KLAUS VON NICHTSSAGEND GALLERY

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ARTFORUM

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Alex Dodge

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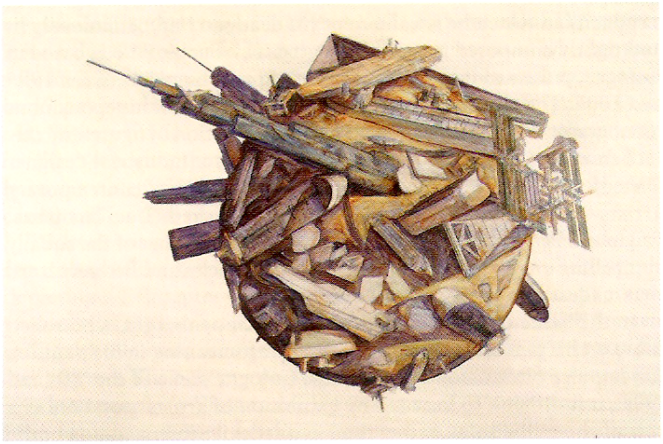
Like the freshly severed head of Ash, the treacherous corporate android in Ridley Scott's *Alien* (1979), the disembodied silicon-rubber face that forms part of Alex Dodge's sculpture *Study for Intelligent Design* (all works 2008) looks ready to open its eyes and spill its guts. Surrounded by shredded documents and wreathed in Christmas lights, the ghoulishly lifelike visage (a self-portrait) suggests the aftermath of a grisly murder, until we notice the bundled wires protruding from its underside. The robotic simulation is, however, deliberately imperfect; woven into its artificial viscera is an incongruous mixture of parts spanning the past half-century of technological history; typewriter components, for example, vie for space with fiber-optic filaments.

Accompanied by grubby casts of a leg, a foot, two hands, and an ear—all stuffed with an unnatural blend of, among other things, mangled bike parts and shattered compact discs—Dodge's death mask becomes a kind of morbid steampunk fantasy. It also implies, as do the other works in the artist's recent exhibition at Klaus von Nichtssagend Gallery (his second solo outing at the Brooklyn venue), that human beings and technology are fundamentally inextricable: Three modest paintings and a set of drawings bolster the argument by blending computer-generated and computer-inspired forms with color applied in an unashamedly "organic" manner.



Alex Dodge, *Large Katamari (millions of years of pressure and heat)*, 2008, oil and toner on linen, 36 x 54".

The paintings take Keita Takahashi's cult video game *Katamari Damacy* as their starting point. In Takahashi's bizarre diversion, players roll a giant sticky ball—a *katamari*—around a landscape, picking up larger and larger objects as they go. Dodge's *Large Katamari (millions of years of pressure and heat)* depicts a sphere encrusted with skyscrapers, oil tankers, and other massive industrial structures, which project from the floating globe at awkward angles. Initially rendering these forms with the modeling program Autodesk 3ds Max, then simplifying them via Adobe Illustrator, the artist uses solvent to transfer the black toner from prints of each image to the panel's densely gessoed linen surface. The resultant schematics are then colored with oils, here, primarily, an iodic brown and a denimlike indigo.

Dodge employs the same format in *Medium Katamari (mostly physical structures)* and *Small Katamari*, the orb in the former being covered in human bones, that in the latter in coat-pocket bric-a-brac; (keys, coins, credit cards, an iPhone). The implications of such images are legion; the airless clutter that the loaded *katamari* present seems a ready metaphor for unchecked urbanization and industrialization, as well as for individual lives buried in *stuff*. Finally, like *Study for Intelligent Design*, the paintings seem to argue for a greater awareness of the symbiotic (ergo potentially fatal) relationship between our environment, our inventions, and us.

A suite of small drawings on paper, held to the wall with colorful "ABC" fridge magnets, are, for the most part, made using the same combination of computer rendering procedures as the paintings. Closely resembling coloring-book illustrations, the ultraclean line drawings are roughed up only by their cheap-looking (though in fact archival) paper, and by the pseudo-haphazard application of bright wax crayon. Depicting Rubik's Cubes, computer components, large vehicles, and so on (there's also a maze), they are the apotheosis of a slight tendency toward cuteness present in all the work here (the presentation certainly doesn't help). Still, in *Studies for Graphic User Interface (Cray X1)* and *Studies for Graphic User Interface (IBM Blue Gene/L II)*, to take the two most arresting (perhaps because they are least readily identifiable?) examples, Dodge again combines hermetic high tech with a self-consciously user-friendly aesthetic to striking effect.

—*Michael Wilson*