

as aluminum arrows, fabric balloons, and silicon flowers. The sculptures contain figurative components buried within or jutting out from masses of organic abstraction. The forms are soft, collapsing under their own weight, seemingly melting (a property we associate with wax), dissolving or putrefying. The beige to yellow coloration and texture of the wax are reminiscent of rotting meat, puss, and semen, which does not heighten the physical allure. This isn't joyful work. It deals with bodily pain, emotional distress, constraint, and death. Works such as *Death of a Virgin* and *Jesus* suggest themes of good versus evil, mysticism, and time-honored narratives. In essence, Collura's sculpture tackles the Neo-Platonic theme of the soul seeking to escape from the confines of the body (or matter).

Spiral (2005–06), which hung from the ceiling by a chain, has more than a hint of Paul McCarthy mixed in with some George Condo. In its seeming desire to include as much as possible, it is reminiscent of Chris Burden's *Medusa's Head*, though *Spiral* consists of an exploded composition spinning around a vertical. The semblance of all-inclusiveness turns out to be a shortcoming when handled by Collura, for her choices—mass versus line, hard versus soft, attraction versus repulsion, figuration slipping into abstraction and vice versa—cancel each other out, thereby leading to visual congestion. In certain contexts, willfully bad taste can be terrific—witness Warhol. But here, as elsewhere in Collura's work, this principle has been brought down to the level of kitsch—grandma's porcelain tchotchkes blown up exponentially. Unlike in the work of Koons, however, Collura's figures end up in perilous situations. The figure trapped in the middle of *Spiral*—his limbs torn asunder, his wax epidermis mimicking the translucency and

elasticity of skin—and surrounded by soft, seemingly edible parts reminds one of Gargantua, looking up in ecstasy, though hardly triumphant.

The freestanding *Death of a Virgin* (2005–06) shows a figure with preposterously large ears in the spirit of Condo, lying on its back on top of a vertical mass, as if it had fallen from a great height, with the result that the body is shattered, thighs and chest literally torn off what remains of the torso. Collura clearly has a great deal to say. Her statements would be considerably less garbled if they were more focused. Even in a highly eclectic and idiosyncratic art of excess, more—to paraphrase Mies—may amount to less.

—Michaël Amy

NEW YORK

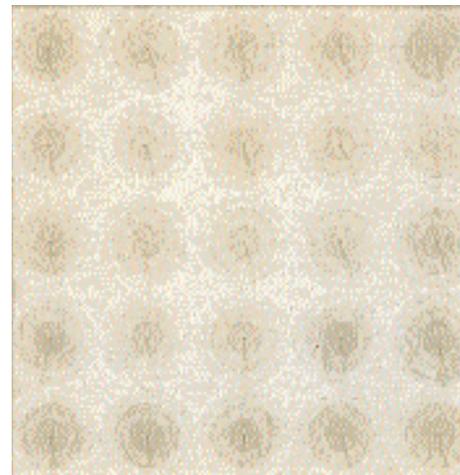
Eva Hesse

The Jewish Museum and the Drawing Center

Eva Hesse gave a new sensibility to Minimalist notions of repetition, patterns, and grids. Between 1961 and 1970, when she died at age 34 after battling a brain tumor, her drawings on paper became dimensional. The Drawing Center show charted the curious ways that her work turned sculptural, starting with drawings surprisingly bursting with color and one untitled 1964 gouache of five box-like forms whose center literally pops up from the surface. Competing notions of clarity and complexity appear in drawings of machine parts and in *Tomorrow's Apples* (1965). In this enamel, gouache, and mixed-media work, five colored strings connect two flesh-colored mounds. The shadows of the cords somehow double and cross over each other. *Ingeminate* (1965) offers two oblong balloon forms transformed into black sausages wrapped in coils and connected by a thick brown umbilical cord.



Above: Eva Hesse, *Repetition Nineteen III*, 1968. Latex and filler over canvas stuffed with polyethylene sheeting, rope, and unidentified materials, Right: Eva Hesse, *Untitled*, 1967. Ink and pencil on paper on board and nylon string.



As Hesse's work took off in these and other sculptural directions, she experimented with papier mâché, reinforced fiberglass over wire mesh, and latex over cloth, rope, and cord. The obsession with circles, represented at the Drawing Center by works incorporating those coiled raised circular mounds, reaches a delicate peak in a grid of unpainted circles on a gray-washed ground. The center of each circle is punctured, a short thread of varying length moored by one knot in each hole. The threads' longer shadows form a knotted grass-like white field.

At the Jewish Museum opening, the cognoscenti were calling Hesse a proto-feminist and noting the associations between her forms and human body parts. Eleanor Heartney said that Hesse "personalized and organized Minimalism—the question of whether she was a proto-feminist turns on this issue of injecting

what seems to be a very body-conscious, and hence perhaps female, element into the stern reductionism of the male artists now known as Minimalists. I would argue that, even if she wasn't consciously making work as a woman, as later feminists did, that her work has an undeniable female sensibility, which is why it has been embraced by later generations of women artists."

