View of Todd Siler's exhibition "Fractal Reactor: Re-Creating the Sun," 2006; at Ronald Feldman.

medium and collaged drawings depicting more fractal phenomena and annotated with handwritten hortatory quotes from Thomas Edison ("There is a better way. Find it.") and Jacob Bronowski ("The whole of science is the search for unity in hidden likenesses."). The titles included portmanteau words of the artist's invention, such as "metaphorm" and "simplexity."

There was a small, spherical model of the reactor (2000) that looked like a soccer ball cut so that the interior was revealed, and another more recent model that dealt with the device's nanotechnology. Siler has said that his fractal reactor can be made at any scale, from smaller than a pinpoint to mega-sized structures.

In another room, there was a video with nifty effects that explained once again—for the text-challenged—the science behind this effort. Here also, the walls were hung with many drawings. A few sculptural forms were suspended from the ceiling, including a wire tangle, *Anatomy of a Hot Plasma (200 million degrees Kelvin)*, 2006, that seemed a cousin to Alan Saret's ethereal sculptures from the 1970s.

Essentially, Siler shows us how to begin to think about constructing a fractal reactor based on a thermonuclear fusion system, which he claims is more effective than fission because it is non-Euclidean and closely replicates the actual physics and geometry of a star. His system is efficient, clean and quite feasible, so it is much more economical than those it would replace. (Siler thinks he can build a functioning prototype for around $10 million, which is much less than the cost of a nuclear reactor.) The unit is also self-sustaining once it reaches its break-even point, and it won't go into meltdown, so it is completely safe. This star system—unlike some others—does seem to be a better way. Certainly the premise is appealing, and so is the art, in a Buckminster Fullerish manner. But like all marriages, this one of art and science has its ups and downs. Maybe, though, Siler should run for president with Al (*An Inconvenient Truth*) Gore. I'd vote for them. —*Lilly Wei*

"Reprocessing Reality" at P.S.1

In this exhibition, Basel-based curator Claudia Spinelli assembled a group of recent works by 13 international artists (with a generous portion of Swiss participants) that address notions of reality. The show, which appeared at the Château de Nyon in Switzerland early last year, traveled to New York as part of the Swiss Art Council's year-long "Swiss Roots" program of art and music events exploring cultural connections between Switzerland and the U.S. With the exception of Robert Frank, Anri Sala, the Swiss veteran Guido Nussbaum, the Atlas Group/ Walid Raad and a few others, "Reprocessing Reality" highlighted the work of mostly emerging artists, many making their U.S. debut, using a variety of formats, from room-size multimedia installations to small works on paper.

According to the curator's essay for the show's catalogue, key to her ambitious project is the work of Robert Frank, the Zurich-born artist who has worked in the U.S. for most of his career. Frank's 1958 photo book *The Americans* blurred the boundaries between journalism and art photography, and he was represented here by his 1994 video *Moving Pictures*, a silent reflection on mortality, in which he visits the gravesites of his parents as well as his friend Jack Kerouac.

The exhibition began with *I am an Exhibition* (2002), a haunting installation by Philipp Gasser, who emptied the darkened gallery but for a tall, empty sculpture pedestal in the center of the room. Aimed at the pedestal was a black-and-white video projection of tall, slowly shifting vertical bands that cast on the walls animated shadows of the pedestal as well as gallery visitors moving through the space. In this work, Gasser has reduced the complexities of visual reality to its fundamentals of light and shade. Similarly engaging but offering a more personal view of reality, Eric Hatton's labyrinthine site-specific installation *No One is Home Anymore* featured a makeshift architectural structure of cardboard and wood, embedded with numerous video monitors and projections showing documentary footage taken on nature trails and urban jaunts.

Many artists in the show addressed political realities. Christoph Draeger's poignant photos are recent shots of former disaster sites with worldwide significance, such as Three Mile Island, Lockerbie and Hiroshima. A video by Derry-based artist Willie Doherty explores the 1972 Bloody Sunday events in Northern Ireland, while Christoph Büchel's video *AC-130 Gunship Targeting Video* uses appropriated footage of recent aerial bombings of Afghan villages. More playful is Nussbaum's *Heim Welt 2* (Home World 2), a tongue-in-cheek comment on global surveillance. Here, on the floor, a convex arrangement of five monitors mimics the curvature of the earth. Each screen shows a section of a geopolitical map, a live feed shot by five cameras focused on a desktop globe placed across the room. —*David Ebony*

Mary Temple and Liza McConnell at Smack Mellon

Concerned with the dematerializing effects of light, Mary Temple and Liza McConnell pursue their interest in dramatically different ways, as was evident in this recent paired-solo show. Both artists achieve ethereal ends through self-evident, disarmingly direct means. In *Forest for the Sea*, Temple made smart use of Smack Mellon's problematic architectural features, including dominant, north-facing windows, intrusive columns, and an enormous but obstructed 24-by-66-foot wall. Having toned the latter in an even off-white, the artist convincingly painted, using a slightly paler white, the illusion of raking sunlight falling upon the wall through tree branches and foliage, interrupted by vertical bands of varying widths. At least momentarily, her silhouettes passed for actual shadows—until the viewer recognized that there was no sunlight of the sort streaming through those windows and around those columns, and little by way of foliage outside the gallery's windows that could cast such shadows anyway.

