

Art in America

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SANTA MONICA

Jacci Den Hartog at Christopher Grimes

In classic Chinese landscape painting, mist is often used to bridge the gaps between distant mountainous backgrounds and close-up foreground details. Early morning haze disguises distances that might look awkward or unrealistic if seen in harsh noon light. Chinese painters also clearly relished the translucent effects of mist over streams and waterfalls, juxtaposing amorphous liquids with the solid, linear quality of rocks. Playing off of these traditions and formal devices, Jacci Den Hartog makes 3-D mountainous landscapes out of plaster and covers them with mistlike veils of diaphanous dripped polyurethane, which also suggest falling water. Her fantastical sculpture brings far-off vistas up close.

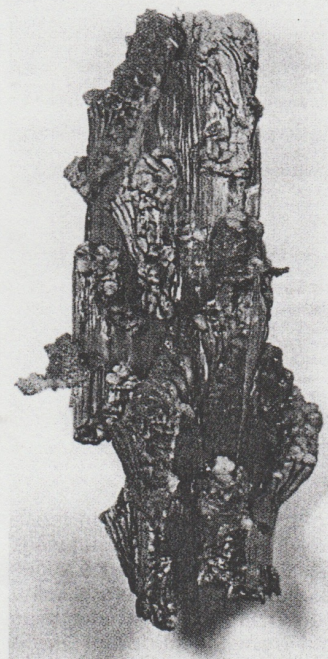
Picking up on the malachite greens and azurite blues of 12th-century Chinese paintings, Den Hartog's new reliefs show a more exuberant use of color than do her previous works. Gemlike tones are at times mixed into the polyurethane and at times painted on the white plaster bases. Plaster armatures are often exposed and visible through the clear sheets of plastic. The spills of polyurethane are neatly trimmed to resemble sheets of water flowing over the

encrustations of plaster. Pathlike grooves are cut through the craggy plaster and visually map out routes through the works. *Reflection through a Plum Blossom Mist* (1995) traces a twisting trail as it meanders upward from a violet-blue base. *Rising before the Mist Has Risen* (1996) suggests an ice cave containing a deep pocket of pink quartz. *Late Snow in the Early Spring* (1995) and *Dwelling in the Floating Jade Mountains* (1995) cast misty veils of jade-tinted plastic over their plaster platforms. These gorgeously contemplative works confirm the spirit of the exhibition's title, "Invitation to Reclusion."

Two floor pieces added a conceptual spin to the artist's enterprise. *Moving Mountain* (1995-96) is a sprawling mound of piled multiples, each cast from a mass-produced, intricately carved stand originally intended to hold a ceramic. Tinted green and blue, the casts are arranged to suggest a mountain at the edge of the sea, weirdly evoking the stylized imagery of Chinese landscape painters who experimented with shifting points of view and multiple perspectives.

With her unlikely materials, Den Hartog has reinvigorated the genre of landscape, bringing a surprising rigor to her process-oriented spills and piles. In so doing she has tapped into a tradition with a host of exciting formal and conceptual possibilities for Western artists.

—Michael Duncan



Jacci Den Hartog: *Dwelling in the Floating Jade Mountains*, 1995, mixed mediums, 56 by 26 by 18 inches; at Christopher Grimes.