



sending dancers all over the place, the photo collage breaks the surface of the canvas into a myriad of mini-surfaces. Effects of multiplied perspective were enhanced by the exhibition's lighting: a garland of black-box spotlights in the ceiling's center, curling the white cube into a zoetrope.

Mary Boone is in a gilded fortress of a high rise near Central Park and seeing this weird and funny show there reminded me of an early photograph by McNamara, *Where Babies Should Be* (2006). It's a portrait of McNamara and his mother, standing against a blank black backdrop. McNamara wears a serious Sears gaze and his open shirt reveals an abdomen discolored by bruises and pus. His mother, in a cranberry-colored turtle-neck, is all matriarchal sternness as she sticks her hand into her son's stomach wound. I couldn't help but imagine *Where Babies Should Be* as the script for "Gently Used," where Mommy was played by Mary Boone, and McNamara was his own gay zombie art.

—Brian Droitcour

NANCY GRAVES

Mitchell-Innes & Nash

Head on Spear (1969), a sculpture in the form of a woolly camel's head mounted atop a 7-foot-high steel pole, is one of the last works in Nancy Graves's late-1960s "Camels" series. It was placed strategically to the right of the main entrance in her recent show, as if to usher visitors into the conceptually

rich work of the 1970s. The sculpture *Inside-Outside* (1970), was arranged on the gallery floor and appeared like fragments of a camel's skeleton: the outer shell (an amalgamation of fiberglass, wax and animal skin) is cut in half to reveal lifelike "bones" cradled inside. In this work, Graves moves through the idioms of natural-history exhibits, Minimalism and process art; the camel was disassembled and hollowed out, returning it to the realm of the "specific object."

The exhibition, organized with the Nancy Graves Foundation, focused on the years 1969 to 1982 from a prolific career that was cut short when the artist died of cancer in 1995 at age 54. The show included sculpture and film but foregrounded drawings and paintings, the latter melding Pop colors with geological and cosmological data.

Where Graves's sculptures are decidedly terrestrial, several of her paintings feel untethered and suggest lunar exploration and oceanography as their sources. Adjacent to the floor work was *Xola* (1977), an oil-on-canvas painting that measures over 7 feet wide. It consists of brightly colored contour lines in saturated pink, rust, green and blue. Despite the apparent expressiveness of the marks, one senses an underlying structure to the careening squiggles and arabesques. Graves's hand is ever-present—the way the paint is scrawled and scumbled over the canvas anticipates painting's return to an expressionist vocabulary in the 1980s.

Measuring 8 feet high, *Lixit* (1979) shows a central circular pattern of black lines set within an ecstatic field of multicolored painted marks. One tries to "read" the painting as if it were a topological map, but the "data" is subsumed within the frenetic field. The clue to understanding this work might be found in *Aves: Magnificent Frigate Bird, Great Flamingo* (1973), one of three videos projected on the wall outside of the main gallery. In the video, the camera is fixed on a flock of frigate birds silhouetted against a turquoise sky. Later in the same work, Graves captures flamingos in flight, an impressive and comical scene. The buoyancy of Graves's paint handling, the recurrent circular motif (evocative of a dance-step chart) and the videos of migrating creatures suggest that the artist was thinking about movement in general and choreography in particular in her work from the 1970s.

Covering vast conceptual and formal territory seems to have been par for the course during the '70s—a decade notoriously lacking a dominant style. Graves's flamingos stand in for performers, her camel "bones" nod to a Minimalist vocabulary and her paintings employ the allover gesture of the New York School. While it is tempting to try to locate movements against which Graves was reacting, one ultimately senses that her work, both wry and inquisitive, is primarily concerned with engagement.

—Eric Sutphin

KEITH HENNESSY

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In times of social unrest our only recourse, however frivolous it may seem, is to re-ground ourselves in a rhetoric of intimacy. We are momentarily reassured by something tactile,

Nancy Graves:
Lixit, 1979, oil on
canvas, 96 by 62
inches; at Mitchell-
Innes & Nash.