

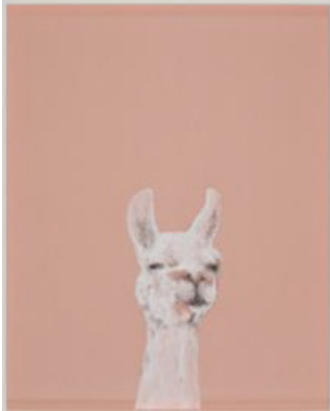
# FRANÇOIS GHEBALY GALLERY

*THE Magazine*

Michael Müller: "Werke/Works"

Valdez, Cynthia

December 2008



Michael Müller, Reflecting on Pink Elephants, pencil and acrylic on blotting paper, 20 ½" x 16 ½", 2008

For German artist Michael Müller, hypnosis is the answer to the riddle of how beautiful things might be culled from deep within the psyche. In *Werke/Works*, Müller's first solo show in the United States, several drawings address the idea of descending into the depths to emerge with something that would otherwise be hidden. The drawings, which strongly resemble nervous systems, were achieved while the artist was under hypnosis, as can be seen by the trembling, unstable quality of the spidery strokes.

The theme of consciousness is again evoked in a work that shows only the head of a llama. If you are from a certain religious persuasion, you will see the depiction of a noble animal, worthy of respect and dignity. If not, you will simply see the head of a llama. A certain point of view is what alters the piece and makes it meaningful. Other references include Rorschach blotch-looking paintings matched with drawings that appear to have been inspired by the objects they are accompanying.

What the artist seems to be pointing out is that in order for art to be meaningful, it requires a viewer. But Müller's exigence is what keeps his work from falling into the "interactive" or "relational aesthetics" realm. He seems to be asking more of his viewers than just simple observation or interaction; he is suggesting that they should inform themselves as well. In doing this, one is able to activate subtexts that once hidden, can become easily visible. One sculpture, *Cornerlove*, makes this point very clear -- a painted abstract shape is attached to a fishing line that leads up to the ceiling and back down again. At the end is a fishing reel, just within reach of the viewer. Is this an invitation, a provocation, a symbolic gesture? Or perhaps what is really on the proverbial line here is Modernism? In any case, Müller poses enough open-ended questions to keep the viewer engaged -- and above all -- willing to plunge beneath the surface.