

# Art in America

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## REVIEW OF EXHIBITIONS

### NEW YORK

#### Reeva Potoff at Kouros

Reeva Potoff's recent photo-based wall works feature a female swimmer and shimmer with a waxy, opalescent sheen. The grid format accentuates the surface quality and creates a pleasing tension with the rather prosaic image of a floating woman performing a froglike kick, her bottom-heavy form clad in a one-piece bathing suit. The show's title, "Zero Gravity," appears to allude both to the swimmer's suspended aquatic state and to the illusion of depth achieved through the artist's complex process.

There were 14 works in the show, the smallest measuring 8 by 10 inches, the largest an 8-by-8-foot gridded diptych. Some vertical rectangles, others horizontal in format, they are mosaiclike in

appearance and set up an alternation of darker and lighter colored panels. In some works, the figure of the swimmer is accompanied by additional motifs including water ripples and ghostly tropical fish. In two pieces, the figure appears twice, as if swimming after herself. Organic tones predominate—pond greens and dusky browns mixed with occasional violets and reds.

The most striking aspect of these works is their tactile sense of depth, which suggests the translucency of water and gives the swimmer a convincing sculptural presence. To achieve this effect, Potoff has developed a subtle, multistage process that is not immediately obvious to the eye.

It involves colored acetate, laser-printed with a photo, layered over a mirror support; each grid panel is built up individually, sometimes with added textures underneath. But Potoff does not hide all the aspects of the works' making: some squares are placed slightly askew, so that tiny gaps between them reveal the mirror beneath.

Potoff is a veteran 1970s installation artist, and the present grouping of works has overtones of certain concerns from that era, such as an emphasis on materiality and process, the push/pull of surface versus depth and a reinterpretation of the female represented as object. At times, however, Potoff's exposure of process results in a loose handling that can come across as sloppiness (an impression reinforced by the gallery's installation, which included a burnt-out track light and nail holes in the wall). Even so, there is something captivating about Potoff's dreamlike female figures and her inquiry into visual illusion.

-Carey Lovelace

Reeva Potoff: *.001 Gravity*, 2001, color acetate prints, 19 by 16 inches; at Kouros.

