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NEW YORK

Linda Stein

Flomenhaft Gallery

Linda Stein's recent exhibition of new work focused on the combination of popular culture, myth, and body politics. By eliciting the contradictions that continue to exist between cultural ideals and lived reality, Stein's work attempts to bridge the gap by creating shells of body armor that speak to the sociopolitical situation of many women in the contemporary moment.

The show opened with *Knight of Wishing 557* (2006) and *Power 581*

(2007), two four-foot-high works forming female silhouettes out of brittle, tactile materials such as keys, tags, copper wire, and fragments of chain interlaced with stone and wood. The much taller *Breaking News 638* (2008), made of wicker, wood, and paper, offers depictions of Wonder Woman emerging through its surface.

Newsprint comics, collaged onto many of these costumes, add another level to the implied narrative of empowerment. Stein's correlation

of myth and the female figure crystallizes into a durable concept in *Knight at Ease 652* (2009), which features fragments of black-and-white newsprint cartoons worked into a black leather surface. Blurring the distinction between handmade objects and assembly-line productions, Stein effectively sets up a metaphor for the social advancement of women.

Other sculptures, such as *Knight of Courage 655* (2009) and *Silver Knight 666* (2009), initially appear to be made of metal imbued with colorful images of the artist's hero, Wonder Woman. Once these layers of armor are worn and set into

motion, the attached comics become mobile and allow the fictional "Woosh! Ba-Ang!" to escape into a real context. With these works, Stein not only bypasses the paradoxical history of the female figure in sculpture, she also moves away from objectification and places the idea of the figure within a three-dimensional, mobile form, leaving her work as a viable contribution to larger discussions surrounding gender and identity politics.

—Jill Conner



Linda Stein, (left) *Silver Knight 666*, 2009, wood metal, leather, paper, and archival ink, 45 x 17 x 7 in.; (right) *Knight of New Thoughts 667*, 2009, wood, metal, leather, paper, and archival ink, 41 x 16 x 5 in.