

This same range of interpretation is seen in Comer's choices of portraiture. Allusive symbolism in undefined space is present in Bill Jacobson's well-known *Interim Portraits* #355 and #222 (1992). However, the most thought-provoking reinventions of portraiture are in the works by others, mostly emerging artists from Atlanta.

Employing the first person narrative, Jenny Clifton's emotionally powerful *Heavy* (1998) gives a more honest, less voyeuristic view from the other side of a culture obsessed with body weight. 36 chromogenic prints are assembled in an immense grid pattern. Singularly, each closeup tells a fragment of a life: a newspaper ad sent anonymously by someone about the newest "miracle diet" pill, her pendulous breasts, her hand's shadow falling over her face as Clifton grimly peers out at the viewer. The work as a whole is a lived experience.

In like manner in her "Inner Landscapes: A Body's Expression" series, Pamela Ellerbrock uses the photographic process to deal with her mother's death, her own mortality and, finally, her emotional healing with a celebration of life. This journey is documented through her evocative double exposed pinhole photographs. Fleeting glimpses of Ellerbrock in her nude self-portraits are overlaid with faded flower petals, bare branches and dark shadows. By revealing her story so carefully and so closely, it is as if she has blurred the lines between public and private to whisper in a clear voice what she has learned.

Taking a step away from self-investigation as portraiture, Alli Royce Soble captures the vivid life of her circle of friends. Each portrait is a unique darkroom creation, playfully painted with hot, bright colors. These are what Soble refers to as "real moments between friends." Dynamic and sometimes introspective, there is a light beyond visible appearances in *Chrysty* (1997) and in *Omi* (1997).

Urban landscape and anonymous portraiture blend together in the five chromogenic images from Deborah Wian Whitehouse's widely recognized "Saturday Night" series from 1996 and in the four silver gelatin works from Ohm Phanphiroj's "Strangers in the Night" series, begun in 1998. In both bodies of work, night discloses urban territories occupied by people, where unknowns are revealed and concealed. Dim light pervades. Moods, despondency and the undefinable side of night are detected. Their cameras record but also become part of the construction of these realities.

As a debut exhibition, "Faces & Places" succeeds in showing, as Comer states in the wall text, how postmodernism continues in contemporary photographic art forms. Her choices are intuitively fitting. Perhaps, though, for a public space, a greater effort is needed to educate those who just happen to be in the building. Detailed wall text, in public viewer-friendly language, accompanying each artist's work to explain why the art was important enough to be displayed would have completed this meaningful exhibition.

Susan Todd-Raque, Atlanta



Alan Loehle, *Box*, 1994, oil on canvas, 82" x 65" (photo courtesy of Marcia Wood Gallery).

#### ATLANTA

There is uncomfortably little distance between the raw meat and live dogs described in the recent drawings and paintings of **Alan Loehle** (Marcia Wood Gallery, April 2–May 8). Looming up from the walls of the gallery, his subjects provoke an immediate visceral response.

Powerful and aggressive canines like Rottweilers and bull terriers are the animals of choice for Loehle. Their brutal presence externalizes the vicious side of humankind, while emphasizing our vulnerability. At the same time the dogs contain a repressed savagery—each is miserably alone in deep darkness or in half shadow, kept company only by a suspended hunk of butchered meat. The animal's entire being is fixed on that flesh. The random appearance of objects at his feet (an electric cord, plastic rings and a squeeze-toy) does not distract his regard.

The white dog that eyes *Meat* is charged with anger. A hook above him suspends a bruised cavity of red and marbled flesh. The dog's mouth, a black slit edged in pinky reds, is the only solid definition in a body rippling with dark desire. Frenetic motion dissolves the dog's tail and shadow into smoke. A red electric cord that crosses the floor behind him becomes a sign of constrained bestiality, a thin red line that he has crossed.

In *Box*, a dark background and shadowy floor vaguely define a visual space blurred with a dog's raw energy. Layered paint strokes create the kinetic energy in his fleshy skin. The animal is caught in motion, one paw atop the vertical rectangle of a yellow box, as if surmounting an enormous obstacle.

*Dark Room* generates in the viewer a physical angst. Two carcasses dangle over the head of a thick-bodied brown dog. Caught aware of his mortality (and perhaps of his precarious position in the food chain), his twitching muscular form cowers below the carcass and its pendant entrails. His eye menaces, while his body quakes in fear.

Loehle's small drawings are beautiful, and far easier to approach. In pen and ink, *Dark Room* describes fear at a clean-edged remove. The dog crouching on the floor is frozen in the same realization. Above him, a bound carcass stretches out like a crucified figure. Another flayed form hangs beneath, almost touching his back. The more intimate scale, 11 by eight inches, forces the animal into a more uncomfortable confrontation with his raw self.

Watery motion studies of another favored figure, the dwarf, would appear inconsequential, if not for their relationship with the large-scale paintings

of the same dense figure. Rendered in oil on canvas, the dwarf in *Walking Man* becomes a dramatic persona. His foot rests on a crack that breaks its way through the surface of a smooth grey floor and disappears into the darkness beyond. The rest of the dwarf's powerful body is a motion-filled blur. His shuddering head glows like a jack-o-lantern.

These paintings present a remarkably cool parallel to the work of the late Francis Bacon. Bacon's violent, expressionistic images of raw flesh, grimacing orifices and brutal, animalistic relationships don't hold back; they scream in hellish ecstasy. Loehle's studied brushwork, while vibrating with visual intensity, is emotionally restrained.

Still, as he recreates photographic effects, Loehle deconstructs movement, but not in a neat, easy way. His flat surfaced paintings belie the agitation in their dark interiors. Visually disrupting the line between animal and human, animal and meat, the artist confronts us with our primal apprehensions. Like his subjects, we are forced into a position of dis-ease, compelled to consider our mortality and the misery of our modern isolation.

Cathy Byrd, Atlanta



Andrew Sافتel, *Wall of Wishes*, 1999, mixed media on wood, 56" x 48" (photo courtesy of Lowe Gallery).

#### ATLANTA

On the surface of things, the three painters exhibited at the Lowe Gallery (April 30–May 26) are quite different from one another. Whereas **Mark Perlman's** work resembles cave paintings, **Michael David's** paintings are minimalist, milky walls of paint. **Andrew Sافتel** employs a high-keyed palette and the multiple representational strategies characteristic of postmodernism. A closer examination of each artist's process, however, reveals a connection between the underlying structures of the paintings. All three employ extensive underpainting and build up their paintings in layers on wood panels. All three also demonstrate a keen interest in the texture of the painted panel and employ painting media, such as encaustic, that allow them to create rich and densely painted surfaces.

Mark Perlman clearly comes out of an abstract expressionist love of sgraffito, engraving multiple marks and gestures into the wooden surface. There is a feeling of automatic drawing, as the artist scratches and scrawls circles and lines. These scrawlings, which seem like some prehistoric handwriting, have the quality of all-over paint-