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BODY OF WORK

Left: *White* (1997) by Bonnie Collura at the Dallas Museum of Art

Below: *Kai* (1991-92) by Lucian Freud at SMU's Pollock Gallery

BY JANET TYSON
Star-Telegram Staff Writer

DALLAS — Sigmund Freud's grandson and two brash young New York artists analyze the human body — as an artifact of art history and contemporary culture, as well as our mortal abode — in two exhibitions at the Pollock Gallery at Southern Methodist University and at the Dallas Museum of Art.

But where Lucian Freud's realist works rivet his (and our) gaze upon the flesh before him, both Anne Chu and Bonnie Collura, in their sculpture and works on paper, refer away from the body as much as to it, citing art-historical modes of representing it. They look at how the body symbolizes other things — and at what other things can symbolize the body.

Chosen by Suzanne Weaver, the DMA's assistant curator of contemporary art, both of these up-and-comers use form and color to enhance the meaning of their stylized, disquieting, yet eminently appealing, works. Although Chu is Chinese-American and Collura is of Italian descent, both suggest that the body is as much a cultural construct as it is a biological entity.

Collura's black-and-white ink drawings serve as keys to her colorful, lifesize sculptures, which resemble randomly assembled



Pollock Gallery

"Concentrations 32: Anne Chu and Bonnie Collura"

Through Jan. 17: 11 a.m.-4 p.m. Tuesday-Friday, 11 a.m.-5 p.m. Saturday and Sunday, and also 4-9 p.m. Thursday. Dallas Museum of Art, 1717 N. Harwood, Dallas.

Admission: Free

Information: (214) 922-1200

"Lucian Freud: Etchings"

Through Dec. 6: 11 a.m.-5 p.m. Monday, Tuesday, Thursday and Friday, and 1-5 p.m. Saturday. Pollock Gallery in Southern Methodist University's Hughes-Trigg Student Center, Dallas.

Admission: Free

Information: (214) 768-4439

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chunks of figures — from Disney's Snow White to wild animals. The chunks are smooth like fiberglass, although Collura uses other, less hazardous materials. In some cases, Collura applies color uniformly to visually unite her bits and pieces. In other instances, she uses a variety of hues to further break them apart.

Collura skillfully draws upon baroque traditions of painting, sculpture and manipulation of space overall, with specific references to the sculpture and architecture of Gianlorenzo Bernini. I think of Bernini as an artist of whirling fragments that somehow, through a brilliant feat of balance, manage to cohere long enough that viewers have a sense of complete figures in comprehensible situations.

But Collura's application of sensuous baroque colors takes Bernini a step further. Furthermore, her installation in one of the DMA's small quadrant galleries resembles a baroque fountain, with clusters of figures popping up from the stone floor as if from a basin of water. A figure suspended from the ceiling, an ascension or assumption of sorts, rounds out the experience of baroque space.

Chu's installation, in her own gallery, has an unmistakably elegiac air. A central platform, of beautifully cut and joined lumber and plywood, becomes a stage for wooden statues, roughly carved to resemble Tang Dynasty funerary figures. Chu, too, uses color unconventionally, daubing these forms with a hues ranging from subtle to garish. There's a strong link between Chu's sculpted figures and those she has drawn roughly on smooth white paper, then dabbed with similar colors.

But Chu throws us a curve with the addition of seven monumental, papier-mache figures of bears that loom on either side of the gallery entrance. Standing on their hind legs, their forelegs dangling, they have heads that are fitted on separately, a bit like canopic jars.

Chu's modeling of the bears' heads is deliberately crude and wonderfully sensitive, as is her treatment of the surfaces of their bodies. They seem at turns jolly and sad, fierce and vulnerable, ursine and human.

Those seemingly paradoxical evocations

also are found in the Pollock Gallery's presentation of 25 etchings by Londoner Lucian Freud, descendant of the founder of psychoanalysis. Born in Germany in 1922, Freud widely is viewed as the greatest realist figure painter alive. In that case, it may seem irrelevant to view his etchings, but this selection of graphic works allows us to disregard debates over Freud's painterly style — some find it sensuous, others repellent — and focus on his rendering. Nor need we mull over his style as a print-maker, either, because Freud is about as straight-ahead and literally incisive as they come.

So what we see here is Freud looking at models — almost all of whom are friends and family — and looking and looking until they yield to his scrutiny, succumb to fatigue and boredom and let it all hang out — again, literally, because his models for the most part are nude. A couple of them (including the late performance artist Leigh Bowery) are morbidly obese. One (his whippet, Pluto) is as gaunt as death. The rest have bulbous, Freudian noses and conspicuous private parts, wrinkles, sagging bellies, warts and very bad hair.

Mixing psychoanalytic metaphors for the moment, I'd recommend taking Freud's images as Rorschach tests: They are what you want them to be, vile or humane, life-affirming or nihilistic.

Assembled by Philip Van Keuren, the Pollock's talented and ambitious director, the exhibition features almost half of Freud's graphic works. The only similar presentations surpassing its scope were a pair presented in conjunction with the Met's big Freud retrospective in New York in 1993. So, however you take Freud's work, do see the exhibition.

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Sleeping Death (Martyr Yellow),
1997, by Bonnie Collura



Two Guardian Figures, 1997-98,
by Anne Chu

