



Clare Rojas, *Hope Springs Eternal* (detail), 2006, latex paint and wood. Installation view.

pieces of work are here patched into newer ones to lend the project an intergenerational character. Rojas's fantastical imagery of powerful females, magical beasts, and pathetic male nudes forced to assume the poses of female fashion models is meshed into a blend of quilting patterns and traditional Pennsylvania Dutch "hex" signs. Her faux-naïve style of patternmaking and spare, dainty drawing straddles nostalgia for old-fashioned craft and the cartoonlike stylings of contemporary street art.

The massive, intricate paneled installations covering the walls of the Rose Art Museum's upper floor extend the imagery to more intimate gouache and latex works. One small painting features a kerchiefed giantess—a dominant protagonist here—whose projected tongue becomes a striped pathway along which diamond-headed male figures bearing gifts parade toward her mouth. A simple painting in black lines against a light monochromatic ground depicts a wiry naked man in an awkward pose displaying his male attributes. And in a more elaborate image, a black-haired woman plays her banjo on the back of an elongated growling horse. Lyrics and music to Honeywell's song "Squirrel Bridge," painted in the style of a folk-art sampler, are framed and hung elsewhere.

Rojas manages to temper fairy-tale imagery and sugary lyrics like "Kindness is walking you across Squirrel Bridge/Take your Flowers and hold on tight/Without much disturbance you will rest here for the night" by poking fun at male behavior. The two levels of the installation are linked by a goofy fountain based on a male figure who pisses pink water into a pool equipped with four erect water jets. The figure holds a small monitor that shows a video of Honeywell singing about love to a group of beered-up frat boys. The comic aspect of Rojas's depiction of sexual relationships and the absurdity of her over-the-top performances and videos make for an upbeat kind of art in which, as the show's title suggests, "Hope Springs Eternal."

—Francine Koslow Miller

## WASHINGTON, DC

### Teo González

IRVINE CONTEMPORARY

In his recent exhibition, "226,085 Drops," Spanish-born, Brooklyn-based artist Teo González proved himself capable of coaxing transcendent moments from mere daubs of paint. González's square grids are composed of tight clusters of thousands of miniscule "drops-within-drops." His process involves the application of dabs of acrylic polymer emulsion to a gessoed surface. The composition of the emulsion

depicts a small naked bald man posed spread-legged and vulnerable inside a box, surrounded by geometric enclosures guarded by a horse and a lion. As in traditional quilting, older

forces the color to disperse to the edges of each drop, forming tiny haloes. A second set of drops, this time of acrylic enamel, is then spotted onto the first. González references Minimalism and process art—the work of Sol LeWitt, Eva Hesse, and Agnes Martin in particular—in exploring the aqueous properties of his pigments and in the improvisational nature of his technique.

Until recently, González's best efforts have been black-and-white works on paper that resemble photographic negatives of a starry sky. Deceptively simple, they reveal rich contrasts of light and dark, dewy and dry. Unfortunately, works on canvas from this period are less successful, displaying an imbalanced orchestration of color and contrast. "226, 085 Drops" (the title refers to the total numbers of drops in all twelve of the works on show), marked an important step forward. González succeeded here on several fronts by making more authoritative use of color, adroitly realizing his vision on various scales, and tinkering provocatively with his established method. The once straightforward grid is now more like netting in a breeze, bunched in some places and undulating in others. The most successful paintings feature all-over compositions pushed to the very edge of the supports as if about to burst beyond them. (Conversely, when the grid is suspended in the center of the canvas with a wide border of flat color around it, the energy dissipates.)

González's use of color was particularly successful in this show, and paralleled a more mature and nuanced inquiry into density and luminosity. The Prussian-blue ground of *Untitled #400* (12,544 clear blue on Prussian blue direct 112 gauge), 2006, has the rich, fathomless quality one associates with the blues of Yves Klein and Anish Kapoor, and permits the contrasting lighter-colored dots to shimmy and quiver on the surface. Similarly, *Untitled #401* (16,641 red on yellow direct 129 gauge), 2006, offers up the potentially gaudy combination of bright red dots on a lemon yellow background, but the use of red is sufficiently restrained, which defuses the impact of the yellow and transforms the effect from jarring to meditative. The less saturated ground of the six-foot-square *Untitled #405* (21,025 gold on copper blue direct 145 gauge), 2006, with a blue-green color of oxidized copper, seems weathered and dry by comparison. Dappled in gold, it suggests celadon porcelain and the dreamy landscapes of Thomas Wilmer Dewing. González, like Robert Ryman, balances fastidiousness with controlled chaos. He finds strength in restriction and uses contrasted subtleties as passages to revelation.

—Nord Wennerstrom



Teo González, *Untitled #400* (12,544 clear blue on Prussian blue direct 112 gauge), 2006, acrylic polymer emulsion, pigment, and acrylic enamel on cotton mounted on board, 48 x 48".