



Jacci Den Hartog: *False Harbor*, 2004, polyurethane and steel, 39 1/2 by 35 1/2 by 26 inches; at Christopher Grimes.

Art in America

FEBRUARY 2005

SANTA MONICA

Jacci Den Hartog at Christopher Grimes

Jacci Den Hartog's colored, cast polyurethane and steel sculptures of falling or moving water are like stop-action concretions of the crashing waves and thundering cascades depicted by Romantic painters. Similarly, a few recall the patterned waterfalls of Chinese landscapes or

formal Japanese gardens with their raked gravel ripples.

Removed from its natural context, water is here transformed from a dynamic and volatile force into a kind of iconic still-life fragment. Ranging from modest to large scale (one work is 21 feet long), wall-mounted or freestanding on metal poles, the sculptures reveal the laborious process of their making. Den Hartog starts with clay, and one can imagine her energetically working the material into turbulent and tempestuous baroque surfaces. Over time, she painstakingly pours thin waxy layers of tinted polyurethane into silicone molds of the clay works, with the resulting pieces mimicking the translucence and effervescence of shifting currents and streams affected by wind, gravity and light.

The works partake of an anxious dialectic between nature and art; they embody the paradoxes and challenges artists have faced in trying to capture the dynamic sensory aspects of nature via artificial means. Static representations of nature necessarily render inert the capriciously alive. *Part of the Tide*, a 21-foot-long foaming wave mounted on the wall, acknowledges in its title its divorce from the beach.

Some artists, such as Andy Goldsworthy, allow for the actual forces of nature to intervene in their pieces. By contrast, Den Hartog takes nature into the studio where she engages artifice head on. The power of her work resides in the distillation of both our estrangement from and connection to nature. Her sculptures equally capture and tame the sublime. —Constance Mallinson