

ROCHELLE FEINSTEIN on PAM LINS

When I arrive at Pam Lins's studio on Good Friday, she shows me a recent find: a vintage copy of *On Not Being Able to Paint*, by Joanna Field (aka Marion Milner); foreword by Anna Freud. Lins's reverie is not over the book's content but its chapter headings: "Ideals and the Fatal Prejudice," "Monsters Within and Without," "The Necessity of Illusion." For Lins, who mounts lilliputian paintings onto and inside gigantic sculptures and creates cloven-hoof pedestals, who has said, "I've always used representation because I don't understand it" and "I desire to make things that are of no culture while keeping it contemporary," this wormy book sans its text is a cogent aphrodisiac. Channeling *Critique of Pure Reason* through Art Therapy 101, the book—or at least, its wacky titles—is a compass set exactly on the wildness and brilliance of Lins's work.

As we walk through her studio, the chapter heading "The Refusal of Reciprocity" begins to vibrate. Lins's sculptures allude to emptiness and immeasurable depth. Lightweight plywood is at once plain-Jane material and painted surface invoking infinite space. Her forms lean, rest, balance, prop—with bases as likely to come from a modernist lexicon of form as from faux-rationalist white cubes that are Straight from the Crate (no, never Design Within Reach for her). Reading as both explicit gestures and implicit blanks, they create a condition in which physical hollowness is inseparable from conceptual density. Northern Romanticism meets Midwestern Utilitarianism, as Lins harnesses Home Depot, thrift shop, and bioengineering with an urgent but subtle need-for-Green undertone through reflection, observation, and touch.

We spent some time with a new group of sculptures whose working title is *Please Bear With Us*. Facing a wall, propped on two pieces of planed wood, a mirror reflects the floor planks as diagonals moving against the directional diagonal of the actual floor, zigzag-style. Lins told me about Lacan's theory of the internalization of an image of the self: A female pigeon reaches sexual maturity in the presence of other members of her species; when isolated from other pigeons, she can reach maturity only when she can see her own image in a mirror. This touches upon biology and the complicated engagement images have with everything else. Much like Lins's work.

And Good Friday? Lins recently saw a sculpture of Mary Magdalene in the woods. She made a painting based on it, then a sculpture. Knowing nothing about Mary's post-Resurrection voyage to Provence, I did some research and found an image of Donatello's widely known version. Lins's model, as it turns out, is not this one, but a rough and homely Mary posed as a mirror-image opposite to Donatello's. While the chapter heading "Being Separate and Being Together" may be a bit cosmic, it is apt for this work that is worldly, unabridged, and fabulous.

Rochelle Feinstein is an artist living in New York.



LINS IN STUDIO WITH MARY MAGDALENE, 2007, ACRYLIC ON CANVAS, 20 x 20; ALL IMAGES COURTESY OF THE ARTIST.



WIN ME FREE (DETAIL), 2005, CARDBOARD BOXES AND LIVE MUSHROOMS, INSTALLATION AT SILO, NEW YORK.

