

Art in Review; Ohad Meromi

By Roberta Smith

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The New York debut of Ohad Meromi, a young Israeli-born artist with a master's degree in fine arts from Columbia, is an open-ended installation in which means, and references, are more interesting than ends. The video "Cyclops II" jarringly mashes together performance art, sculpture and set and costume design while alluding to Greek drama, science fiction, monster-movie special effects and Isadora Duncan.

The do-it-yourself recklessness and rampant paganism are promising, especially in moments when actors, shot in a green studio, are inserted into model-sized setups of mountain villages and stone temples. (They resemble James Casebere's setup photographs from the 1980's.) The problem is that the video's tale of abduction and escape does not provide nearly enough in the way of sense or entertainment value.

In a larger gallery lined with bleachers, Mr. Meromi assembles a loose-limbed evocation of the performing arts, involving Klieg lights, Greek-hero helmets made of cardboard and yarn and an 11-foot-high guitar of wood. Deft, alternately biomorphic and geometric sculptures in Styrofoam and clay suggest models of modernistic buildings or stage sets. A tall sculpture and a wall piece, both made of welded steel rods, evoke modernist benchmarks like Picasso's "Charioteer" and David Smith's "Australia."

Mr. Meromi's sculptural versatility and cut-and-paste approach to video need a lot more focus, but he has smartly realized that the field of what might be called setup video is relatively open right now, with plenty of room for making worlds collide. Jessie Washburne-Harris and Michael Lieberman, whose new gallery Mr. Meromi's show inaugurates, demonstrate a similar realization by setting up shop in the relatively gallery-free zone west of SoHo and south of the meatpacking district.

Cyclops

HarrisLieberman

89 Vandam Street, South Village

Through Oct. 8