

'Circle of Friends'

Paintings, Drawings, and Sculptures by Robert Arneson, Joan Brown, Roy DeForest, Peter Saul, and William T. Wiley

George Adams Gallery
525 West 26th Street, Chelsea
Through Aug. 26

The art dealers' creed is partly financial, partly educational. They want to make money, in order to support themselves and their artists, but they also want to exhibit things that, ideally, you don't see every day, things that expand the viewing public's sense of the present or the past in some way.

With this lively, often surprising summer group show, George Adams is doing his bit for several painters and sculptors who emerged in the 1960s in the San

Francisco Bay Area and in the process keeping this particular, often overlooked part of postwar American art history in view.

"Circle of Friends" reunites 23 top-notch works, most of them from the 1960s and early '70s by Robert Arneson (1930-92), Joan Brown (1938-90), Roy DeForest (1930-2007), Peter Saul and William T. Wiley. All five artists started out in the Bay Area, often attended or taught at the same schools, and were frequently included in the same exhibitions, most important, the seminal "Funk" show organized by Peter Selz at Berkeley in 1967. The gallery has assembled a colorful flowchart of their shared experi-

THE NEW YORK TIMES, FRIDAY, AUGUST 19, 2011

Art in Review



ABOVE: ROY DEFOREST; GEORGE ADAMS GALLERY



ANDREW EDLIN GALLERY

"The Inside Story of a Youthful Strategist," above, a 1963 painting by Roy DeForest, is part of the "Circle of Friends" group show at George Adams Gallery. At left, Jeremy Everett's "Flood (Manual)" is at Andrew Edlin Gallery. For "Deep Bones," below, at Freight + Volume, Jay Critchley wrapped a '70s-era MG sports car and its parts in plastic shopping bags.

These connections are corroborated by works that communicate a heady sense of common interests and robust individual sensibilities, as well as astute attention to developments elsewhere. Mr. Wiley's 1981 "I Visit Bob" depicts the sculpture-filled studio of a friend, the artist Robert Hudson, in color and grisaille while making written mention of Mark di Suvero and Joseph Beuys.

DeForest's colorfully cartoonish "Inside Story of a Youthful Strategist" from 1963 is a riot of loopy shapes and dots that conjure up the California desert filtered through the art of Joan Miró. It is one of the show's standouts, along with DeForest's wildly textured, spatially disorienting "Diary of a Flapper" from 1961. Arneson is represented by a panoply of ceramic sculptures and reliefs that attest to his slippery, multifaceted talent as well as his vigorous transpositions of Surrealism, Abstract Expressionism and Pop. Peter Saul's "Girl I" of 1962 accomplishes something similar in oil on canvas with a big assist from cartooning. And the talented if uneven Joan Brown sneaks up on the outside track with two small paintings, including the wonderfully creamy and rather naked "Portrait of a Chicken" of 1967 and a larger one, "Things and Mess in a Classroom," which shows her adapting Abstract Expressionism to her own more figurative inclinations.

This excellent show should not obscure the fact that these artists have yet to receive their due from New York museums.

ROBERTA SMITH