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ARTFORUM



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THOMAS SOLOMON GALLERY @ COTTAGE HOME
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Miles, Christopher. "Krysten Cunningham: Thomas Solomon Gallery," *Artforum*, March 2009: 252, 253 (illustrated).

Krysten Cunningham THOMAS SOLOMON GALLERY

Perhaps it takes an artist who grew up on a commune and went to college during the (pre-impeachment) heyday of the Clinton years to make work as fundamentally optimistic as Krysten Cunningham's. In their forms, allusions, and artistic precedents, her sculptures seem unlikely as the products of anyone who didn't enjoy a certain amount of shielding and hope and all the other benefits of a (slightly) more enlightened era.

When Cunningham revisits past concerns in art and design, she does so without apology or irony. In this exhibition—titled, appropriately, "Time Machines"—the artist dealt in the sorts of forms found in vintage design manuals like Kranz and Fisher's *The Design Continuum* (1966). One work, *Bride's Cross*, 2008, which brings together woven elements, tripod-like supports, and a circular tabletop, might have been teleported from an Eames-era showroom. Its various forms—radial bursts, intersecting and interlocking planes—turned up throughout the exhibition, serving to illustrate conceptions of connectivity and expansion; the artist channels the visionary engineering spirit of Buckminster Fuller and of sculptors like Kenneth Snelson, utilizing design elements for their evocative potential as well as for their structural possibilities, converting them into modules, blocks, and building systems.

Cunningham's work ranges widely in its allusions, from lofty heights to kitschy

lows, from Fred Sandback to macramé, Bauhaus to summer-camp crafts. On the more debased end of the spectrum are references to woven "God's eyes" and all that can be described as "Sputnikesque." But while there are plenty of allusions to other objects, what really matters is the kinship she has with certain precursors, like Duchamp—whose bicycle wheel and Rotoreliefs translate to dream catchers and mandalas in her hands.

One branch of Cunningham's art-historical network extends to Lee Mullican and George Lippold, who attempted, in installations of wire and rods, to give material form to divine light in the way Bernini did in *The Ecstasy of St. Theresa*, but within the territory of atomic-era abstraction. Lippold shared real estate with Pollock, Rothko, and Still in the Museum of Modern Art's 1952 exhibition "Fifteen Americans," and showed alongside Calder, Nevelson, Noguchi, and David Smith in the Whitney Museum's 1976 survey "200 Years of American Sculpture." That the restoration of his works was recently covered in the Antiques section of the *New York Times* is perhaps an indicator of the dustbin to which such unabashedly visionary work has been relegated. Cunningham suggests that, following an age of anxious sculpture, and during anxious times, some sifting of that dustbin is needed.

Krysten Cunningham, *Bride's Cross*, 2008, wool, wood, steel, Gator Foam, felt, 59 x 61 x 38".



—Christopher Miles