past the artist based his sets on real-life settings in which improbable, dreamlike occurrences take place—a cascade of snow forms a mound on the living-room floor, for instance, as a nude woman in a wing chair swings her feet. These new images, however, show an otherworldly, almost phantasmagoric world. Set up in the gallery in 2007, they take us on a journey through the artist’s inner world. The images are hauntingly beautiful, yet still maintain a sense of mystery and intrigue.

The exhibition is a powerful testament to the artist’s mastery of form and composition. His work is a study in contrasts—light and dark, soft and hard, delicate and intense. Through his use of color and texture, Olson is able to create a sense of depth and movement that is both visually striking and emotionally compelling.

In conclusion, the exhibition at the A.I.R. Gallery is a must-see for anyone interested in contemporary art. It is a testament to the artist’s talent and skill, and a reminder of the power of art to move and inspire the viewer. Whether it’s the dreamlike landscapes, the haunting portraits, or the intricate still lifes, Olson’s work is a true masterpiece.
candlelight—frequently look grey, waxy, and undetermined, in anatomically summoning a modernist aesthetic. Olivear's works often evoke the glint of industrialization's scent and oil. This washes extreme canvas (all works Grünfeld, 2008) leave tiny pools of dirty brown grease, as though the surface had been treated by a mechanic's driving sponge.

Generally consistent in palette and tone, the paintings' imagery varies from vaguely pictographic, linear forms of whimsical delicacy to repeated patterning and biny collage-like arrangements of overlapping shapes. The former are executed in translucent glazes and washes, while the latter tend to be built up more substantially using heavily worked sections. All of them derive from a cornucopia of unpredictable and idiosyncratic precision, which is based on the subtle and varied layering of pigment. The material accretions involve both additions and subtractions, and many combinations of past treatments, spackled, transparent, glossy, matte, scrubbed, peeled, grooved, scumbled. To view Olivear's works is to assume an investigative project: Parsing the ambiguity and materials used to create them requires careful inspection. Underpainting remains visible to varying degrees, the depth understanding the importance of process without fully conveying chronology. Each of Olivear's surfaces presents a damaged archaeological landscape of its own slow maturation.

The more the viewer is in a composition, the more differentiated it becomes. The act of viewing the works takes on a haptic aspect, connected as the paintings are with establishing context and affording physical presence as counter to the ubiquitous gaze, which so commonly takes the place of the object it images and forms the basis by which much art is now viewed and sold. Devastating proximity and patience, Olivear draws us away from the clamped pace of remote, digital viewing and renews prolonged personal encounters with insistently material histories.

—Sarah Lehrer-Graiwer

MONTREAL

Geoffrey Farmer
MUSÉE D’ART CONTEMPORAIN DE MONTRÉAL

Geoffrey Farmer’s video The Fountain People, 2006, consists of footage of a fountain located in front of an escalator, most likely in an upscale shopping center. While waiting for some intermission to commence, and perhaps for the titular characters to appear, one must make do with the brunt sight of spouting water, the dull flow of lights underwater, and the sedating stream of Masak. In the accompanying installation, the two typewritten pages afford to the wall provide little interpretive guidance but allude to strange aquatic forces that celery watch, surround, and transform in a way along to the workings of a veneer, a culture industry; according to these texts, the more folks invented bathe in the representation game, the more powerful the “pensively the fountain people became. Despite its deadpan reflectiveness, the work summons a number of associations, perhaps the strongest being to Robisch’s Dr. Strangelove and its vision of a communist conspiracy to fluoridate the bodily fluids of the American people.

A suitable introduction to a mid-career retrospective, organized chronologically and with input by the museum’s Pierre Lescure, The Fountain People provides a glimpse of the heterogeneous, packaged, and polished cultural landscape extending from malls to museums—that the artist has investigated in myriad ways over the past two decades. Widely visible in Montreal was Farmer’s fondness for, and inventive use of, provocatively humble and ephemeral materials, as seen in Entrepreneur Shovel Returning Back to Sculptural Form, 2002, a sprawling sculptural-installation in which packing, cleaning, and office materials are intricately and whimsically arranged and that, although only one of many works shown here, encapsulates his concerns. In this installation, an enormous disc made up of rows of blank yellow Post-it’s is adhered to the wall, the disc implying that the sheer laborious accumulation of identical and worthless notes may in itself constitute an artistic statement. Crumpled bits of paper placed atop and around a trash can could signify a repeated failure to achieve creative fruition—or could delineate the bare minimum requirement of professional sculptural competency. Packed alongside this material are reliefs in a cosmos, as if interpolative stones, a cardboard box containing, among other items, plastic sculptures composed of foil; the container is set atop a monitor on the floor playing a video of the artist irreverently producing the aluminum foil with his feet—a display of glibness to be sure, but also a challenge to the materialization of art objects. Hanging on the opposite wall is a piece of weathered newspaper with two headlines cut out, as if it were a crude monument or a performance prop. A nearby challenge of the installation demonstrates the tense strength of such everyday items as packing tape and paper clips, which are strung or glued together as belaboring devices, tripped, and columns—all textually and chronologically enriched by scattered bits of pink tissue paper.

Such experimentation with the durability of materials exemplifies the process-based nature of Farmer’s work, which is as best shown that even throwaway objects like plastic bags and masking tape rolls can carry expressive gravitas. Farmer questions how and why we assign aesthetic value, in a way that is both cunningly clever and heartfelt.

—Dan Adler

MEXICO CITY

Felipe Ehrenberg
MUSEO DE ARTE MODERNO

Encapsulating fifty years of production, “Masculia: Peripheral Vision” is the first formal retrospective of Felipe Ehrenberg. The artist’s participation in Mexican art and culture during the late 1940s and 70s would prove critical in a country whose restrictions on artists and intellectuals, institutional inflexibility, distrust, poor communications with the international art world, and political violence (especially the Maleconazo massacre following large student demonstrations in October 1988 in Mexico City) led Ehrenberg to establish independence from any system or institution and move with his family to England in 1968.

Ehrenberg’s six years there were crucial for the development of his conceptual strategies, as evidenced in Living in My Art Recent Considerations on the Habitable Space. Ideas for Ergonomic Actions, 1973. Here one is reminded of the Bochner approach to art as language and the ideas about quantification and space presented in his measurement pieces. Ehrenberg’s typewritten Metacognitive Symphony for Alliance and Storm, 1973, and handwritten Art According to Me, 1973, also exemplify his language-oriented works from the 70s. As he recently noted, “Ninety percent of my production...