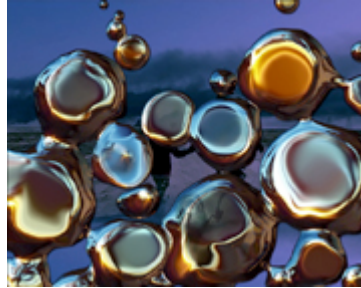


Wry Material”
Jack the Pelican Presents
Through Feb 15

By Barbara Pollock



Materiality is supposedly dead in this digital age, but the four artists in the exhibition “Wry Material” manage to turn the funeral pyre into a roast worthy of the Friars Club. Balancing witty formalism with a healthy cynicism about their artistic predecessors, each of these artists applies a virtuoso’s skills to unexpected materials.

Elana Herzog makes monumental friezes from old-fashioned chenille bedspreads, stapling the fabric to the gallery’s wall until shreds of cloth are embedded in the Sheetrock. Reminiscent of Frank Stella’s stripe paintings, these works also invert the craft of quilt-making, simultaneously attacking and celebrating the repetitive details of domesticity. Equally violent and funny is Margaret Evangeline’s “Luminista” series, a takeoff on Lucio Fontana’s slashed canvases, in which the artist shot panels of polished steel with a gun. The works’ mirrorlike surfaces create impromptu portraits of viewers, albeit riddled with bullet holes. Donald Judd meets Robert Smithson in Samm Kuncze’s Ring Around the Rosie, a semicircle of cubes cast from sand. (One cube was already collapsing at the opening, as if in homage to Smithson’s obsession with

entropy).

At first, Fariba Hajamadi's digital prints seem out of place in this quartet. But although her process relies on such hands-off techniques as Photoshop, it is equally labor-intensive. She constructs elaborate digital photographs by combining images of iridescent petroleum globules with appropriated scenes of war-torn Iraq so seamlessly that the shiny blobs appear to reflect the action. It may not matter that all these artists are women, but then again, who else can multitask with such intelligent and entertaining results?