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The Museum of Modern Art

OPTICALLY SEDUCTIVE WORKS BY FOUR NEW YORK-BASED ARTISTS FEATURED IN NEW PROJECTS EXHIBITION AT THE MUSEUM OF MODERN ART

Projects 63: Karin Davie, Udomsak Krisanamis, Bruce Pearson, Fred Tomaselli

May 14-June 30, 1998

A new Projects exhibition exploring visual seduction in the recent works of four New York-based artists opens May 14 at The Museum of Modern Art. *Projects 63* features the works of Karin Davie (b. Toronto, 1965), Udomsak Krisanamis (b. Bangkok, 1966), Bruce Pearson (b. Aruba), and Fred Tomaselli (b. Santa Monica, 1956), and will remain on view through June 30.

Despite their many differences--in age, approach, and background as well as in subject matter, medium, and style--Davie, Krisanamis, Pearson, and Tomaselli share a concern with visual seduction. Each strives to create artworks with what Pearson calls "a real pleasure component," artworks that are "enormously rewarding to look at."

"The pulsing, vibrating, eye-popping vocabulary of their work has a sensorial immediacy that directly engages the viewer," according to Lilian Tone, Curatorial Assistant, and Anne Umland, Assistant Curator, Department of Painting and Sculpture, co-curators of the exhibition. "They also exploit conventions of accessibility inherent in art that provokes a strong perceptual response, the optically overloaded surfaces of their works evoking not only the hyperactive world of screen-savers, video games, and computer-generated effects, but the much-maligned yet perennially popular 1960s style known as 'Op.' "

These artists infuse the fields of perceptual abstraction with content, including references to the body, pop culture, mass media, and language.

In Karin Davie's paintings, the non-referential stripes of high-modernist abstraction are made to swell, contract, and expand, stretching over forms that loosely evoke human anatomies. In diptychs such as *Something Like This* (1995-96), repetitive mark-making and painterly process co-exist. Davie obsessively replicates "spontaneous" gestures, drips and brushstrokes from one canvas to another, highlighting the performative character of her work.

Concealment and obsessive process are also key to Udomsak Krisanamis's work. In *Tears on My Pillow* (1995) he applies black Magic Marker to strips of newspaper, laboriously covering all but the "orifices" of individual letters--the gaps within Os, or the curved inner spaces of Ps and Bs, for example. Rendering the text invisible, he builds up densely layered, mottled, textured, shimmering surfaces, replacing language with pure optical effect.

Where Krisanamis foregrounds the spaces within letters, Bruce Pearson's Styrofoam relief constructions give letters themselves material form. Frequently based on clichéd phrases from contemporary media, these works

also thwart language's communicative function. In *Something that Seems to Symbolize In Quotes Reality* (1997-98), basic sentence structures are mirrored and reversed, creating elaborate, vividly colored patterns within which the original message is encrypted and made virtually illegible.

Fred Tomaselli's marquetry-like collages are often inlaid with pills and other psychoactive substances. Combined with cut-out, photomechanically reproduced illustrations and hand-painted elements, works such as *Bird Blast* (1997) blur the lines between fine art, pop culture, craft, and design. Complicating distinctions between the real and the imaginary, Tomaselli's collages/paintings emphasize the play between illusion and allusion, and between abstraction and figuration that informs his works and those of the other three artists in this exhibition.

The *Projects* series is sponsored by Peter Norton.

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