

GLADSTONE GALLERY

Rosenberg, Karen "Art in Review: Wangechi Mutu." *NY Times*, November 12, 2010, p. C30.

Art in Review

Fortunately, the borders are not so obtrusive as to ruin the main event: the coolly jazzy flow of the lines and the optically captivating shifts between differently colored webs.

Next door is a small selection of paintings Mr. Marden made in the early 1960s, including a diptych of differently grayed monochromes made in the reductive

Wangechi Mutu

'Hunt Bury Flee'

Gladstone Gallery
515 West 24th Street
Chelsea
Through Dec. 4

In her first solo exhibition with Gladstone Gallery, Wangechi



THOMAS ERBEN GALLERY

"Christmas Fairy" (2008) by Rose Wylie, part of the artist's exhibition at Thomas Erben Gallery.

Mutu shows why she's one of the most exciting artists working in collage today. The same can't be said of her storytelling and her sculptural installations, though they aren't the focus here.

Ms. Mutu assembles snippets of National Geographic, skin magazines and fashion tomes into intimidating cyborglike beings (usually female). Often, mechanical imagery adds a Dadaist touch. In "Root of All Evils," for instance, a woman in a magnificent striped headdress wears shoes made of motorcycle parts. At the same time daubs of glitter, handfuls of tinsel, and marblelike swirls of paint encroach on the clippings, making it hard to home in on a specific source.

The collages of life-size figures, though commanding, have a certain mythological ponderousness about them; they show women being attacked by vultures and giving birth to strange plant forms. Ms. Mutu's smaller, square-format collages of heads are more playful and often just as involved. The female profile of "Before Punk Came Funk," with its cat eye and cactus neck, seems to riff on Arcimboldo, while the fake-pearl-encrusted, fishnet-coiffed "Me Myself and Shy" takes cues from Chris Ofili's ornamented Madonnas.

Tree stumps made from felt bunched over cardboard boxes and anchored with packing tape are clearly meant to extend the enchanted-forest theme but look like dull set design. And in the rear gallery, the installation "Moth Girls" — figurines with porcelain legs and wings of leather and feathers, affixed to the wall in neat rows — is a curio cabinet of disappointing sameness. Why Ms. Mutu would want to experiment with seriality and uniformity when her collages relish the subjective and unique is anyone's guess.

KAREN ROSENBERG