

ALIX PEARLSTEIN

LAURIE RUBIN GALLERY

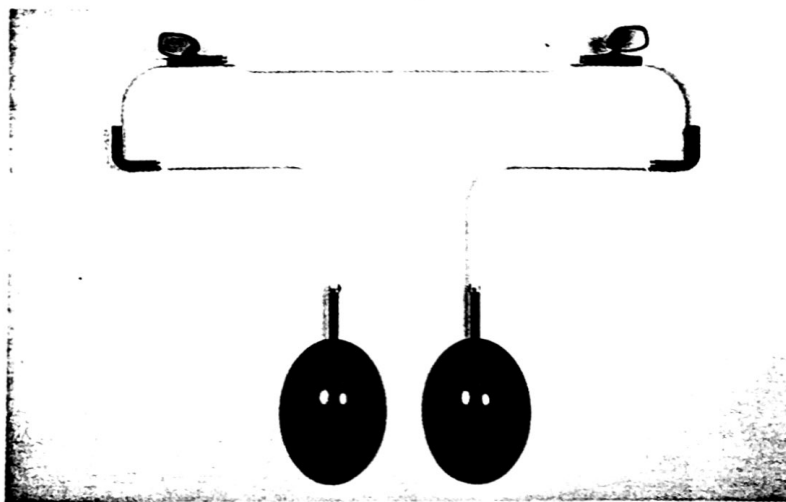
Alix Pearlstein combines utilitarian objects with commercial materials to make slick wall sculptures that are replete with anthropomorphic associations. Her creations allude comically, but never overtly, to the human body and to the objects we use daily. By intermingling human and nonhuman elements, Pearlstein shows how commercially manufactured objects and materials have become an integral part of our physical existence.

In her game of allusion, the artist often cleverly equates consumer greed with sexual desire, revealing the two to be uncomfortably if inextricably linked. *More, More, More* (all works, 1989) is constructed to look vaguely like a face. Two disco globes serve as eyes, and the mouth is a velvet rope—the kind that keeps people out of exclusive nightclubs. The artist has chosen objects that are used to manipulate our desire in order to parody this manipulation. *Paradise Syndrome* is a group of three soft, pink, flower-shaped lamp shades, each bearing a convex mirror in its center. The inviting nature of these commercial narcissus plants recalls the many useless objects we surround ourselves with purely for pleasure. The plush sculptures play on our need for material stimulation. Others are even more explicit. *Promises, Promises* is a satin bodice from which sprout two lamp shades that seem like misplaced breasts. *Formula Joy* is a long, tightly drawn, black rubber corset from which two plaster sacks hang like overgrown testicles. In both works, the body has been replaced by material surrogates—satin for female, rubber for male. Pearlstein offers seductive fetishes that mock fetishization.

The success of these sculptures owes part-

ly to the artist's knowing use of materials, such as chrome, plaster, and flocking, which trigger associations that are largely based on our sense of touch. She uses these materials to alter found objects, creating assemblages that seem functional, but whose function remains a mystery. In one untitled work, a symmetrical plaster shape looks like a teapot connected to a handle, but on closer inspection, it becomes an almost recognizable body part. *The Road* is perhaps the best example of Pearlstein's subtly comic critique of materialism. The artist has arranged an assembly of car parts into a skeletal form with rearview mirrors for eyes, and large Plexiglas headlights for breasts. From inside each headlight peers an entrapped Garfield doll, arms and legs suctioned onto the surface. The doll suggests our infantile clinging to mass-produced products. Overall, Pearlstein evokes a repressed suburban experience through minimal means.

—Jennifer P. Borum



Alix Pearlstein, *The Road*, 1989, mixed media, 64½ × 83¼ × 8¼"