

Art in America INTERNATIONAL REVIEW

EXHIBITION REVIEWS

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LOS ANGELES
NANCY JACKSON
 ROSAMUND FELSEN

Nancy Jackson's latest exhibition, her sixth with Felsen, was a lighthearted tour de force consisting of seven paper mobiles, at once intricate and majestic, nine works on paper and 12 sculptures. The keen balance of intellect and intuition Jackson has displayed in prior exhibitions was here injected with levity and wisdom, revealing another facet of an artist adept at using fantastic imagery and meticulous processes to probe psychological mysteries and metaphysical dramas.

Untitled (Large mobile), 2010, is 22 feet high, and it stretched from ceiling to floor. The all-white work is made of plastic rings strung together with thread, one above the other, each hung with cut-paper shapes, thousands in all—curlicues, discs, moons, arrows and the like, all in rhythmic patterns. Peeking out from the bottom is a solid glass object; shaped like an upside-down exclamation point and surrounded by a fluff of monofilament, it



Nancy Jackson: *Untitled Heads 1-11*, 2010, enamel, papier-mâché, aluminum tubing and mixed mediums, 80 by 87 by 21 inches; at Rosamund Felsen.

resembles a sea creature and exudes a playful sexuality. In the same room was a small gouache and ink on paper, *The Way it Works* (2009), in which a lush plant, its juicy green leaves and delicate pink tendrils bursting from a thick stalk, erupts from a mountain of human skeletons. The undulating shape of the plant mirrors that of the mobile, and their actions are reciprocal—one descending gracefully, the other reaching energetically up.

Six equally elaborate mobiles, each about a quarter the size of the large one, occupied a second room, along with a wall sculpture, *Untitled Heads 1-11* (2010). In the latter, 11 shiny black papier-mâché-and-clay masks sit in the end of springy velvet-covered tubes that stretch into the room like serpents. Each face, about a foot high, sports a set of pointy white teeth, a bright red mouth and a quirky hat. In the context of the artist's interest in psychology and dreams, the creatures connote anxieties and neuroses, yet their grins suggest mischief. The area of the wall on which the heads were installed was painted in broad swaths of matte black; the immediacy of the brushstrokes struck a balance with the labored intensity of the mobiles.

The dreamlike narratives of the paintings and drawings in another room have a darker sensibility but retain seeds of optimism. In one four-part ink-on-paper drawing (each sheet letter-size), a turbaned woman snatches a glowing crystal from a stand, only to have it grow back during her getaway. The storyboardlike sequence suggests a parable about a benevolent light. In a small gouache on rice paper,

Untitled (NY), 2010, a detailed depiction of an urban street, a torrent of yellow, blue and white lines seems to have replaced the buildings. Is the city being blessed or destroyed? It depends on one's perspective, but the rest of the exhibition—with the patient process inherent in the hand-cut mobiles and the playful absurdity of the heads—tips the reading toward the benign over the apocalyptic. —Annie Buckley