

Cindy Wright: Paintings 2004-2006



Las Vegas Art Museum | April 15 - June 11, 2006

Cindy Wright's Contemporary *Vanitás*



Cindy Wright's paintings have an arrestingly claustrophobic effect. Wright depicts in paint photographic close-ups, which she makes herself, of various configurations of raw meat, persons she encounters, sections of human skin, lace curtains, a slain deer, a dead fish, and other objects and parts of objects that constitute the intimate and domestic realms. The viewer is forced to scrutinize in detail such matter as glistening fat, creases in skin, flesh, and fur, which in most images—and in life—exist as a generalized blur. Paradoxically, the impact of Wright's paintings is most pronounced at a considerable distance from the canvas, where the large-scale *trompe l'oeil* details coalesce into view. Move in closer to the canvas, and the details disappear into lovely, quasi-abstract impasto.

Despite the fact that Wright's paintings generate a certain level of visual surprise, by virtue of reorganizing ordinary perception, her works are forged out of profoundly familiar traditions. No one alive today isn't aware of the perceptual distortions produced by the photographic close-up; and Wright's themes and style have long artistic pedigrees. In a sense, the artist takes traditional themes of domestic still-life and genre painting and translates them through various dialects of Modern and Postmodern art to yield a kind of contemporary *vanitás*: The still-

lives of dead game, meat and fruit, and the working class domestic scenes in paintings by eighteenth-century artist Jean-Siméon Chardin are robbed of their contextual narratives and rendered as deadpan, isolated objects and textures. The incongruous relationship of scale between objects depicted in Surrealist paintings by René Magritte, is reconfigured as an incongruous relationship between a single painted object and the viewer, a style of address that mimics the structure of the viewer's relationship to Pop artists Claes Oldenburg's monumental Pop sculptures, and Chuck Close's huge faces, which dissolve into abstract pattern at close view. At the same time, Wright's isolated objects, which are composed in simple configurations or cropped to form abstract patterns, have the confrontational disposition of Minimalist sculpture. As with Close, the physical distance from the canvas that must be maintained to perceive details forces Minimalism's "theatrical" awareness of the viewing process, while harking back to Baroque-style painting: move in close to a large-scale painting by Peter Paul Rubens, and the image disintegrates.

The younger viewer will more readily recognize Wright's connection to immediate predecessors. The clever, large-scale, *trompe l'oeil* sculptures of Ron Mueck, the dystopic portraits of contemporaries

Meat 3, 2003. Oil on canvas, 67 x 47 ¼ inches. Courtesy Mark Moore Gallery, Santa Monica

Front cover: *Baconcube 3*, 2004. Oil on canvas, 78 ¾ x 76 ¾ inches. Collection Alvin E. Friedman-Kien and Ryo Toyonaga



Pieter Vermeersch, 2004. Oil on canvas, 67 x 55 inches. Private Collection

Roastbeef, 2005. Oil on canvas, 59 x 67 inches. Collection Andrew and Amy Weinstein

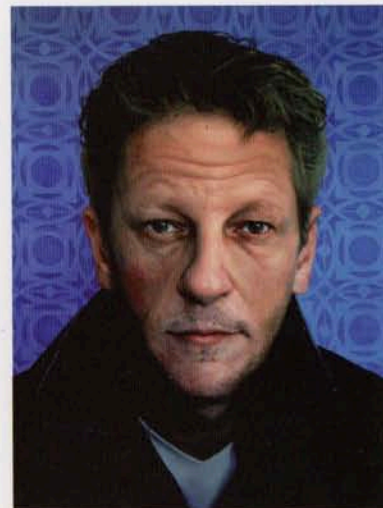
by Muntean and Rosenblum, the “incarnate flesh” renditions of meat by painter Victoria Reynolds, and the domestic objects of Robert Gober, each connect at different points. Of course, German artist Gerhard Richter first used the technique of explicitly rendering photographs in paint in the 1960s. Richter exploited the technique as a means to give painting an objectivity he felt was lacking in the abstract art of the period, and to give indifferent visual information expressive force.

For Richter, and for the many Conceptual and Postmodern artists who investigated the character of photographic imagery in the late twentieth century, the viewer’s awareness of the psychological aspects of perceiving cultural codes of representation was of paramount importance. Wright’s paintings seem to reverse those terms. The carefully composed order and solemn beauty of Wright’s compositions, and the contemplative mode that pervades all her carefully rendered paintings, connects her more directly to Chardin, whose carefully ordered still-lives and domestic scenes engender reflective contemplation; to her Belgian predecessor Magritte, whose cool detachment and unnatural juxtapositions suggest a paradoxical view of the human condition; and, perhaps most profoundly, to her Flemish precursor Jan van Ecyk, whose meticulously observed,

intricately detailed depictions of human beings in devotional paintings reminded fifteenth-century pilgrims of their mortality. Without resorting to traditional narratives or allegory, and with a knowing approach to representation, Wright creates her own contemporary *vanit s*. By putting viewers in close confrontation with the physical details of flesh and food, she forces us to reflect on the psychological aspects of our own material existence, and the painting’s material existence, as well.

Libby Lumpkin Ph.D.

