

1970s Western cult films, like Alexandro Jodorowsky's *El Topo*.

Unfortunately, the last part of *Cremaster 2* is overly occupied with Barney's tenuous subplot: the unlikely theory that Houdini was Gilmore's grandfather. The film's most witless moments occur in one of its few passages of scripted dialogue—Mailer's nonsensical speech to Gilmore's grandmother.

Overall, with its central story line and high production values, *Cremaster 2* moves Barney closer to film auteur than visual artist. For its effectiveness, much credit goes to Jonathan Bepko's score and Peter Strietmann's cinematography. —Rex Weil

**John Currin**

ANDREA ROSEN

John Currin's classically inspired nudes, with their high waists, distended bellies, attenuated limbs, and tapering fingers call to mind some familiar figures—Dürer's Eve; Botticelli's Venus; Cranach's women, too; not to mention 17th-century Dutch painting, Mannerist muses like Parmigianino's *Madonna with the Long Neck*, and an Ingres odalisque. The faces, however, are all Currin's: blonde, fresh American. It's a look we associate with high-school cheerleaders and Malibu Barbie rather than timeless beauty.

In the elegantly rendered painting *The Pink Tree*, reaching over six feet tall, two female nudes pose before an overly pruned tree. Its shorn limbs contrast with the nudes' gangly ones. Although one figure assumes the classical *contrapposto* stance, her friend crouches awkwardly. Drawing from different sources—20th-century faces seamlessly grafted onto mannered bodies and set against an ink-black background reminiscent of Dutch painting—Currin creates a gorgeous picture.

Currin gets more contemporary in *The Hobo*, where the Venus cum Valley Girl is clad in bra, panties, and a

**David Row**

VON LINTEL & NUSSE

David Row's signature oval forms broke deliriously loose in this elegant and animated show. Slaloming over the surface and off the edges of these eleven new paintings and works on paper, Row's fat roller-coaster line takes the viewer on a trip through space. Underpinning it, though, is a complex, geometric framework. Each painting is a diptych, with a vertical seam joining the canvases or wood panels, which are painted different colors or in alternating bands of color running horizontally across both panels. In a sharply contrasting color, the elliptical line starts its journey, but



John Currin, *The Pink Tree*, 1999, oil on canvas, 78" x 48".  
Andrea Rosen.



Richard Patterson, *Male Nude*, 1999, oil on canvas, 84" x 65".  
James Cohan.



David Row, *Chemistry of Desire*, 1999, oil and alkyd on wood, 48" x 60". Von Lintel & Nusser.

**Richard Patterson**

JAMES COHAN

Richard Patterson explores a strange territory between Abstract Expressionism and photorealism. Unlike Gerhard Richter, however, who balances abstraction and photorealism by simultaneously producing two separate bodies of work, Patterson manages to conflate the categories, allowing both styles equal time on a single canvas.

Patterson begins by physically defacing a miniature action figure, adding globs of bright-colored paint to the posturing form. This mutant shape then becomes the focus of the ensuing meticulously rendered canvases, every drip and blob captured with the specificity of a photographic image.

In the large painting *Male Nude*, for example, a single figure on a tabletop shoots a weird appendage into the viewer's face. The body is only partially in focus, as happens when miniatures are photographed within the limited depth of field of a standard camera lens. The effect is hallucinatory. Wild swirls of paint are captured with precision, while the figure itself remains fuzzy, slightly beyond our focal range.

Even more challenging is *The Last Detail*, in which Patterson poses the figure by a window looking out on a movie marquee. The messy strokes of color that make up the fig-

tracing its trajectory becomes mind-teasing, as it loops over and under itself or shifts tone as it weaves through different color fields.

In *Sidewise*, for instance, a white figure eight, evocative of the symbol of infinity, twines around angled poles on a black ground and continues off sides. The tones reverse themselves though, black on white, across the midsection, creating the effect of positive and negative photographic exposures suggesting alternating universes. This piece is lyrically reprised across the room in *Ovalisque*, a clever abstraction in both name and form. Its composition is a mirror image of *Sidewise*, but Row uses a more highly keyed palette—vibrant orange on deep blue, flipping to blue on a peachy pink-and-white plaid, and back again.

Less monumental but very playful is *Chemistry of Desire*, with two discreet

lines—one pink, one white—snaking down each half of the black ground. While never touching, the white drips curve over the center seam, as if to spoon in the arc of the pink, and lower down, the pink moves across the center line to kiss or butt heads with the white. Beautifully, mathematically, almost musically, Row's calculated abstractions let the infinite reign.

—Hilarie M. Sheets