knows English (also Polish, German and Yiddish), and the Polish kapo in charge of his barracks happens to want tutoring. When others are sent out to labor and freeze, Vladek is outfitted in sturdy garments and hidden in a back room. Prisoners are fed a daily ration of watery soup and bread made of flour and sawdust. "If you ate how they gave you, it was just enough to die more slowly," Vladek explains. His kapo gives him sausages and chocolate.

Even when forced to work, Vladek wrangles opportunity and relative safety, summoning skills he's learned or watched others apply. He mends boots for officers, labors as a tinsmith—at one point, as Russian troops advance, dismantling gas chambers and crematoria to destroy evidence of the atrocities. Still, Vladek is stalked by starvation and illness. He's savagely beaten when, working in Birkenau, he's caught talking with Anja. Twice he's examined by Mengele; during another inspection, having grown very thin and fearing he'll be sent to the gas chambers, he hides in a bathroom. In Dachau, he nearly dies of typhus.

He retrieves his past to please his son; it's a way of holding on to him. But as he goes back in time, Vladek expands. His language grows distilled, his sense of proportion reliable. He describes horror without exaggeration, so we apprehend it directly. And we see the mental adjustments required to ward off despair and madness—an ability to bear the ambivalence intrinsic to experience. Vladek tolerates the coexistence of mundane details and terror; the crematoria, he notes, resemble a bakery. In his view, fiendishness isn't divided off as inhuman and unreal but rather contained in his perceptions as all *too* human.

His failure, the *Maus* books show, is never observing the relationship between his Holocaust experience and his own impulse to dominate. He fails to see how he has played dictator in the family. Long before the war—we're shown through Vladek's own descriptions—he strong-arms routinely, pressing some pigeons with righteousness, guilt-mongering others with his pitiableness. He can be charming, caressing, but his aim is always closing deals. As he gets older, he gets worse.

Art worries that, in showing up his father's smallness, he's venting sadism. He *is* exacting revenge, exposing Vladek's pettiness, indulging gleefully in his analytic powers. Art worries that he's a know-it-all, exploitive and manipulative, just like his father, *the transgression from hell*. And indeed, Art does pursue agendas, enduring his father's hectoring and complaining to get his story on tape.

Vladek is condemned to skip back to the scarred grooves in his psyche, but Art doesn't duplicate his father's stagnation. He examines his role, his motives. He portrays himself cowed and shamed and chronicles former mental breakdowns. We see him retreat to a mousehole of silent rage, but when he exits, he exchanges self-pity for irony. He tells Françoise, "I wasn't obsessed with this [Holocaust] stuff . . . it's just that sometimes I'd fantasize Zyklon B coming out of our shower instead of water." His books reflect mastery over the damage of his childhood and of Vladek's past because he does perceive the relative size of suffering—understands that his own is less grave than his father's. Inside this man who must control is a mind swept by tides of memory.

Art anguishes that he trivializes history by comparing the Holocaust and domestic horror, but his concern isn't founded. In his work, history and psychological struggle shape each other; we see how destinies are marked by world events and how the drives of the inner life determine the way masses of people behave.

Art fears that the largeness of Nazism will be nibbled away by the simple, comic-strip means he uses to portray it. But the shifting reality of what is big and what is little is captured with special brilliance in his use of beasts, for it takes mice, with their animal appetites and vulnerability, to set the Holocaust on a human scale—not some hyper-real landscape of devils and martyrs. With these creatures so accessible, we're continually prodded to wonder: What would I do in their place?

Similarly, Spiegelman shifts our concepts of big and little art, investing the modest form of the comic strip with grandeur. Most artists who try harnessing high-art complexity to simple entertainments—the postmodern clown Bill Irwin comes to mind—succeed only in draining pleasure from the form they loved as children. But Spiegelman's drawing makes history immediate, at the same time uncovering a new capaciousness in comics.

His figures are minimal: kabuki masks for faces, signifying how each race looks alike to the others. The smallest variation—a pair of eyeglasses perched on a snout, eyebrows slanted in worry—particularizes. The strips are fluid, like movies, moving back and forth in time, halting for commentary and asides. Points of view continually change. Some frames depict a bird's-eye perspective, others look up, from the vantage point of a mouse, to the open-mouthed suffering of the tortured. In any one frame, doodled fantasy coexists with factual horror, each box a miniature of grab-bag reality—Breughel on a loop.

