

**Above from left:** Izhar Patkin, *You Tell Us What to Do*, 2010, painting on four walls (detail), ink on pleated tulle, 426.7 x 670.6 x 762 cm. **Izhar Patkin, *Don Quixote Second Part***, 1987, color coated anodized cast aluminum, 233.7 x 190.5 x 101.6 cm. **Izhar Patkin, *Let My Right Hand Wither***, 2001, oil and wire mesh, 182.9 x 121.9 cm.

inventions, many allegorical, some merely episodic.

Beyond the veiled rooms are a number of works whose fundamental effects have no common ground such as a baroque inspired blown-glass sculpture *The Messiah's glAss*. The decapitated head of the donkey is placed on a platform between the reflective pillars of an ersatz Holy Ark. In his catalog essay, *The Messiah's Ass*, Sefi Rachlevsky discusses a treatise by the noted theologian, Rabbi Abraham Isaac Kook, a metaphorical work that became a "foundational myth" linked to both orthodoxy and secularism in the weave of the Israeli social fabric. Rachlevsky's conclusion is that "... Patkin's *glAss* stands for the richness of secular Judaism: Israeli, Hebraic, Tel Avivian, innocent, sparkling, virile, intriguing, gratifying, and reflective in all meanings of the word."

Further on one is confronted by *Gardens for the Global City*, a handful of cleverly painted pictures depicting Oriental carpets in which oil pigments are hard-pressed through the back of a wire mesh support, a technique that projects an artificial woven appearance. Several porcelain plates and a porcelain sculpture *Madonna and Child*; a number of stylized black paintings and an installation of collages and illustrations utilizing enamel pigments on slick Chromecoat paper entitled *Judenporzellan*. This particular work (at the Open Museum, Tefen) is a

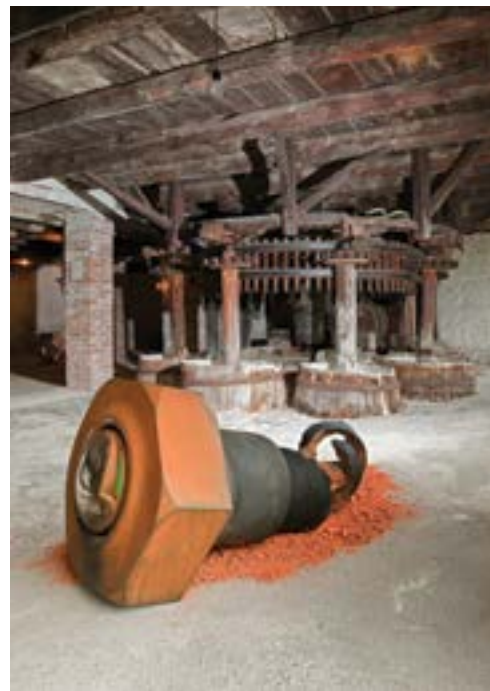
graphic survey of bits and pieces of drawn tea pots, animals and cages; and portraits of Felix and Fanny Mendelssohn hung randomly on panels. The narrative relates to the anti-Semitic events in the 18th century when King Frederick of Prussia forced all Jews to purchase porcelain from the struggling monarch's factory before receiving permits for domestic activities like marriage, building and trading.

A life-size anodized cast aluminum rendition of *Don Quixote Part Two* consists of an elaborate surface coloration of white, yellow, olive, blue, and violet that provides coverage for the rococo gestures of the scrawny man and benevolent beast. Beautifully rendered, it is, nevertheless, a distinctively theatrical work bordering on kitsch created in 1987, initially installed at the John and Mable Ringling Museum of Art, Sarasota, Florida. (Reminder: The Ringling Brothers and Barnum and Bailey Circus.)

Coming back to Patkin's tulle hangings. The images are not painted on the fabric in a traditional manner but are assembled from various sources, compiled and plotted on a computer, then printed onto the hung fabric from a machine that Patkin developed and installed in his New York studio. The images are often random, appear and disappear in the pleats, and relate to one another in the realm of illusions and the shadowy underworld. To describe his dead father's place in *Arik Patkin WTC* (2006)

Patkin had this to say: "... What is a ghost if not an unresolved emotion? When it is resolved, the ghost will leave. The role of the narrator, be he artist or filmmaker, is to suspend these ghosts. That is the job description. When you look at the paintings of my father, you feel the image, even if you do not know the family connection." The same holds true for *Violins* (2006) and *Et in Arcadia Ego* (2012), the latter a seamless combination of emblematic and mythical landscape paintings by Reuven Rubin, Israel's foremost painter in pre-State Palestine.

When one reaches the final room of this long and, to this writer's opinion, confusing exhibition, the viewer looks



**Steve Montgomery, *Structural Bolt with Corrosion***, 2006, painted, glazed ceramic, 25 x 28 x 59". Images: Courtesy of Jerome Zodo Contemporary, Milan.

back to recall its essence. But there doesn't seem to be one for Patkin is not only an artist but an inventor and sort of media alchemist as he experiments, amalgamates, and blends pictures with whatever matter grabs his fancy. Considering this the last question to be asked is: "Why Izhar Patkin and why in two museums?"

**Gil Goldfine**

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## ITALY

### Nove

#### Steve Montgomery at Mulino Pestasassi Baccin Cecchetto Stringa

**S**teve Montgomery is a familiar artist in New York. He has had several important exhibitions at the OK Harris among other venues, both domestic and international. His medium is ceramic sculpture. Through ceramics Montgomery elevates the importance of sculptural form, and through sculpture he pushes the medium of ceramics in a new direction. Montgomery's work is partially about the verisimilitude of machinery. Some have extended his idea further by suggesting that his ceramic

forms represent the decay of the industrial or machine age.

