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'According with Nadelman' | OCTOBER 2003

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Cynthia Nadelman, art critic, poet, and *ARTnews* contributing editor, lovingly gathered together 13 living artists with connections to her grandfather, American sculptor Elie Nadelman (1882–1946), the subject of a recent retrospective at the Whitney Museum. The result was a beguiling show in various media that beamed a thoughtful, current light on Nadelman, based on similarities of sensibility, style, or subject matter.

Several works from the family holdings were shown, including some small plaster figures dating from the mid-1930s to 1946 as well as an undated marble *Ideal Head* that resembles a smaller version of Rodin's portrait of Camille Claudel. These acted as points of reference for the other works—mostly heads and busts—and drew the disparate artworks together in unusual ways.

The selection informed the many aspects of Nadelman's witty, erudite, folk-oriented production. Martin Puryear's untitled bronze (1994) of an abstracted winch handle is characteristically spare, elegant, and formal, but it also resembles a sculpted bust and reiterates the shape of Miriam Bloom's papier-mâché *Sea Theory* (1999), a knobby, rotund form that bespeaks a whimsical head on its shoulders, which in turn relates to Arlene Shechet's seated *Patchwork Buddha* (1998),

made of Hydrocal, the face partially obscured by a yellow patch. Other sculptures included Jacqueline Shatz's painted wall ceramic of a flirty pink crinoline and a wise-eyed head of a dog and Susan Mastrangelo's 250 new, thumb-size smiling or grimacing heads displayed as an offering from an ethnographic museum. Judith Shea's wood study for *Gorgeous* (2003) is a delicate-featured female head haloed by strawberry blonde hair, while Matthew Spender's wood *Bather in a Yellow Towel* (1999) is a full-figured female that recalls primitivist carvings. Elizabeth Catlett's *Stepping Out* (2003) is a smooth, upright bronze Amazon, provocatively stanced, while Kiki Smith ups the adorable factor with her bronze Chihuahua-size spotted fawn. Lighthearted but not light-minded, the gathering traced many interrelationships, as if at an extended family celebration.

—Lilly Wei

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