The *Maus* books should be read as a single work, and published under one cover as soon as possible. Why, they wonder, are some people frozen in place, unable to alter their perspectives? Why are some people able to imagine how others feel, picture themselves as they are perceived? Mala, who also survived the camps, tells Art that many people shared Vladek's fate and didn't turn out as rigid. Vladek recalls his father, and we glimpse another obsessive; to avoid draft into the Russian Army, he extracted fourteen of his own teeth and demanded that his sons starve themselves for months. It's a hint to why, even before Nazism, Vladek experienced life as a chase, with himself as potential prey. Finally, though, the *Maus* books provide no certain explanations for change. All wounds don't heal in time, we see, but in the space of time the paw print of earlier life can fade—and we can make a run for it. □

ART.

ARTHUR C. DANTO

Dislocationary Art

Philosophers, jurists and civil libertarians alike have been intrigued by an argument made by Catharine MacKinnon in the so-called Minneapolis Ordinance, which attempted to treat certain representations as being in violation of the civil rights of women. The ordinance spoke of the graphic sexually explicit subordination of women through images or words. It is not only that images that depict women in sadistic fantasies may have as consequences the actual subordination of women because they inspired sadists to realize such fantasies. Rather, the images *themselves*, whatever their consequences, subordinate women through their content. That images have the power to subordinate in this sense is widely conceded: When someone depicted the former Mayor of Chicago as in drag, wearing frilly underthings, the black community felt that to be a degradation, an unac-

ceptable picture, and undertook to remove it from the wall. Subordination, thus, is one of the "powers of images," to borrow the expression David Freedberg uses for the title of a book that treats the phenomenon of empowered images throughout history. Freedberg's thesis is that treating images as possessing a wide range of powers is at once ancient and universal, and that the attitude persists in many of the ways in which we respond to and think about images: Think of the toppled statues of Lenin throughout Eastern Europe, or the way images are prayed to, injured, kissed or treated as uncanny throughout the world. Freedberg believes, I dare say rightly, that art historians have neglected these powers, and that in consequence there are entire empires of art to which the formalistic and iconographic modes of analysis they (and most art critics) favor have no application. They do not touch that which in images verges on their presumed magical and moral force. The testimony of the "experts" in the famous trial in Cincinnati over whether Robert Mapplethorpe's images are "obscene" is a case in point: The experts claimed that they saw the work only as "figure studies," as "classical proportions," as "symmetrical," virtually denying the almost shattering sexual energy of those morally challenging photographs.

Even so, a distinction must be drawn between the power of images and what one might call the *power of art*, where the effect of experiencing a work of art can be tantamount to a conversion, a transformation of the viewer's world. Ruskin, for example, underwent just such a transformative experience with Tintoretto's stupendous paintings in the Scuola San Rocco in Venice: "I never was so utterly crushed to the earth before any human intellect as I was today before Tintoret," he wrote his father in September 1845: "As for *painting*, I think I didn't know what it meant till today." Some years later, Ruskin sustained what he termed an "unconversion" inspired by Veronese's *Solomon and the Queen of Sheba* in Turin. He had just suffered through a dispiriting sermon on the vanity of life, and seeing the great painting against this bleak characterization of the world, he asked, "Can it be possible that all this power and beauty is adverse to the honour of the Maker of it?" His wonderful letter, again to his father, continues:

> Has God made faces beautiful and limbs strong, and created these strange, fiery, fantastic energies, and created the splendour of substance and the love of it; created gold, and pearls, and crystal, and the sun that makes them gorgeous; and filled human fancy with all splendid thoughts; and given to the human touch its power of placing and brightening and perfecting, only that all these things may lead His creatures away from Him?

Ruskin's very language belongs to the world it describes, and to which Veronese's painting reconciled him. He was converted from a kind of evangelism to a redemptive form of humanism.

The aim here is to re-place the viewer in a conceptually recast world.

Ruskin's are extreme instances of the transformative impact art can have, and the very fact that such experiences are possible must surely be part of what Hegel had in view when he claimed that art, philosophy and religion are aspects or "moments" of what he designated Absolute Spirit. My sense is that anyone who has had any sustained intercourse with art must at some time have undergone some such experience, and I hold it greatly to the credit of Robert Storr, in his inaugural exhibition as curator at the Museum of Modern Art, that he should have sought to reconnect with the possibility of such transformations. "To be moved by art," he writes, in a text that accompanies "Dislocations," as the exhibition is called, "is to be lifted out of one's usual circumstances and taken out of oneself, the better to look back upon the place one has departed and the limited identity one has left behind. With or without metaphysics, and for however brief a moment it lasts, this state may be fairly called transcendence." Of course, such dislocations are rare in anyone's affective history. Countless tourists have trudged through the Scuola San Rocco thinking of little more edifying than how chilly they feel or when lunch might be. However greatly one admires Veronese, few have been catapulted by his gorgeousness into a totally new moral attitude. And Ruskin, for all his sensitivity, was numb to works that stirred others profoundly. Speaking for myself, I was absolutely knocked off my horse by certain works of Andy Warhol that others found blank or meretricious or cynical or silly. For all their importance, dislocative experiences are unpredictable, and presuppose certain states of mind on the viewer's part that not everyone will share.

