

PATRICIA SWEETOW GALLERY

77 GEARY STREET MEZZANINE SAN FRANCISCO CA 94108 415.788.5126 F 788.5207

GUARDIAN THE SAN FRANCISCO BAY GUARDIAN

March 15-21, 2006

"Partially Told Stories"

GROUP SHOW, Clay Studio (Space 743), San Francisco

By Katie Kurtz



They Couldn't Begin to Understand Its Unknown Qualities (flipped conception of ends) (2006), by Weston Teruya

Since most group exhibitions tend to offer only a glimpse of an individual artist's work, "Partially Told Stories" is a name that could be applied to just about any themed group show. Oftentimes, the theme takes priority and curators will include just one, maybe two, examples of the artist's work, making it difficult to discern whether the work on view is part of the artist's larger project or merely representative of the theme. In order to tell this particular story, curator Michael McConnell wisely chose to include a broader sampling of the show's six participants: Teresa Cuniff, John Herschend, Danielle Lawrence, Brian McDonald, Jennie Ottinger, and **Weston Teruya**. In doing so, McConnell suggests that each of them is working within a larger framework — or genre — of artists interested in composing narratives visually. In this sense, we can look at the work as chapters, or excerpts, from a more involved and complex story, and the exhibition can be read as an anthology, of sorts. Standing in the center of the room and scanning the work as if it were at a horizon line, you see telephone poles, houses, floating human figures, elk, bison, cyclone fences, and other random bits of information that act as sentences, quotations, punctuation. Parts of the landscape recede while other parts emerge, the way a line in a poem can mean more to one reader than to another. These artists are engaged in a disrupted narrative — the fragmented images leaping through space, skipping over time — and you're not quite sure where you've landed in the story. Who is the boy crouching in Lawrence's *Slingshot*? **How did the tree come to be tied down in Teruya's *They Couldn't Begin to Understand Its Unknown Qualities (flipped conception of ends)***? Are McDonald's collages portraits of fictional characters or fictions of people he knows? Where is the country of Herschend's abstracted landscapes? What rituals are to be performed in Cuniff's *Fairy Ring*? Where do Ottinger's *Herds* roam? As with any good story, the viewer of these pieces is asked to fill in the rest.