His recent exhibition, titled *Forward Archaeologies* (a rough translation of the Italian), curated by Geraldine Zodo, was shown at the Pestasassi – Baccin – Cecchetto – Stringa Mill (*Mulino Pestasassi Baccin Cecchetto Stringa*) in Nove, Italy. The various names represent families that have owned the mill since its inception at the outset of the Industrial Age in the 18th century. The location—chosen by the artist's gallery, Jerome Zodo Contemporary—is the perfect setting for Montgomery's installation of work. Most of the pieces are enlarged nuts and bolts in various stages of breakage, corrosion, and decay. The machine shop settings going back more than 200 years add an impressive context for seeing this work. It is curious that all of the works included from 2006 to 2011 might be considered major works and are occasionally seen in relation to one another.

For example, a painted and glazed ceramic piece, *Structural Bolt, Hollow Core* (2006), extends nearly five feet on the floor of the museum with a circumference of nearly 30 inches. This is shown proximate to a work *Test Site, Nut Fragments* (2007). The rusted color of the steel is impressive as is the concentration on the detailed facets of the surrogate metal, qualities that Montgomery's work is known for. The sculptural aspect of the work is further emphasized by the placement of the two works. They read visually in relation to one another, almost as if there was some kind of metaphorical relationship, signifying a highly charged relationship on stand-by.

The metaphorical reading of the work is based solely on the reading of the author, not the artist's direct intentions. Yet the dual placement of many of these machine works suggests some form of dialectical tension, which further implies the artist's heritage in relation to Duchamp and Picabia in the early 20th century. In both cases, their works represented machines in terms of a sexual



**Steve Montgomery** at Pestasassi-Baccin-Cecchetto-Stringa-Mill with his **Structural Bolt, Hollow Core** (left: 2006, painted and glazed ceramic, 58.6 x 157.5 x 68.8 cm) and **Test Site, Nut Fragments** (right 2007, painted and glazed ceramic, 20.3 x 76.2 x 76.2 cm). Image: Courtesy of Jerome Zodo Contemporary, Milan.

metaphor. Duchamp's machine iconography in the *Large Glass* (1915–1923) is an explicit example of this concept.

In an adjacent room are *Large Nut* (2011) and *Structural Bolt* (2009), which are painted ceramics. It is curious to note that sometimes the work is painted and in other works it is both painted and glazed. Montgomery's choices in terms of the surface appearance are essential decisions in creating the kind of verisimilitude of the work.

One of the most beautiful and expressive works in the show is *Structural Bolt with Corrosion* (2006), also a painted and glazed ceramic work, in which a large nut is tightly fitted on the bolt. A separate work, *Large Nut #2*, is placed out-of-

doors adjacent to the gigantic mill wheel that, in this case, offers more of a literal placement than a metaphorical one.

Finally, *Two Red Wrenches* (2011), also painted ceramic, is a sheer tour-de-force, meaning that the scale relationship appears equal to the actual objects and therefore creates a *trompe l'oeil* effect, suggesting that the two wrenches are, in fact, wrenches. Although the scale appears relatively equal to the actual objects and therefore is smaller in scale compared with the other works in the exhibition at Nove, the relational metaphor appears to hold.

While the context of this historical machine environment is important to the show in its entirety, Montgomery's elegant and eloquent works shine in

relation to the context. This was a rare opportunity to see a master of his art and craft in a place that affords the completion of a narrative. Never before has Montgomery's concept appeared so forceful and so immensely and delicately clear.

**Robert C. Morgan**

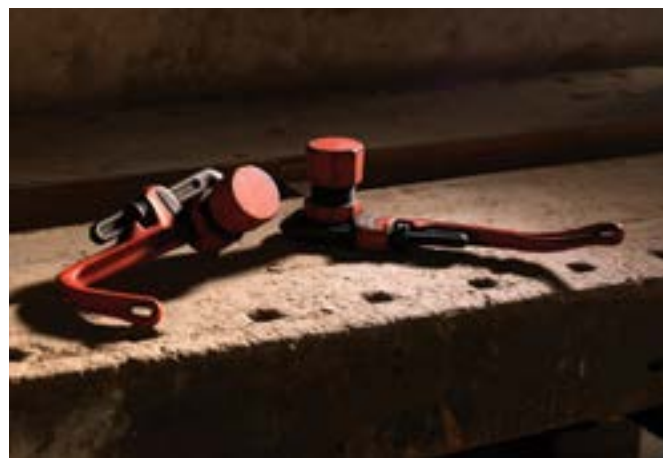


## THAILAND

### Bangkok

#### Khemrat Kongsook at the National Gallery Bangkok

On the occasion of his retirement from the faculty of painting, sculpture, and graphic arts of Silpakorn University in Bangkok where he has taught since his graduation in 1973, Khemrat Kongsook has been honored with a retrospective of his work at The National Gallery of Thailand. In a tribute published in the catalogue, which accompanies the exhibition, his former student Panya Wijinthanasarn recounts how Kongsook had received perfect scores in drawing in the entrance exam for Silpakorn University and was known for his competence in all other areas of art making. Most important, Wijinthanasarn recounts how he was an inspiration to his classmates, and



**Left: Steve Montgomery, Red Wrench 1**, 2011, painted and glazed ceramic, 30.5 x 10.2 x 20.3 cm. **Right: Steve Montgomery, Red Wrench 2**, 2011, painted and glazed ceramic, 45.7 x 10.2 x 12.7 cm. Image: Courtesy of Jerome Zodo Contemporary, Milan.