

heated fan atop two gigantic rocking half-moon structures mounted on tracks. Sticks of cotton candy located perpendicular to the floor face the fan and, as they slowly heat, melt into a sugary-sweet gloop. The burned scent of the spun sugar permeated the gallery, more fair-ground attraction than scientific evidence. Such machines are best described as playful contraptions or amateurish inventions rather than austere analogues for thought—though ideas, like machines, are frequently flawed. Despite the long history of machines and the diagram in twentieth-century modernism, of Oppenheim's works are more in the vein of Caractacus Potts than Jesús Rafael Soto, with the playful and promised pyrotechnic pleasures of the sudden whoosh, whiz, and crank of Oppenheim's fireworks inviting viewers to revel in the absurdity of their construction.

A selection of video works was also on show, including *Whirlpool—Eye of the Storm*, 1973, Oppenheim's footage of an aircraft drawing a spiral of white smoke in the air, alongside *Ratta-callity*, a two-part sound piece from 1974. Documented by way of photographs and maps, *Polarities*, 1972, involved the artist re-creating his daughter's first and his father's last drawings writ large across the ground in red magnesium flares. This piece added a sense of poignancy and depth to the say-what-you-see logic of Photoconceptualism, which his oeuvre at first glance invokes. And there's a humor to Oppenheim's work, too. While videos such as *Echo*, 1973, in which the artist bangs his hand repeatedly against a wall, might make for uncomfortable viewing, they just as easily register as absurd and funny. Puncturing the heroic ambition of Land art through the insertion of his own body, or his family's doodles, into its sublime territory, Oppenheim always privileged a mode of working that referenced an all-too-human order of fallibility and failure. Following the brief flaring of a series of Oppenheim's firework signs from 1974–75, *Narrow Mind*, *Mindless Less Mind*, and *Mind Twist*, outside the gallery throughout the run of the show, their charred remnants were suspended on the walls: relics showing how Oppenheim's unique brand of Conceptual profundity crackled with illumination and spark.

—Jo Applin



Annette Messenger, *Mes Transports*, 2012–13, mixed media, dimensions variable.

rigor mortis—is a nod to the dead-sparrow arrangements of Messenger's first major series, *Les Pensionnaires*, 1971–72.

In many of the wheeled tableaux that make up *Mes Transports*, the intertwined limbs and random detritus are piled in chaotic heaps. More disturbing, however, are the assemblages in which Messenger plays Dr. Frankenstein, carefully constructing alarming yet droll monsters. One particularly freakish example seems to describe the fate of an infant who was apparently still in utero when disaster struck. Laid out on a heather-gray blanket, a blackened plush-and-plastic baby doll rests partially inside a disembodied female pelvis. Bringing a measure of sci-fi absurdity to this horrific image, the doll's preposterously hyperextended limbs, which have burst far beyond the imagined parameters of the perished mother's body, suggest a bizarre crustacean-human hybrid. Amid a sea of similarly absurd and abject vignettes—a bent leg plunged into the neck cavity of a severed head; an adult set of upside-down, tutu-clad thighs sprouting bouquets of child-size arms and legs; a headless and footless couple in the sixty-nine position on a bed of small-scale architectonic rubble—a lone black cube appears like a beacon of geometric order and logic. Covered in the same foil as the rest of the sculptures, the form resembles a crinkly miniature Tony Smith sculpture on wheels. A jarring reference to Minimalist austerity and rationalism, the cube also suggests the black-box recorder used to determine the causes of aircraft accidents. The appeal to either an art-historical precedent or a real-world context implies a hypothetical answer key to the object's interpretation, but provides no final explanation for the surrounding devastation.

Downstairs, in the gallery's basement space, another room-filling installation illustrated the apocalypse from a different perspective. Similarly disjointed and also sheathed entirely in black foil, *Continents noirs* (Black Continents), 2010–12, consists of nineteen sculptural landscapes suspended from the ceiling. In the otherwise unlit room, three dangling lightbulbs attached to overhead motors swung rather vigorously above the viewer, illuminating sections of the diverse topographies of continental fragments—train tracks, pagodas, pyramids, tepees, high-rises, smokestacks—while creating a dizzying shadow play on the walls. Standing beneath the seemingly burned airborne landmasses and pendulum lights, one had the impression of being at the epicenter of a major explosion. The exiting viewer could then stroll back past the post-traumatic scene of maimed and reconstituted bodies upstairs with newfound empathy, if not yet complete comprehension.

—Mara Hoberman

PARIS

Annette Messenger

GALERIE MARIAN GOODMAN

Spread across the gallery floor in an archipelagic formation, Annette Messenger's installation of twenty-one sculptures arrayed on small padded dollies, *Mes Transports*, 2012–13, conjured the gory aftermath of a mysterious disaster. Reprising some of the artist's signature motifs, including dead animals, human body parts, and children's toys, this work evokes a scene of emergency triage with nightmarish casualties on makeshift gurneys. The strange amalgams of limbs, shoes, birds, dogs, and architectural wreckage—covered with the kind of matte black foil typically used to mask theatrical lights—appear hideously charred, evoking catastrophes ranging from the eruption of Vesuvius to the bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki.

Making the grisly mise-en-scène more tolerable, scattered traces of offbeat humor, such as a bright-pink tongue sticking out of a disembodied blackened head or an enormous snail-dildo, confirm Messenger's peculiar talent for linking comedy and horror. The morbid humor of *Mes Transports*, which is chromatically and thematically bleaker than her recent installations featuring soft, colorful materials ranging from mass-produced stuffed animals and toys to handmade weavings and pillows, has roots in Messenger's early work. In particular, one of the blackened victims—a small bird placed on its back, feet suspended in