

The New York Times

Art in Review

August 3, 2007

PALISADENPARENCHYM

Danese

535 West 24th Street, Chelsea

Through Aug. 17

Like many things academic or art-related, palisade mesophyll sounds more imposing in German, where it becomes the protractedly compound (and capitalized) Palisadenparenchym. The term refers to the tissue layer in plant leaves where photosynthesis takes place. Plants appear here as both motifs and metaphors. Matthias Meyer's painting looks like an eerily lighted version of Monet's lilies. Chris Lipomi's wall assemblage with a carnival mask nestled in a wooden bowl bordered with ivy is a provocative attempt to blend art and kitsch. Marcel Odenbach's two collages on paper look from a distance like blown-up wood grain or plant cells; up close they register like Dada photomontages packed with possibly important (but mostly unrecognizable) historical figures.

In Peter Coffin's "Untitled (Shared Refraction/Reflection)" a potted plant is read a list of colors from a CD titled "Music for Plants." Christian Holstad's knitted blob of a sculpture, "Organic Soil (We'll Make Great Mud)," employs both wool and hand-dyed human hair.

A small room off the main gallery is lined with drawings and diminutive paintings by emerging artists, including Markus Knupp, Delia R. Gonzalez, Isa Melsheimer, Jeff Davis, John Kleckner, Scoli Acosta, Lutz Braun, Nico Ihlein, Andreas Hirsch and Christain Weihrauch, in which the plants are more phantasmagoric, yet pointedly conjure up human society and weed-choked dystopias.

So why is the show titled in German rather than English? Perhaps because it was organized by the gallery's associate director, Daniel Schmidt, a native of Cologne, and includes a high quotient of German artists. Or maybe it just sounds more impressive.

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