Hesse's accomplishments culminated in her 1968 exhibitions at the Fischbach and Leo Castelli galleries. Works from those two shows formed the core of the Jewish Museum's moving and beautiful exhibition. It

reunited many of these 1968 works, including *Repetition Nineteen III*, the intriguing cylinders from MoMA; *Aught*, four large mustard-hued rectangles in latex and mixed media; and *Area*, a long rectangle of brownish latex and filler on wire mesh that drapes itself from wall to floor.

These two exhibitions once again demonstrated Hesse's unique contributions to drawing and sculpture. Barry Rosen, of the Eva Hesse Estate, says that "the two separate shows, each with its own focus, make a stronger statement than a bigger show. The brilliance of the Drawing Center's installation by Catherine de Zegher (its former director) gave a great texture to what the drawing was about, and the Jewish Museum show focused on an important group of works that have a strong relation to each other."

—Jan Garden Castro

NEW YORK

Betty Woodman

Metropolitan Museum of Art and Max Protetch Gallery

Betty Woodman is the first living clay artist to exhibit at the Metropolitan Museum. Her works, which began as decorative utilitarian clay vessels, have become increasingly layered and conceptual. The Met and Protetch exhibitions offered dialogues among the thrown vessel, painting, and sculpture and across the history of art. As Metropolitan Museum Associate Curator Jane Adlin tells it, the Woodman exhibition came about at the artist's suggestion as she was serving the curator homemade blueberry pancakes. Adlin asked her superiors up to Philippe de Montebello and all said yes. Then Woodman suggested replacing the vases in the atrium with her own, and this out-of-the-ordinary request also sailed through official channels.

The Met exhibition opened with early experiments in color and form, from the stoneware *Erotic*



Betty Woodman, *Aeolian Pyramid*, 2000. Glazed earthenware, epoxy resin, lacquer, and paint, 120 x 168 x 91 in.

Burrito (1971) to the glazed earthenware *Italian Basket* (1978). All demonstrate creative, varied ovoid forms leading to *Tang Pillow Pitcher* (1981), a shape that plays with "pillow" sides bulging out horizontally. This shape is present in the original Tang Hu vessel, but Woodman's pitcher adds an elongated neck and handle.

The Met galleries showcased Woodman's fluency with clay. Clay may be thrown on a wheel, sliced, incised, extruded from tubes, and otherwise shaped using inventive techniques. Woodman even paints with clay slip in the 18-foot-tall *Roman Panel*, a canvas, glazed earthenware, terra sigillata, epoxy resin, lacquer, and paint work designed to tower over viewers and to command its space at the Met. The wall piece (its model was shown at the Protetch Gallery) alludes to Baroque murals yet adds many self-consciously aesthetic gestures: three white vases on shelves have loose, black calligraphy and cutaway clay parts are nailed on. *Roman Panel* collapses the usual distinctions between finished and unfinished, colored and uncolored, flat and three-dimensional, clay and canvas.

One of Woodman's most recent pairs of "his/her" vessels, *Ferris Wheel* illustrates some of her free-wheeling ways and the complexity of her compositions. The two vessels, which seem to resemble cats, one sitting and one standing, have a symbiotic relationship, with one slightly taller and the other slightly longer. The two main faces of each vessel have strikingly different images. Among the images on one set of sides is a blue vase divided between the two vessels. It seems to be pouring itself from one to the other, and the image travels across the space between them. The other side of this "his/her" pair is ornamented with a series of color tests, as well as words and numbers—69, *shrimp*, *blue gray*, 170/914, *Delph*, *sky*, 14P—painted in different colors, along with curving brown lines. The title *Ferris Wheel* suggests the circular movement of the wheel used to form the initial work, the color wheel, and notions of things with recurring cycles.

In Woodman's work, aesthetic properties are paramount. Even forms that refer to use value are not primarily functional. Woodman has, for example, worked with the Sèvres

Porcelain factory in France to recreate a soft paste porcelain recipe. Her deliciously impractical cup-like forms are named *Colette*, *Berlioz*, *Molière*, and *Violette le Duc*. As we look into the lumpy yet elegant *Colette* demitasse with its scalloped edges and big saucer, we may slip into the Parisian whirl of budding intimacies and seductions. These two exhibitions offered sunlit views of an artist who has shaped, painted, and glazed her way around and into art history.

—Jan Garden Castro

PORTLAND, OREGON

Hilda Morris

Portland Art Museum

The Portland Art Museum's comprehensive retrospective covering the career of Hilda Morris (1911–91) was the first major exhibition of this prominent sculptor's large and powerful body of work. Consisting primarily of sculptures but including a sprinkling of her sumi paintings, the show and accompanying catalogue provided an important assessment of works as forceful today as at mid-20th century when they were first seen. Working in the relative isolation of Portland, Oregon, Morris