

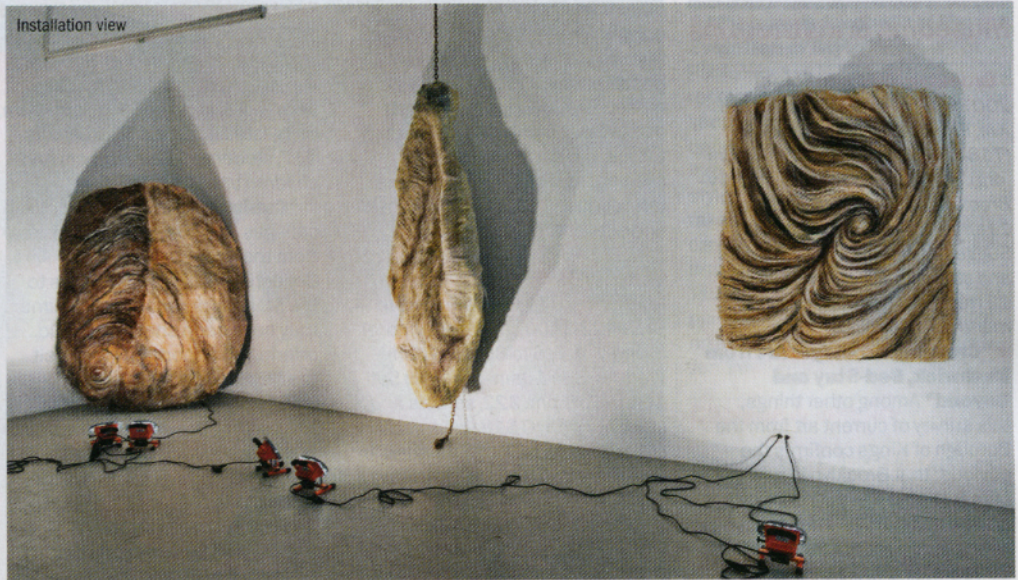
Gillian Jagger, "What Was and Is"

★★★★★

David Lewis Gallery, through Nov 16
(see Lower East Side)

That we're living in a new geological epoch (the Anthropocene, or age of man) isn't news to 84-year-old, British-born artist Gillian Jagger. In the late 1970s, after a career in New York, she moved to the Hudson Valley, where she's since focused on the interdependence of man and nature.

Still, she's never left her past entirely behind, which is what makes this exhibition of old and recent works so fascinating. Pieces ranging from early-'60s paintings incorporating casts of manhole covers to brand-new sculptures made of resin and horsehair variously bring to mind Sue Coe's activist art, Robert Rauschenberg's indexical work of the 1950s, Bruce Nauman's casts of animal bodies and Jack Pierson's early installations, as well as fiber art



and African artifacts.

The most spectacular work, occupying a large back gallery lit by footlights, is a trackway of hooves, pieced together out of latex and plaster casts. The front room contains four large, bestial-looking pieces; one of them—a concave form in latex, fur tufts stuck to the inside—suggests a sizable quadruped. Two shieldlike objects

employ horsehair of different colors to create patterns resembling swirling water. Finally, there's a resin-and-horsehair sculpture hanging from a rusted chain: While abstract, it evokes uncomfortable images of strung-up carcasses.

Jagger's theatrical approach is not only radically nondiscriminatory with respect to class and gender, but to species as well. Her

egalitarianism accounts for both the ferocity and the equanimity in her art, which offers a chance to contemplate both our commonality with—and our disastrous disconnection from—each other and the natural world.—Anne Doran

THE BOTTOM LINE The artist tackles mankind versus nature in sculptural form.

David Humphrey, "Work and Play"

★★★★★

Fredericks & Freiser, through Nov 8
(see Chelsea)

Over the past 25 years, Humphrey has been active as a writer and curator as well as an artist, is known for strange, hybrid paintings and sculptures mixing figuration and abstraction with equal amounts of dexterity and panache. An artist's artist, he has a knack for making smart, psychologically loaded works in which spectators of one sort or the other serve as protagonist, while animals, in some cases, are substituted for people.

The painting *Horsey Love*, for instance, depicts a small, pink horse nuzzling against a much larger one reduced to a solid-yellow shape. In *The Birds*, two creatures, part human and part avian, huddle together on a set of branches that veer off into different directions as expressionistic gestures. Two other canvases, *Posing* and *Shutterbugs*, offer similar views of vacationers

taking snapshots of themselves or of their surroundings, the latter rendered as abstracted expanses of color.

On the Couch features a stand-in for the artist staring at the viewer. He seems to have been assembled from different works, with a head sketched in outline atop a realistically painted body wearing tennis togs; the eponymous furniture on which he sits is little more than a swirl of gray and black patterns. The gaze features in another canvas, *Two Mugs*, showing a faceless nude model, head pressed against a bed with her buttocks in the air. Humphrey subverts the pose's obvious erotic charge by planting a female face on each of the woman's cheeks.

Complimented by an even more surreal trio of sculptures, *Two Mugs* and the other compositions offer multiple visions authored by a singularly clever mind.

—Paul Laster

THE BOTTOM LINE The real and surreal collide with abstraction.

