

ARTnews

Bonnie Collura

by Reena Jana. ARTnews, December, 2003

Bonnie Collura's sculptures, which blend such disparate references as Baroque sculpture and *The Wizard of Oz*, are like physical manifestations of a Generation Xer's postmodern, ADD-afflicted, MTV-influenced thought patterns. Her well-crafted work mixes high and lowbrow into a delirious cocktail that is, thankfully, far from middlebrow.

Guardian (2003), for instance, is a 21st-century Madonna figure, with nods to both Bernini and Barnum & Bailey. Collura's keen awareness of anatomy is clear. Rather than showing off her skills in realistic renderings, however, she presents body parts emerging from swirling shapes instead of their logical sockets. In this circular construction, hung extremely high, a Virgin Mary with a clown's nose looks down; a hand erupts from undulating curves. Collura seemed to suggest, via form, how religion has evolved into something of a circuslike show.

While some associate her with Matthew Ritchie in her imaginative creation of an alternative universe, Collura's work seems closer to Matthew Barney's in its eerie otherworldliness. The theatrical *Rebel Angel* and *Abductor Red* (both 2003), for example, have beautiful faces and bodies with features and musculature exquisitely rendered but distorted to illustrate moral struggle (the silver angel has one black wing) or ecstasy (the white female figure in *Abductor Red* is showered with bright red felt leaves).

Some works were less successful. *Scarecrow* (2003), for instance, seemed somewhat unrefined in its execution. The wavy poles said to suggest fire were hard to interpret as such, and the too-complicated color scheme distracted from the sculpture's lines.

Overall, this show provided an engaging physical expression of how ideas, cultural references, and personal emotions can flood the mind and memory.