

Time Out New York, January 23-30, 2003

Bonnie Collura

“The Prince Project: Dust”



Like a set of action figures melted together in an Easy Bake oven, Bonnie Collura's sculptures blend characters from mythology, religion and cartoons. Balancing this amalgam – part Disney, part Augustus Saint-Gaudens – would be a sufficient undertaking for most sculptors. But Collura, not unlike Matthew Ritchie, bolsters her works with a narrative infrastructure, often as baroque as any segment of Lord of the Rings.

“Dust,” the first installment of the four part “Prince Project,” takes its inspiration from the Kabbalistic legend of the Golem, a creature made of clay and brought to life to rescue the Jews of 16th-century Prague. Adding a dose of Christian dogma to Jewish lore, Collura has fabricated a trio of assistants – Hope, Faith and Luck – to help her conjure her own personal savior.

Positioned high on a pedestal, the clown-faced Hope practically floats right out of the gallery's skylight. Faith, a female form ravished by an elephant's trunk, resembles the unlikely offspring of Dumbo and the Winged Victory. Luck, perhaps the saddest figure of all, is a cast of the artist herself, slumped on the floor, barely able to lift her head due to the weight of the massive four-leafed clover (or is it a set of Mickey Mouse ears?) strapped around her neck. It seems unlikely that any of these three lost souls will be of much help in Collura's quest for a perfect Prince.

Across the room sits Manger, straight out of a Christmas crèche, awaiting the birth of Collura's messiah. Above hangs a series of dull “kaleidoscope” paintings. Each is a 30-inch circle mounted on Plexiglas that correlates with a word from the prayer that, as the legend goes, brought the original Golem to life. This is not the end, but just the beginning of a story that promises to encompass numerous creation myths from Pinocchio through Pygmalion. Hopefully, when Collura has finished her tale and crafted her Prince Charming, he will rescue her from the need to overburden her work with these intricate explanations, and help her find satisfaction in the extreme creativity of the sculptures themselves. – Barbara Pollack