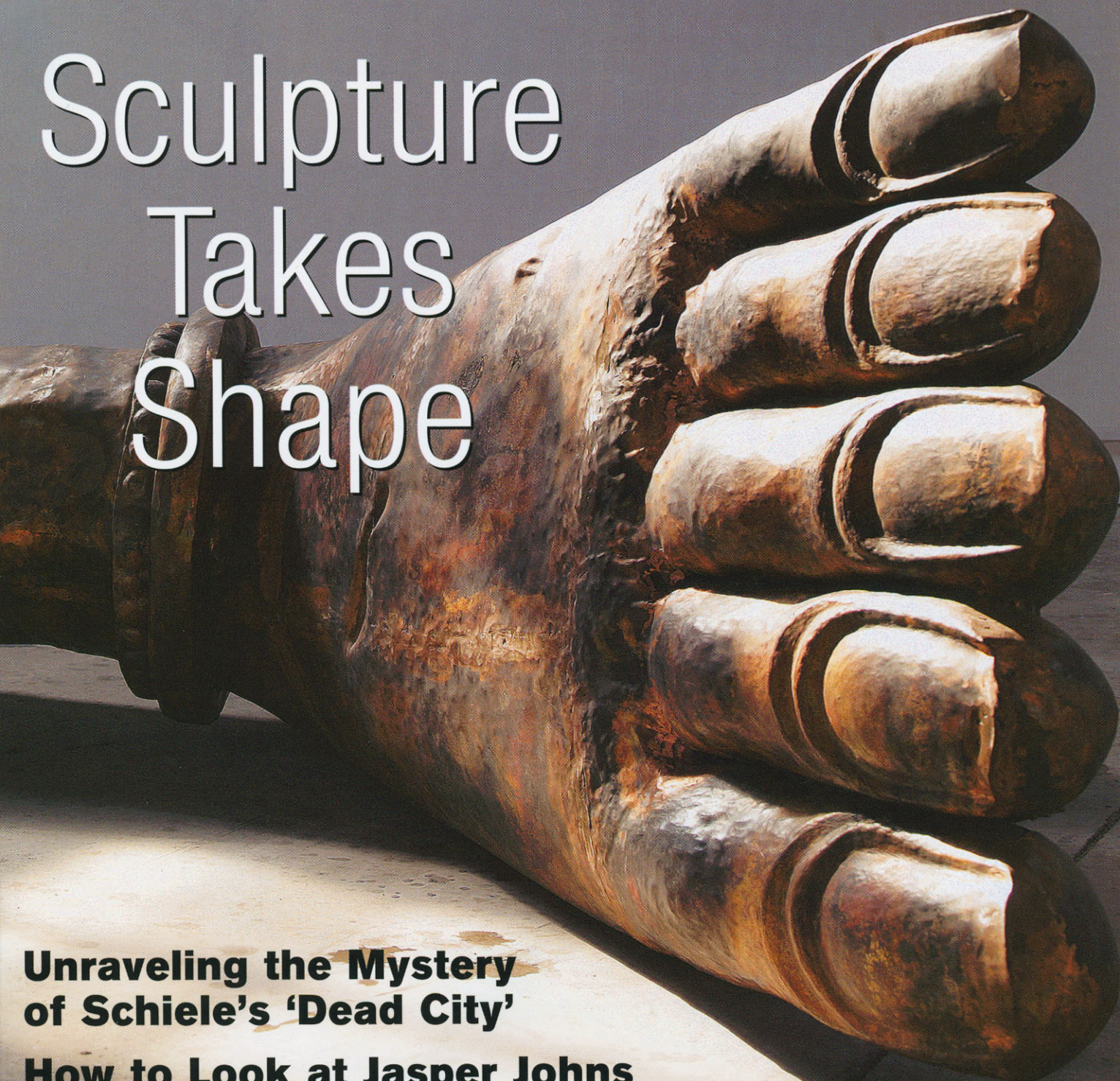


# ARTnews

APRIL 2008

## Sculpture Takes Shape



**Unraveling the Mystery  
of Schiele's 'Dead City'**

**How to Look at Jasper Johns**

**El Greco's Bizarre Visions**

**'The Scream,' the Thief,  
and the 2 Million M&M's**





lian Schnabel and, more particularly, to Jean-Michel Basquiat's. In fact it is distinctly his own. The artist's blend of seriousness, play, surrealist inclinations, and



s, *Farafina*, 2007, mixed media on canvas, 107½" x 120".  
Mike Weiss.

retro splendor is in full bloom in these remarkably dense recent canvases. Even when the field is essentially empty, as in *Farafina* (2007), which is interrupted only by numbers that replicate those given to Africans and Jews in death camps, a new psychological and formal intensity is evident.

