

ARTFORUM

Desirée Holman

SILVERMAN GALLERY
804 Sutter Street @ the corner of Jones
April 17–May 30

"Reboms," the official name of hyperrealistic baby dolls lovingly created by and carried by a subculture of women, is a *This American Life*-ready phenomenon that's as fascinating for its psychological charge as it is for its materiality. Creating reboms is a codified and commercialized craft practice, like scrapbooking as though practiced by Ron Mueck. Desirée Holman entered into this milieu recently, meeting women and learning their craft, like a biased but not unsympathetic journalist. As evidenced by the video and drawings that compose this exhibition, she's fully aware of the hefty emotional and sculptural implications of her new work.

As she has done in previous projects, Holman blends allusions to psychotherapy, reenactment, dance, and music into a discomfiting but compelling whole. (Her 2007 piece *The Magic Window*, currently included in the SECA Art Award Exhibition at SF MoMA, presents actors wearing handmade masks cross-pollinating into the 1980s *Cosby* and *Roseanne* sitcom families.) The slick, nearly ten-minute video *Reborn*, 2009, presents a quirky range of maternal imagery, action, and music: children's games (musical chairs, hot potato), women in rocking chairs holding reboms (made by Holman), and a gyrating dance troupe who wear just bras, panties, hijabs, and baby pouches made from colorful fabric. A repeating image of these practicing "mothers" with preternaturally white milk dribbling from their mouths in forward and reverse is an image as indelible as the sliced eyeball in *Un Chien andalou* (1929). Holman's detailed colored-pencil drawings, as densely rendered as David Hockney's '70s portraits, are equally dreamlike variations on the theme. Particularly effective is *10 20 30 40*, 2009, which depicts a dribbling mama with a forlorn expression on her face. Her hair swirls above her head as though channeling some internal static electricity as she cradles the faux infant. Holman nudges Mary Kelly's *Post Partum Document*, 1973–79, into the realm of plastic surrogates and allusions to genetic engineering.



Desirée Holman, *10 20 30 40*, 2009, colored pencil on archival paper, 16 x 16".

— Glen Helfand