

In Review

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Max Streicher

ARTCORE/FABRICE MARCOLINI, TORONTO

by J. LYNN FRASER



Max Streicher, *Dung Beetle*, 2005, Recycled billboard vinyl, electric fans, 9.2 x 6.4 x 6.1 m
 Courtesy Artcore/Fabrice Marcolini

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"Metamorphosis" is Max Streicher's latest exploration of architecture and structure. Juxtaposing the ephemeral and the earthbound, he whimsically explores structures that encapsulate air and light.

Finding inspiration in the high-ceilinged space of Artcore/Fabrice Marcolini and in Kafka's *Metamorphosis*, Streicher situates, in the centre of the gallery, a 30-foot-long inflated sculpture of a dung beetle on its back, using recycled billboard vinyl to create its articulated carapace. Hieroglyphs of advertising slogans are etched across the glossy vinyl, which Streicher chose specifically for its "insect-like sheen" and "tactile qualities." The weight and density implied by the vinyl's earthen tones and the sculpture's mass are in direct contrast with its

billowy airiness.



Max Streicher, Seated figure Photogram #4, 2004, Silver gelatin print, 2.26 x 1.21 m Courtesy Artcore/Fabrice Marcolini

Seemingly pinned by a column, the beetle is caught trying to free itself. The viewer is similarly held. Inflatable sculptures generally communicate a sense of "naive optimism" that Streicher plays against in this piece by choosing instead to convey a sense of comic helplessness. Is the sculpture to be interpreted as a poignant symbol of human frailty? Does Streicher want the viewer to presume Kafkaesque resonances? Are we to see ourselves as Prufrockian characters who have dared disturb the universe while "sprawling on a pin"? The viewer is left uncertain as to who or what the artist is commenting on.

Punctuating the perimeter is a series of glowing, light-capturing silver-gelatin photographs of human figures and dung beetles that form a necklace of ethereal dark and light around the gallery. The "macabre pseudo-scientific appearance" of the ghostly renderings evokes sympathy for the figures' vulnerability. Streicher's paradoxical juxtapositions of light and dark as well as mass and two-dimensionality are an exploration of the body's structure and the mind's spirit. Influenced by baroque architecture and its concerns for colour, light and shading as well as grand figural gestures and decorations, Streicher's dung beetles and human figures express a modern interpretation of monumental form. www.artcoregallery.com
pages.istar.ca/~maxs/index.htm

Image captions:

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