One standout here was *So What* (2007), dominated by a few irregular forms, several figures—a shamanic shape, a yellow de Chirico mannequin's head, and ribbons of numbers. Colors are limited to the primaries (plus blacks and whites), but what colors they are: a velvety crimson, a blue like the sky just before night falls. *Sun Ra* (2007), with its calligraphic flashes of black traversing the surface and echoing the bright red orange streaks and blue globes that shift to constellated sky, is a knockout, as are *Les Fleurs du mal I* and *II* (both 2007). Vibrant with a joie de vivre despite their often disturbing content, these are Watts's masterpieces to date.

—Lilly Wei

## Jaehyo Lee

Reeves Contemporary

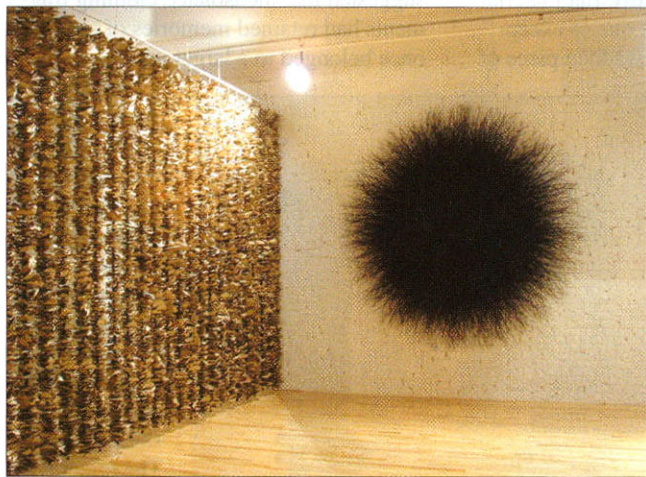
Jaehyo Lee's first U.S. solo show, "Return to Nature," smelled good. *Fallen Leaves Curtain* (2007), which consisted of garlands of dried oak leaves strung like popcorn or tinsel, ran the length of the gallery entryway, while bunches of chestnut tree trunks that had been chopped, carved, and rounded into

smooth, simple forms (spheres, cones, ovals) peppered the space. The gallery reeked of earth.

Lee's early interest in minimalist Earthworks was still evident here in the materials and the ways in which they were exploited. But these new sculptures do not exalt nature so much as turn it inside out: Lee reorders wood, leaves, and stones into new shapes that mimic organic arrangements but ultimately invert them. The hundreds of rolled-up oak leaves in *Fallen Leaves* (2007), for example, create a tableau of irregular circles pushing up against one another. They resemble leaf cells under a microscope.

Similarly, *Chestnut Tree #7* (2007) is a four-foot-long torpedo-shaped piece made from tree trunks. For his wood sculptures, Lee connects tree trunks to produce a sort of bulky asterisk and then carves his patterns. The result is that the inside of the tree—its rings and knots—becomes the smooth outer surface of the sculpture, while the bark remains hidden.

Ultimately, Lee is at his best when he



Jaehyo Lee, (from left) 0121-1110=1071212 (*Fallen Leaves Curtain*), 2007, fallen oak leaves, 100%" x 393¾"; and 0121-1110=106033 (*Bamboo #1*), 2006, bamboo, 78¾" x 78¾" x 35½". Reeves Contemporary.

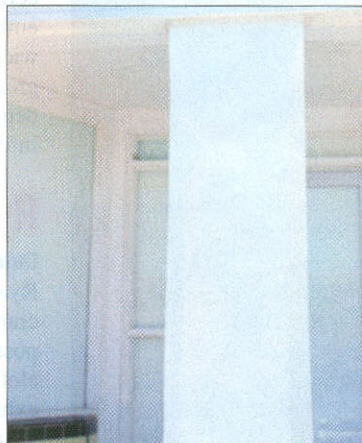
is least methodical. *Bamboo #1* and *#2* (both 2006), the show's strongest works, consist of a large hemisphere made of bamboo twigs affixed to the wall. The thousands of tiny black twigs, which radiate from the sculpture, are delicate. From afar these spheres looked alternately soft and fuzzy like pom-poms, and prickly like a sea urchin, an ambiguity that gave the piece a powerful presence.

—Amy Karafin

## Seton Smith

Winston Wächter Fine Art

For more than a decade Seton Smith has been making large-scale chromogenic prints that capture offhand, ev



Seton Smith, *Inbetween Door*, 2007, chromogenic print face-mounted to nonreflecting panel, 72" x 72". Winston Wächter Fine Art.

interiors in historic and contemporary buildings—places where one space abuts another, perhaps, or a door meets a window meets the floor. Ba

are the posed glances we glimpse in the corner of an eye, but they turn the viewer into a serious participant that might be about the business of architecture, maybe beauty of seeing things as they are expected.

Most of the photographs show views out of

nonetheless hard-edged shots of door frames and exits, doors and windows, chrome fixtures and ventilation grilles. That sounds drab, but blown up to life scale (generally 72 by 72 inches), the colors are realized in understated color (off-white, creamy blues, and greens), though they have the same punch as a good abstract painting. One thinks of some Rymans and their reflections of cars and sidewalks.