Still, dislocation is a bold direction for MoMA to take, not least of all because of the close identification of modernism with formalism, not only in the thought and writing of Alfred Barr but in the practice and discourse of any number of curators or docents when they explain works of art to one another and to the world. Formalism, moreover, as may be seen from the responses of the experts at the Mapplethorpe trial, is clearly the lingua franca of art criticism and what is tacitly appealed to and contested in the issue of "quality" that has lately so exercised the art world. It is formalism against which David Freedberg inveighs in his polemic in favor of recognizing the power of images. And it is formalism, however correctly believed to have been the philosophy and critical posture of Clement Greenberg, that has been so polemicized against by those who have sought a more political mission for art, or who practice what is called "the New Art History." The art world, especially that sector of it corresponding to middle management in industry, is today a politicized, indeed an angrily politicized, group of persons, and there can be little doubt that some of the dislocation aspired to by the seven installations of which this show consists is political: The works mean to get those who view them to think differently about matters of gender, race and war. This is not likely to happen easily, just because so many of those who will see the show already share so many of the beliefs and attitudes of the artists. Even so, I cannot suppose that the overall aim of a show, the raison d'être of which is cast in such terms as "transport" or "transcendence" or as "mapping previously unimagined spaces," can be construed as political in any narrow way. The aim is rather something like a conceptual revolution, a way of seeing things fresh, of re-placing the viewer in a conceptually recast world. This is a pretty tall order, all the more so if animated by the belief that there are works capable of doing this in any uniform and dependable way. Conversion is hardly something one can promise ticket holders as the reward of a few hours spent in the galleries.

Dislocation, moreover, does not seem to figure greatly in the day-to-day expe-

riences with art of the MoMA cadre, typical, no doubt, of museum personnel everywhere. This is certainly the inference to be drawn from one of the works, "installed" by the French conceptual and performance artist Sophie Calle in the galleries of the museum's permanent collection. Calle's work is called *Ghosts*, which translates the French term *fantômes*, though the latter has a use in French for which we have, so far as I know, no English word at all—though I imagine "ghost" is destined to enter the language as such. A *fantôme* is the photograph of a painting that replaces the painting when the latter has been taken away from a museum wall, together with a label that explains what happened to the work: It is on loan, or being cleaned or restored, or it has been stolen. Calle had the poetic idea of substituting for the "ghost" the memories of the missing work carried by those supposed most familiar with it—curators, administrators, guards and the like. It is always interesting to find out how images are stored—I have read that Americans divide equally on the question of whether Lincoln faces right or left on the standard U.S. penny—and it is to be expected that even when a painting is as familiar as the penny, memories will conflict and decay. Remembering paintings, in fact, turns out to be almost like remembering dreams, and it is fascinating to read what Calle has written in the blank spaces on the walls where just a few weeks ago there hung a Magritte, a Modigliani, a Seurat, a Hopper, a de Chirico. It is easy to pick out the official MoMA voice. Of de Chirico: "Very sterile, very angular." "It's mostly those typical de Chirico colors, mustard, gold, brown, and blue." The angry feminist voice is readily identified as well. Of Magritte: "It's just one more picture where the woman is naked and the men are clothed." Of Modigliani: "It's like any other nude. It's a horizontal painting of a female lying naked." And then there are the usual bitchy art world voices. Of Hopper: "An icon of American art. I respect it historically but I'm not passionate about it." Of Seurat: "There's something anal about it." These are voices of the located, rather than the dislocated. Storr draws a certain moral from Calle's work. It should "at the very least, give pause to those who declare themselves to be sure of the import of such canonical pictures." "Canonical" is tendentious: I would say it shows how unsure we ever are of the import of pictures, given the immense diversity of individual histories and beliefs. Some of Calle's ghosts are very evocative and poetically confessional. It would be interesting to know at least the rank in museum hierarchy of the different orders of respondents: Are the guards more likely than the curators to say such things as, "You have the feeling you are not in reality, you are on a film set, and something is wrong . . . " of the de Chirico? Or of the Seurat: "The painting reminds me of a sequined dress." Anyway, what ghosts would be left behind from the memories of the non-canonical works in "Dislocations"? Ruskins are few and far between.

