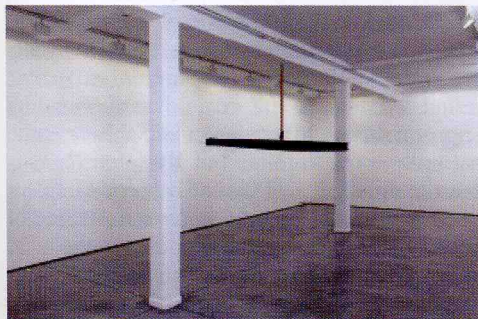


ERIC WESLEY

MAUREEN PALEY - LONDON



ERIC WESLEY, *I Beam (U Channel)*, 2009. Painted model (mixed media), 11 x 12 x 245 cm. Courtesy Maureen Paley, London.

“New Realistic Figures,” the first solo exhibition in London for LA-based artist Eric Wesley, playfully interrogates the very idea of the ‘real’ through a series of seven new sculptures celebrating the enthusiasm and craft of the model-maker. The first gallery contains only one work, *I Beam (U Channel)*, at first glance an impossible construction; two solid steel components that somehow warp into one another like a strange industrialized Möbius strip, suspended weightlessly from the

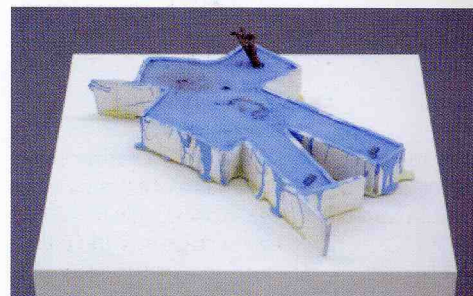
ceiling by a thin thread of climbing apparatus and hooks. However, the sculpture is soon revealed as a carefully fabricated prop, a mirage of lightest balsa wood camouflaged with painted layers of metallic sheen and rust.

Upon entering the upstairs gallery one feels like Gulliver arriving in the land of Lilliput, as six scenes from a miniaturized imaginary world are arranged on plinths around the room. In the middle are four small models of dead men, comprising the morbidly amusing series “Figures at Rest,” each named after a European philosopher (“Jean,” “Jacques,” “Michel” and “Gilles.”) Thus Jean Baudrillard is represented as a hyperreal painted prototype of his actual body, contorted into an unnatural form, naked and lifeless. And Jacques Derrida, the founder of deconstruction theory, is deconstructed himself! Only a dismembered foot remains, alongside a selection of modeler’s tools: paintbrush, forceps, scalpel, wax. Michel Foucault becomes a burnt out corpse with his hand down his underpants. Finally Gilles Deleuze is re-imagined as a “Body without Organs”: a model drowned face-up in a cross between a swim-

ming pool and a virtual dimension, one hand still clasping a cigarette burnt to the end.

Wesley combines traditional craft with a subversive sense of fun, engaging with philosophical concerns in his own enjoyable way. And while he conjures up convincing illusions out of model-shop materials, he also questions how realistic these figures actually are.

Dean Kissick



ERIC WESLEY, *Figure At Rest 4 (Gilles)*, 2009. Painted model prototype (mixed media), 4 x 31 x 20 cm. Courtesy Maureen Paley, London.