

# Art in Review

## 'Chamberlain/Prouvé'

Gagosian Gallery  
555 West 24th Street,  
Chelsea  
Through April 4

An idiosyncratic show combining the work of two geniuses who used metal in new if nearly opposite ways needs to be carefully balanced. Displaying 12 crushed car-body sculptures by the American sculptor John Chamberlain (1927-2011) in and around two prefab structures by the French architect-designer Jean Prouvé (1901-1984) doesn't quite do the trick.

Astutely reimagined function trumps innovative abstract form. Mr. Chamberlain's bent and folded metal pieces have a beautiful excess and also brought a new level of abstraction and color to postwar sculpture. But Mr. Prouvé designed and patented methods of folding sheet metal that enabled reusable building elements to be mass produced. His spare structures exalt simplicity, logic, economy and, above all, the ideal of affordable housing.

It doesn't help that to look their best the Chamberlain works need more space and better lighting than the Prouvé structures allow. Or that, these structures — a temporary one-room schoolhouse with bright-red supports and a loftlike house — are supplemented by lots of additional material: 13 beautiful architectural models with explanatory texts; several doors in wood and aluminum; and, above all, four portal-like roof supports in folded metal. They made possible lightweight walls, while their tapering legs echo Prouvé's furniture designs, which are unfortunately not included here.

Ultimately, this counts as an invaluable and fabulous solo show, assembled in collaboration with Galerie Patrick Seguin, a leading dealer in all things Prouvé headquartered in Paris. The Chamberlain sculptures serve as light entertainment or garnish. They get a little revenge when color-coordinated with the red-limbed, glass-walled schoolhouse, which they use as a giant vitrine.

ROBERTA SMITH



2015 JOHN CHAMBERLAIN, FAIRWEATHER & FAIRWEATHER LTD/ARTISTS RIGHTS SOCIETY (ARS), NEW YORK; 2015 JEAN PROUVÉ/ARTISTS RIGHTS SOCIETY (ARS), NEW YORK/ADAGP, PARIS; GALERIE PATRICK SEGUIN, TOM POWEL IMAGING/GAGOSIAN GALLERY

Sculptures by John Chamberlain shown within a structure by Jean Prouvé at Gagosian Gallery.

and groups of nearly identical women who may or may not be in a harem. Shown in conversation or listening to one of their number, these women have pale skin, gestures and becalmed features that recall both the female subjects of Renaissance painting and the powdered geisha of Japanese woodblocks. Their articulated hands seem puppetlike. Their largely strapless gowns and black bouffants seem of recent American vintage even as the fabric patterns of their gowns elaborate a veritable lexicon of Arabic geometric decoration. Ms. Kahraman has devised several stylizations of her own, especially in the ways the fabrics drape and overlap while remaining flat, and in details like eyebrows and those dark bouffants (which, for viewers of a certain age may recall Lady Bird Johnson's hairdos).

As explained in Arabic captions beneath the images, the scenes are from Ms. Kahraman's childhood, in Saddam Hussein's Iraq and later in Sweden, to which her family relocated when she was young and where the necessity of learning Swedish caused amusing linguistic misunderstandings. Punch lines go rogue in red ink along the borders. The gallery provides Eng-



COURTESY OF THE ARTIST AND BRIDGET DONAHUE, NYC

Lynn Hershman Leeson's  
"Breathing Machine II"  
(1968/2011).

## Lynn Hershman Leeson

'Origins of the Species'

Bridget Donahue Gallery  
99 Bowery, second floor,  
Lower East Side  
Through April 5

The micro-survey of Lynn Hershman Leeson's art at the new Bridget Donahue Gallery is a tip-of-the-iceberg event with the potential force of a stealth explosive. Ms. Hershman Leeson began her career in the San Francisco Bay Area in the culturally

tures are in the show, analog forecasters of the digital surveillance and identity theft that have since become ubiquitous.

Ms. Hershman Leeson continues to use art as an advance warning system in new work, developed with scientists, that focuses on, and participates in, the phenomenon of genetic manipulation. The show's most recent piece is an installation of wallpaper made from images of hybrid animals, plants, and human limbs created through DNA manipulation, regenerative medicine and 3-D bio-printing. It looks great in the gallery, and like much of this artist's work, it takes both ethics and aesthetics in ungraspable directions.

Ms. Hershman Leeson's multi-tasking ambition includes filmmaking: Her 2010 "Women Art Revolution," the best documentary on the early feminist art movement, will be screened at the gallery on Friday night. The big question is why we haven't seen more of her in New York. A major Hershman Leeson retrospective is on view at ZKM/Center for Art and Media in Karlsruhe, Germany, and will travel in Europe, but no American dates have been set. Aren't our museums supposed to