The closest to a transformative experience was occasioned for me by Bruce Nauman's *Anthro/Socio*, though part of its impact was due to certain accidents of when I viewed it. There were just a few shadowy visitors in the darkened gallery, with a few more crossing the largely empty space. It made no impact on a friend who was at the opening, when this particular room was dense with guests standing in line to see the next exhibit, and paying no attention to the work. Could the fact that I was one of a handful, each of us in fact paying attention, an enhancement of the experience? In any case, it consists of three colossal projections of the same male head onto the bare walls, one of the heads upside down. The heads are chanting, over and over, as if it were a mantra, what sounds like calls for help. The same striking head, sometimes upside down again, appears on several monitors placed here and there in the gallery, taking up the chant, as if a chorus of semblables. The volume of the sound, the volume of the *room*, the repetition, with felt intensity, of the phrases "Feed me/Eat me/Anthropology. Help me/Hurt me/Sociology," the urgency of the voices, the floor-to-ceiling scale of the dislocated heads, achieve a very powerful effect, especially when experienced in a near empty gallery where one sees other visitors silhouetted, singly or in pairs, against the chanting heads. But if it was dislocating, it was so only momentarily, and it left me with nothing by way of a transformed philosophy. The world after Nauman looks a lot like the world pre-Nauman. Perhaps that is because, knowing there is more to come, one is primed to see what the next installation does.

The next installation I saw was Louise Bourgeois's *Twosome*, having taken a wrong turn in the intended progression of the exhibition. Hers has something of the scale of Nauman's, and it enacts an alternation where his merely chants alternations, but her work uses mechanical protagonists rather than explicitly human ones, and does not touch us with the same immediacy of sympathy. Her alternation is what Alex, in *A Clockwork Orange*, calls "The old in-and-out." The work consists of two very large tanks, rescued for the purposes of art from the scrap yard, lying on their sides, but end to end. The one with the larger diameter has windows cut into it, through which a sort of reddish light shines out. The other slides in and out of it on tracks. It is thus a sort of love machine, an emblem perhaps of the act of love in an age of mechanical reproduction. The receiving cylinder can be seen as a kind of shelter, what with the windows, and so a sort of woman-house (or perhaps a house-wife). One senses that some mischievous reading is intended, like: House-wives are screwed. In a personal statement, Bourgeois philosophizes a bit on in/out as the general metaphysical condition of humankind: We are in/out of love, in/out of luck, in/out of debt, and so on. But none of this is made visual enough by a work that seems awfully large to be at best a kind of joke on the circumstances of copulation. One waits for a more ample revelation, but none comes. It in any case diluted the impact of the Nauman.

Hammons's art ends up sullen and inert in the museum.

I ought to have seen Bourgeois's work after passing through an installation by Ilya Kabakov called *The Bridge*. Indeed, there is a bridge, from which one sees, in the dark space of the room it traverses, furniture pushed back against the walls. A narrative is pinned to a bulletin board, telling of what was to have been a critique, in a housing project in Moscow in 1984, of some paintings held to display "dangerous bourgeois tendencies." This event never came off. The furniture instead was all pushed where one sees it, and there, in the cleared space, are what are described as "groups of little white people, constantly exchanging places." Binoculars have been placed along the bridge for us to look at what to New Yorkers have the appearance of cock-

