



Stephen Lee, "Worse to Better" (detail), 1994. Mixed media.

different stages of their execution in a schema reminiscent of Joseph Beuys and Ann Hamilton. The ingenious layout functioned simultaneously as a church, a laboratory and a natural history gallery. Two rows of glass cases, lit by overhead lights, displayed bread babies and mylar overlays giving population demographics. A glass vitrine with bread babies wrapped in tin foil and a wooden tub containing rising dough hugged the left wall. At the front of the room, three modern refrigerators with their doors removed revealed more bread babies tagged with dates, possibly of their birth or death. Off to the right in a kind of side chapel, an old worktable complete with vintage bowls and pans chronicled Cole's baking progress, with his recipe handwritten on the wall.

This constructed environment showed Cole at his best, a witty yet serious Westernized shaman, versed in the art of recycling or giving birth to secondary objects. The bread babies clearly parodied the traditional lost-wax technique and generated various puns such as "half-baked" and "crack baby." Most importantly, "Labor of Love" succeeded in asserting the sacredness of life against the controversial backdrop of the Cairo conference and orphanage care. And while its ominous, quasi-Nazi tone reflected the troubling statistics of

teenage pregnancies and rising world population, the hope expressed by all the bread babies triumphed. Nearby, at School 33, Stephen Lee demonstrated a different approach to the figure in a quirky, one-room installation. Combining aspects of magic realism and early Kienholz, the exhibit, like Cole's, relied on recasting mundane materials to tell its story. An Englishman born into a family of house-thatchers and currently living in Baltimore, Lee crafted two slightly over life-size male and female straw dolls that were a cross between his native fertility dolls and Appalachian corn dolls. As the title *Worse to Better* (1994) hinted, the theme of healing was deftly explored by drawing an analogy between domestic scenes and the political arena of Northern Ireland.

The seated female doll and her carved-wood anima were shown convalescing in a bunk bed in a pose recalling medieval tomb statuary. Nearby, a male doll dressed in a costume bearing imperial insignia stood with outstretched arms like an angel on call. Two other images—teacups and potatoes—unified the dense composition that at times bordered on visual overload. Yet a keen sense of poetry saved Lee's enigmatic tableau and rewarded the lingering visitor.

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