In Temple's work, wall painting functions as installation: the trompe-l'oeil element activates the entire space, as the viewer tries to verify the alignment of

View of "Reprocessing Reality," showing (on floor) Guido Nussbaum's *Home World 2*, 2005, globe, cameras, monitors, mixed mediums; at P.S.1.

illumination, trees and framing architecture that give rise to this particular configuration, and, finding none, is a bit unsettled. (A funny characteristic of the installation is that it deflects the viewer's attention away from the painting itself.) Temple re-creates a visual experience—familiar to the point of being mundane—that the viewer is accustomed to seeing occur naturally. Depicting a phenomenon that is often subliminal, that we habitually filter out of our experience of interior space, her installations have been known literally to blend into the woodwork. The absence of any other elements in *Forest for the Sea* was startling, nervy and necessary.

McConnell's *Compound*, housed in a darkened enclosure off the main space, comprised two parts. The less flashy component involved three tapering coils of fiberglass insulation, in the bowels of which were planted glowing lightbulbs. Slightly spooky, the coils were clustered together like pods in a science-fiction movie. Through their tops they collectively cast on the low ceiling a soft, cottony pool of light, like a gathering storm cloud or the atmosphere of Venus. A few feet away was a stack nearly 6 feet tall of nested, bottomless plastic pails, their interiors apparently encrusted with leftover joint compound and similarly outfitted with incandescent bulbs. The stack projected a crisper, more legible image: the light traveling up its curling, loricate length and through a hole cut in the top pail's lid was focused by a single eyeglass lens. By installing a curved panel that rounded the juncture of wall and ceiling, McConnell deftly complicated the space; the eccentric spotlight reached the panel looking something like the moon. In an inspired bit of tweaking, the artist shimmed the column of buckets ever so slightly with a broad putty knife, so that this moon was a few days past full. The suggestion of the lunar cycle chimed quietly with Temple's frozen, late-afternoon moment, which halted the earth's rotation.

—Stephen Maine

Lisa Yuskavage at David Zwirner and Zwirner & Wirth

There is sometimes a very thin line separating high and low art—Thomas Kinkade's clotted English cottages aren't that far stylistically from John Constable's rustic English landscapes, while LeRoy Neiman does a creditable imitation of certain aspects of Post-Impressionism. In Lisa Yuskavage's paintings, the line is drawn between a diverse pantheon of Western masters and the favored styles of those who may never have seen the inside of a major art museum. Echoes of Vermeer and Goya jostle against the spirit of calendar pinups and Catholic kitsch. Meanwhile Yuskavage acknowledges her debt to artists like de Chirico and Caravaggio, who also found themselves vulnerable to charges of impurity and inauthenticity.

Top, Mary Temple: *The Forest for the Sea*, 2006, latex on Sheetrock, 24 by 66 feet; bottom, Liza McConnell: *Compound*, 2006, insulation foam, buckets, light, lenses; both at Smack Mellon.

This double show, her first New York solo in three years, presented full-scale paintings, small studies and a set of beautifully crafted drawings that provide variations on a set of themes. The show reveals a change of subject—the wistful isolated waifs of old are now presented in company. Many of the works offer pairs of women who cling to each other in poses that are more protective than erotic. Others depict women who are not exactly alone either, as they are large with child. In those works, there is often a play on the implied fecundity of the traditional still life. In paintings such as *Brood* (2005-06) and *Biting the Red Thing* (2004-05), a woman's swollen breasts and enormous belly rest above arrangements of globular fruit. In the latter, the woman bites down on a section of pomegranate, that ancient symbol of sexuality and fertility.

The paintings of pairs of women are oddly unsettling. *Painted Things* (2006) is particularly strange. Here a nubile young girl clasps a much larger and strangely doll-like nude woman at the edge of a precipice. The stormy sky behind them and the contrast between youth and deformity brings to mind the "Caprichos" of Goya. Other works on this theme have less contrast between the two figures, but there is often an ambiguity between caresses and gestures of control.

These images, with their garlands of flowers, pastel colors and winsome blonde protagonists, skirt dangerously close at times to the confections of Maxfield Parrish. They are held back from full-fledged sentimentality by their otherworldly luminescence. Yuskavage is often paired with John Currin, but where Currin emphasizes the materiality of his images—the huge breasts in his early nude females are massive deformities, made more repellent by their solidity—in Yuskavage's paintings such endowments are permeated with light and are nearly transparent, giving them a peculiarly spiritual quality. This may be why her works are so difficult to place—they deal with the nude, that most carnal of images, but they subject it to an almost religious transfiguration.

—Eleanor Heartney

Jim Richard at Oliver Kamm/5BE

For years, New Orleans painter Jim Richard has articulated an acidic social commentary through unpeopled interiors of the showy sort featured in domicile magazines. Many of his paintings employ an icy, synthetic palette to depict settings overdecorated with contrasting examples of historical and recent art. "These are the places," one critic wrote, "where art goes to die."

In an impressive recent show, Richard expanded his range to include abstract works as well as his collages, which he has not previously shown. These works are rough studies for his canvases, and here he exhibited both mediums together for the first time. While there were no one-to-one pairings, the collages informed the mostly larger paintings, suggesting sources for their uneasy juxtapositions; moreover, these artifacts of Richard's process ably stand on their own.

In the entryway, *Around the Bend* (2006) set the tone for the disjunctions that characterized a number of the works. In this small gouache on paper, a schematic mountain landscape in purple and gray is dominated by the illusionistic depiction of a framed abstract painting that incongruously floats in the foreground at monumental scale and, strangely, is turned at an oblique angle to the picture plane.

Four midsize oil-on-linen paintings (all 2006) continued the tacky-interiors motif. They're dominated by space-flattening