

# The New York Times

NEW YORK, FRIDAY, DECEMBER 17, 2004

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## Art in Review

### Jeff Way

'Masks, 1976-2004'

Fischbach Gallery  
210 11th Avenue, at 25th Street  
Chelsea  
Through tomorrow

Shown together for the first time, the vivid little masks that Jeff Way started making in 1976, for use in performances that he called "Transformations," turn the second space of this gallery into a vibrating rogue's gallery of staring skulls, monkey faces and horned creatures. Most are brightly painted; many make ingenious use of foil pans, straw hats or sundry other found objects and materials.

Viewers of a certain age may recognize "Mask for Ron Gorchow," as a replica of that artist's curved, face-like abstract paintings of the 1970's. A bright blue skull-shaped mask whose grin consists of horse's teeth covered in foil is in full-blown Day of the Dead mode. Other works reflect an appreciation of African art or the platelike faces of certain kinds of owls.

That all these disparate visages were made by one hand for one face gives the ensemble a pleasing underlying consistency despite so much diversity. (Many began as little plaster pies that the artist pressed to his face, let dry and then, variously, painted, sculptured and appended.) Nearly all the masks meet the basic requirements of maskness with energy to spare: they present a false front that does not require human habitation to hold our attention. They also work pretty well as art.

ROBERTA SMITH