Director



Cindy Wright was born in Herentals, Belgium in 1972. She received a Visual Arts degree in Painting from the Royal Academy for Fine Arts Antwerp (KASKA) and is completing postgraduate work at the Higher Institute for Fine Arts (HISK), Antwerp. Wright received the British Petroleum (BP) Portrait Award in 2003 at the National Portrait Gallery in London. In 2004 she was one of the six selected young artists for the Jeune Peinture Belge (Young Belgian Painters) Award for contemporary art at the Palais des Beaux-Arts, Brussels. She lives and works in Antwerp, Belgium.



Jan Fabre, 2003. Oil on canvas, 67 x 50 ¼ inches. Private Collection, Denver, Colorado

Meat 4, 2004. Oil on canvas, 53 x 53 inches. Courtesy Mark Moore Gallery, Santa Monica

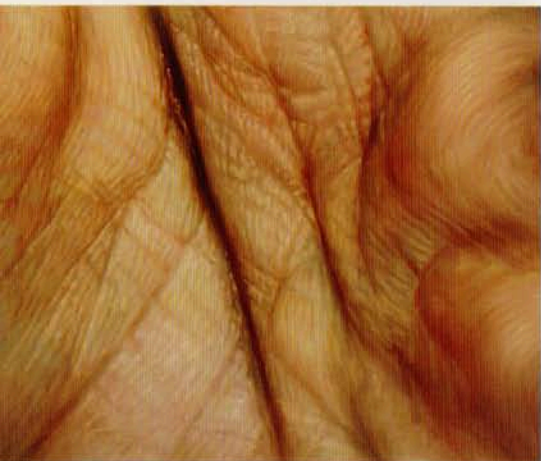
Exhibition Checklist



Baconcube 3, 2004
Oil on canvas
78 $\frac{3}{4}$ x 76 $\frac{3}{4}$ inches
Collection Alvin E. Friedman-Kien and Ryo Toyonaga

Collared Beef, 2004
Oil on canvas
61 x 45 $\frac{1}{4}$ inches
Courtesy Mark Moore Gallery, Santa Monica

Curtain, 2005
Oil on canvas
67 x 47 $\frac{1}{4}$ inches
Courtesy Mark Moore Gallery, Santa Monica



Jan Fabre, 2003
Oil on canvas
67 x 50 $\frac{1}{4}$ inches
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Pieter Vermeersch, 2004
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Roastbeef, 2005
Oil on canvas
59 x 67 inches
Collection Andrew and Amy Weinstein

Skin 1, 2004
Oil on canvas
53 x 70 $\frac{3}{4}$ inches
Collection George and Linda Kurz, Cincinnati, Ohio

Untitled (Sleeping man), 2005
Oil on canvas
51 x 67 inches
Collection Hector Mendez Romano

Vegas Girl, 2005
Oil on canvas
74 $\frac{3}{4}$ x 59 inches
Courtesy Mark Moore Gallery, Santa Monica

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Untitled (Sleeping man), 2005. Oil on canvas, 51 x 67 inches. Collection Hector Mendez Romano

Skin 1, 2004. Oil on canvas, 53 x 70 $\frac{3}{4}$ inches. Collection George and Linda Kurz, Cincinnati, Ohio

Back cover: *Collared Beef*, 2004. Oil on canvas, 61 x 45 $\frac{1}{4}$ inches. Courtesy Mark Moore Gallery, Santa Monica

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Mark Moore Gallery, Santa Monica, Lenders to the Exhibition, Cindy Wright

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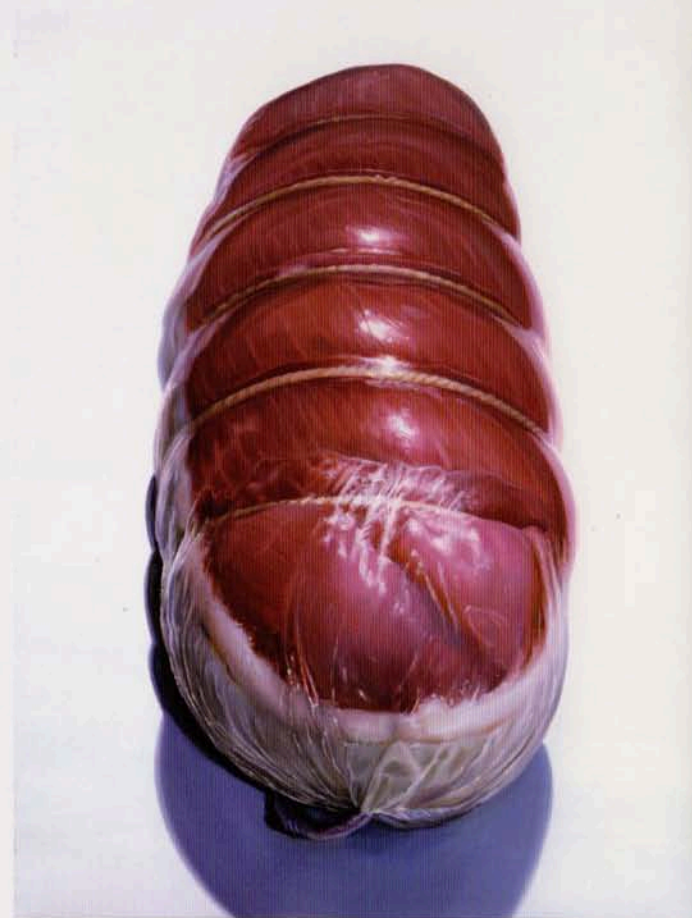
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