lygia Pape, and Hélio Oiticica.

The 42 works included in Maiolino's recent show, most of them created in 2013, are notable for their immediacy, intimacy, and range. The human-size forms incorporate raku-fired ceramic, plaster, molded and pigmented cement, metal, wood, and electrostatic paint. Even the two-dimensional ink-on-paper pieces—*Interações (Interactions)*—feel sculptural because they are created by handling the paper so that the ink runs in different directions; the resulting compositions engage the body as well as the eye.

The "Cobrinhas (Little Snakes)" series (1993/2013) consists of hand-molded plaster coils that evoke the intestines and bodily processes. Maiolino sees the cycle of life as visceral. As she told Helena Tatay in 2010 for an interview on the Documenta 13 Web site: "We live and die from the mouth to the anus. I find it impossible not to talk, not to poetize about what comes in and out of the body, when these are experiences that are fundamental, corporal, and



vital to us...The intestine is a hole that we can never fill, just as we can never fulfill desire.”

Fun, movement, and *joie de vivre* are also part of Maiolino's aesthetic. Several mixed-media works integrate curving, oval, and womb-shaped objects on tables, reminding us that much of life takes place on and around tables. These table pieces involve negative and positive forms. The “Preposições (Prepositions)” series consists of 25 vertical metal framing structures on legs. Inside, raku forms hang from thin wires, clustering at the bottom or dangling at various levels. This series cleverly visualizes prepositions as odd, overused parts of speech, connecting things but hanging by themselves.

In addition to sculpture, Maiolino also works in video, a medium that allows her to focus her attention more specifically on parts of the human body. *Um Momento, Por Favor (One Moment Please)* features a beautiful, poetic text. Sound also plays a role in the sculpture *Two Beats* (2010–12), as two objects and two low stools face each other at opposite ends of a narrow wooden table. The entire exhibition, as suggested by its title “Between Senses,” offered an extended conversation across materials, languages, processes, and viewers.

—Jan Garden Castro

## LORNE, AUSTRALIA

### Elizabeth Presa

#### 2014 Lorne Sculpture Biennale

In Elizabeth Presa's installations, active beehives function as small architectural objects that address dwelling-in and shelter. Her deeply process-oriented practice equates materials with political and spiritual value to re-imbue plaster, glass, wax, fabric, flour, paper, thread, bees, and snails with a significance either forgotten or overlooked in the mad rush to commodification.

Since 2003, Presa has led the interdisciplinary Centre for Ideas at the



University of Melbourne's Victoria College of Art. She recently traveled to the Vatican to do some research—the Pope's apiary is home to half a million bees. During her travels, her latest work, *Bee Village*, was scheduled for installation at the 2014 Lorne Sculpture Biennial, where the more than 30 small plaster hives cast from baskets were gathered to overlook the ocean. Presa's instructions for the piece included living beehives to be set among the sculptures “to create a sort of frenetic energy.” Upon her return, she learned of a last-minute decision to exclude the live bees because they carried too much risk. She felt that what remained was “only half a sculpture.”

Presa burned and blackened the outer walls of many *Bee Village* hives, which echoes a traditional Japanese method for weather resistance. She also dispersed seeds within the hives, which were meant to germinate during the biennial. Some of the hives were decorated with flowers, lace, and pure food colors, giving the impression of a Lilliputian contingent of imps, pixies, dryads, and sylphs convened to shelter and protect the bees.

Things happen for a reason, and in spite of the missing movements and sounds of live bees, there was still great meaning to be had from this “ghost” of *Bee Village*. As a micro-

**Above and right: Elizabeth Presa, 2 details from *Bee Village*, 2014. Mixed media, dimensions variable.**

cosm of the earth, the installation set the stage for a world devoid of bees. Or perhaps, it represented what Timothy Morton suggests in his book, *Hyperobjects: Philosophy and Ecology After the End of the World*: “What exists outside the charmed circles of Nature and life is a *charnel ground*, a place of life and death, death-in-life and life-in-death...that is a much better analogy for ecological coexistence...”

The physical resolution of Presa's inquiry is, at times, fabulously detailed, careful, and elegant, and, at other times, an almost off-the-cuff lexicon of odd bobs or “stuff.” Defiantly anti-formal, her Fluxus-like settings use the everyday to undermine the status quo. Yet, as an *agent provocateur*, Presa offers entry to a theater of socio-poetic practice that surpasses Fluxus' manner of creating research methodology for networked ideas. She goes further and throws down the gauntlet to understand our own embeddedness in objects larger and more powerful than ourselves. Her willingness to relinquish virtuosity and the primacy of the singular artist as creator implies a necessary wisdom not unlike that of the bees.

—Carol Schwarzman



## LONDON

### “The Human Factor”

#### The Hayward Gallery

The problem with group shows is that the curator is powerfully present, and when a show attempts a survey or argument, it is hard not to be distracted by potential omissions or possible flaws. “The Human Factor” fell foul on both counts: there were omissions in the selection and holes in curator Ralph Rugoff's premise—that there is a “ubiquity of the figure in sculpture today.”

It seemed arbitrary for the show to include 25 artists and survey the last 25 years of artistic production. And why represent some artists with just