

MATTHEW MARKS GALLERY

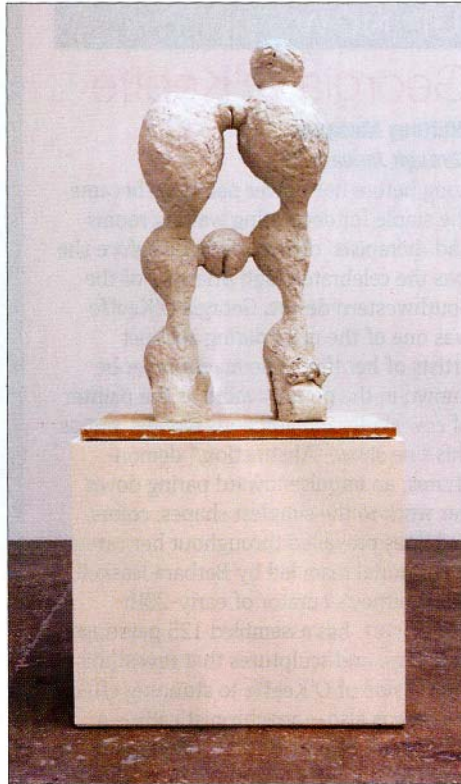
523 West 24th Street, New York, New York 10011 Tel: 212-243-0200 Fax: 212-243-0047

Rebecca Warren

Matthew Marks

Rebecca Warren's seemingly touchy-feely clay sculptures made an odd impression in the new New Museum's inaugural show, "Unmonumental," in 2007. Among all the ambiguous works that took the aftereffects of deconstruction to new highs and lows, her amorphous, unfired masses of clay stuck in the craw, if not the brain, like barely legible remnants of Baroque figurative modeling.

The quasi-figurative clay works here were fragmentary



Rebecca Warren, *Nanon*, 2009,
reinforced clay on painted MDF plinth, 73" x 33½" x 25½".
Matthew Marks.

and robust, brutal and raw, brash and vulnerable. They're impressive in a way that seems uneasy, if not unambitious. Estranged and unstable, they exude chameleonlike changeability: buttocks become breasts, backs become fronts, figural forms melt into abstract ones. You glimpse bits from de Kooning and Rodin, Picasso and Matisse. Warren's inspiration for the seminal piece *Helmut Crumb* (1998) and similar subsequent works can be traced to the final image in Robert Crumb's cartoon *Girls Girls Girls*, as well as to a Helmut Newton photograph—it's the female figure reduced by the male gaze to legs, buttocks, crotch, calves, and chunky high heels, planted on a cartoon head with a silly nose, a Venus of Willendorf for the 21st century.

The show also included carefully balanced steel pieces that look like riffs on Post-Minimalism: they lean on themselves, they balance like seesaws. In at least two of them, a stray pom-pom acts as a featherweight. ("It's a bit like if I was Richard Serra's wife," Warren has commented.) Her work has been compared to Tracey Emin's, as well as to film director Kathryn Bigelow's, for using male tropes against themselves. Warren has also created a series of wall works, called "Husbands," to accompany her freestanding female forms.

This two-sided exhibition, titled "Feelings," was a tour-de-force of anticonceptual rage. It made you realize just how absent feelings have been from the art world lately.

—*Kim Levin*