

# Art in America

November 2006

## Rob Wynne at Craig F. Starr

Graced with such architectural features as a bowed wall and high ceilings, this intimate uptown gallery was well suited to Rob Wynne's *mise-en-scène*, each element chosen to enliven its context. Wynne, attracted by the wit and range of the Surrealist legacy, is known for multiply referential projects in a variety of mediums. The photo-based sweep of his black-on-white hand-printed *Eye Wallpaper* was ornamented with *Glass Tears* (both 2006) that recalled Man Ray's *Larmes (Glass Tears)*, 1930-33. Wynne's tears, fixed to the walls, hung from stems of glass elongated by the weight of each pouring of the material. The interplay of tear and eye was enhanced in magnified passages; the eyes express sensibilities that range from the seductive to the wry, amused and watchful.

Central to the exhibition, and mirroring every object in the gallery—including the viewer—was a gleaming forest of silvered, freestanding blown-glass mushrooms (2006) that varied from toadstool-level to knee-high. Their reflective stems were rooted to poured-glass bases adhered to unseen supports of wood and felt. Lacquered as well as silvered, the mushrooms stood singly or in groups of as many as 14. Intensely reflective, they extended the dance of eyes and tears in random, shifting patterns, following the curve and planes of the gallery walls.

A signature word piece from 2005 of hand-poured letters of lacquered glass occupied much of an opposing wall that had been painted a pale, mossy green. Each letter bore the trace of the artist's hand, and the piece provided the exhibition with its title, "The Heartbeat of a Bird." Each letter was ranked one word to a line so that this work embodied the pulsing rhythm of its unseen referent, suggesting the passage of time and the fragility of beauty and

the medium itself. The poured-glass letters offered a somewhat crackled surface that appeared to be fixed by reflective, protective lacquer; the effect suggested condensation on an iced tumbler.

A framed stitched-thread and vellum drawing, *I Adore Flies* (2003), a recontextualization of an allusive phrase attributed to Salvador Dalí, was displayed in the gallery's office, the thread connecting and extending in loops from each letter, visible through the vellum and miming the dancing course of a fly on the wing. Nearby, Wynne mounted on the wall a silvery 19-by-25-inch glazed-ceramic fly, as well as the ambiguously brief poured-glass text, *It* (2005). In an exhibition about the gaze, mirroring and the artful juxtaposition of elements, Wynne's final fillip was *17 Forms of Happiness* (2006), a gleaming glazed-ceramic branch adorned with a found glass eye set in the manner of a surveillance camera opposite the gallery entrance and high on the wall. It was a fitting conclusion to this handsome excursion through the looking glass. Well-known in Europe, with recent exhibitions in Paris, Munich and Geneva, Wynne was formerly represented in New York by Holly Solomon. This was his first solo in Manhattan since 2000.

—Edward Leffingwell

View of Rob Wynne's exhibition "The Heartbeat of a Bird," 2006; at Craig F. Starr.

