

present world, the artist seems to be saying, the soul may be as impossible to visualize as ever, but nevertheless it continues to hold the memory of what has occurred during moments of forgetfulness.

—Marek Bartelik

## ATHENS

### “Panic Room”

DESTE FOUNDATION CENTER FOR CONTEMPORARY ART

Downplaying as it does subjective expression and the hand of the artist, Conceptual art might have been expected to foretell the obsolescence of drawing, but in fact the medium's aptness for the

unencumbered articulation of thought processes made it central to the tendency. By the same token, neo-expressionism, by putting a premium on the personal, ought to have been a hot-house for drawing, but as it turns out, the movement's dependence on scale over intimacy ruled that out. Today, drawing is again ascendant, but its current proliferation has less to do with the dominance of a particular movement than with broader cultural factors—above all, the fascination with adolescence and youth culture that has permeated recent art.

“Panic Room—Works from the Dakis Joannou Collection” is in all but name a survey of recent drawing by young artists, mostly US-based but also European, featuring almost two hundred works, hung salon-style. Among the nearly seventy artists and groups chosen—by

an advisory committee including Ali Subotnick, Jeffrey Deitch, and Kathy Grayson—are such familiar names as Verne Dawson and John Bock, but most are at the beginning of their career. That no more than a few of them (Devendra Banhardt, Chris Johanson, Dave Muller, and David Shrigley, among others) overlap with the hundred-plus in Phaidon's compendium of recent drawing, *Vitamin D* (2005), shows just how widespread the adoption of the medium as a primary practice has become. Happily, the inclusion of Greek artists who might have been overlooked had this exhibition been mounted elsewhere has been judiciously handled; the works of Georgia Sagri, Christiana Soulou, and Jiannis Varelas in particular are equal in quality to anything here, as well as compatible in spirit.

The show's press release calls attention to San Francisco and Providence, Rhode Island, as important focal points for the new drawing—not major art centers, by any means, but homes of alternative cultural practices of other sorts: “The San Francisco group is characterized by a beautiful graphic line that came out of graffiti and sign-painting traditions,” we are told, while “Providence was the location of the now-infamous Fort Thunder, a deserted warehouse building where many local artists made their home, shaping a whole new style of art and music.” (Among the artists included is Lightning Bolt

drummer Brian Chippendale.) Born of graffiti, comics, and noise bands, this is a vernacular expression rather than a formally elaborated one such as painting lends itself to, but one that has fully imbibed the old avant-garde tenets of nihilism and agonism.

Given this emphasis on youthful exuberance, it's probably not wrong to see the free-standing gallery structure within the gallery as a sort of clubhouse—plastered on the outside with wallpaper by assume vivid astro focus and with still more drawings inside. But for all the emphasis on communities and social networks—there are quite a few collaborative works in the collection—much of this art dwells on essentially private concerns: dreamworlds, fantasies, personal narratives, yet always reflecting real existential questions. This is drawing as “the bedroom art medium,” as Emma Dexter put it in *Vitamin D*. The appearance of being self-taught is clearly at a premium.

Although the overall standard of the work is impressively high for such a wide-ranging show, it was perhaps inevitable that many of the stand-out artists are precisely those who don't appear to be members of the club. I was particularly taken, for example, by Tauba Auerbach's refined and elegant reveries on calligraphic letterforms—no overt narrative or personal content there; their enigmas lie elsewhere. Something similar might be said of the abstract works by Delia Gonzalez, which manage to give symmetry and order a disturbing mien. Ashley Macomber's skewed, macabre animal forms make a more obvious fit with the reigning figurative tenor of the show as a whole, but they also stand out owing to an idiosyncrasy that just might be more than stylistic.

—Barry Schwabsky

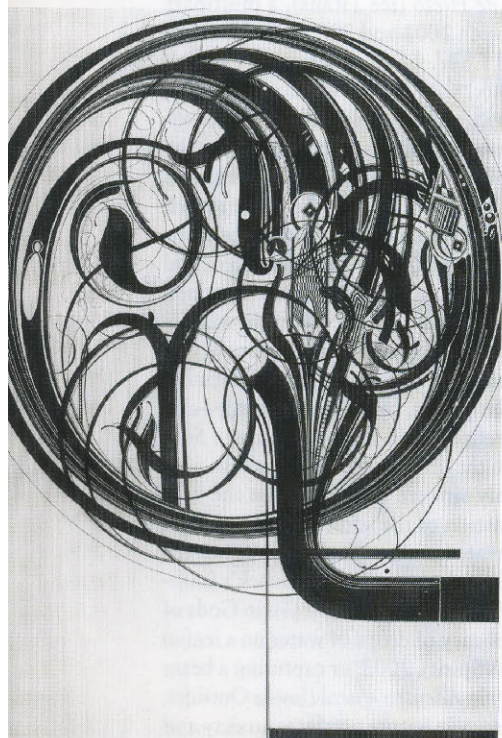
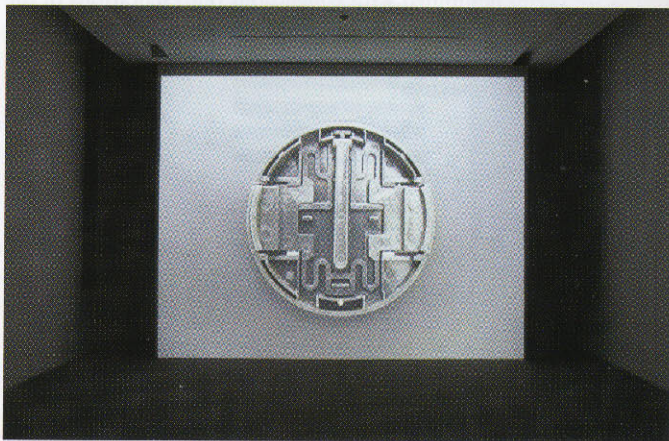
## LISBON

### Alexandre Estrela

MUSEO DO CHIADO

Though his production also encompasses photography, drawing, sculpture, and installation, video remains Alexandre Estrela's preferred medium. It is the creation of images in general, and the process underlying imagemaking in a technological age in particular, that interests him. Estrela therefore uses common audiovisual equipment such as TV sets and camcorders, exploring their technical qualities, both in analog and digital terms, for the creation of his works. For instance, in *TV's Back*, 1995, a television set displays an image of its own back, and in *One in a Million (Version Two)*, 2003, a malfunctioning pixel appears as a tiny bright point interfering with the view from a car driving through the streets of New York City.

Neither of these works, however, figures in Estrela's survey “Star-gate,” for the project took science fiction as its organizing principle.



Tauba Auerbach, *Q*, 2005, ink on paper, 50 x 38". From "Panic Room."