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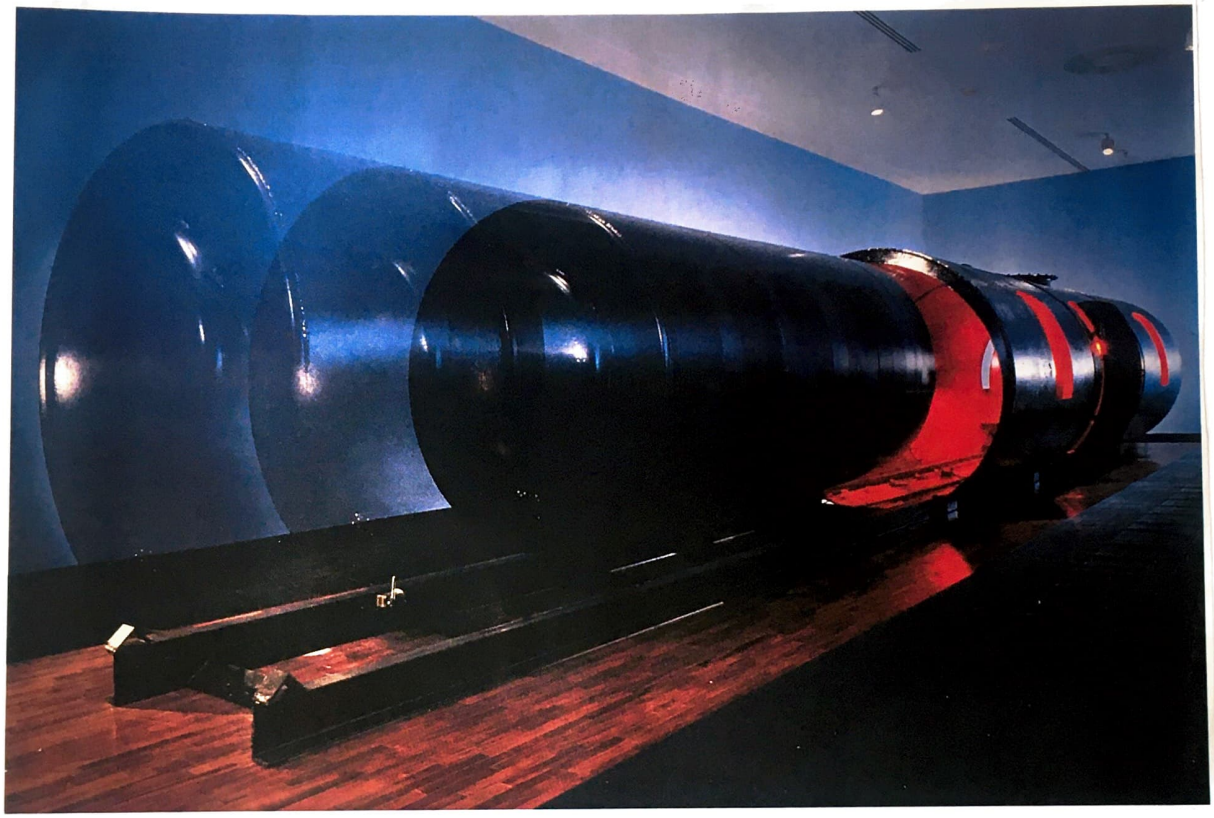

Louise Bourgeois, *Twosome*, 1991, installation view. Museum of Modern Art.

NEW YORK

Dislocations

MUSEUM OF MODERN ART

The title of this exhibition of installations (which runs through the seventh of this month) is a play on the street slang word "dis," an abbreviated version of "disrespect." However, the show, which was organized by Robert Storr, MoMA's new curator of painting and sculpture, seems designed not so much to dishonor the venerable traditions for which the Modern stands as to update them with an injection of street-style energy.

The seven works are distributed throughout the museum. On the lower level one is offered visions of a contemporary hell. With fierce intensity Bruce Nauman confronts the viewer with small-screen and wall-size video images of an angry head whose insistent pleas for help become an almost incoherent chant. In a more poetic yet equally effective installation, Ilya Kabakov mixes dreary Soviet reality and escapist fantasy in a theatrical tableau that represents the mysterious interruption of a tenants' education meeting by an army of tiny white figures who are visible only through binoculars. And in what may be the strongest work in the show, Louise Bourgeois has created an enormous sex machine from a pair of huge steel drums, which slide in and out of each other with an implacable, fearsome rhythm.

On the second floor, French artist Sophie Calle presents the most direct challenge to museum orthodoxy. She has replaced several of the Modern's prized paintings (by such masters as de Chirico and Hopper) with texts composed of fragmentary recollections of these works gathered from museum employees who should be most familiar with them. The result is a demonstration of the frailty of memory and the uncertain status of the masterpiece, and is by turns charming, disheartening, and thought-provoking.

The three installations on the third floor are the most political and the most problematic. David Hammons tackles issues of colonialism, homelessness, and racism in a bunkerlike installation complete with sandbags and howitzers. These encircle a photo blow-up of an equestrian monument to the Westernizing zeal of Theodore Roosevelt, who seems to charge forth through a tangled forest of party streamers that dangle from balloons clinging to the ceiling. In contrast to this overly eclectic and ambitious display, Chris Burden's *Other Vietnam Memorial*, numerous placards listing the names of the Vietnam War's Vietnamese casualties, is too visually plain to do its subject justice. Finally, Adrian Piper has a stark white environment housing videos that make a rather tired point about the pervasiveness of racial prejudice among whites.

But the unevenness of some works should not obscure the exhibition's real achievements. The Modern rarely has been a showcase for the more untidy aspects of contemporary art. This show leaves one hungry for more. **—Eleanor Heartney**

ARTFORUM

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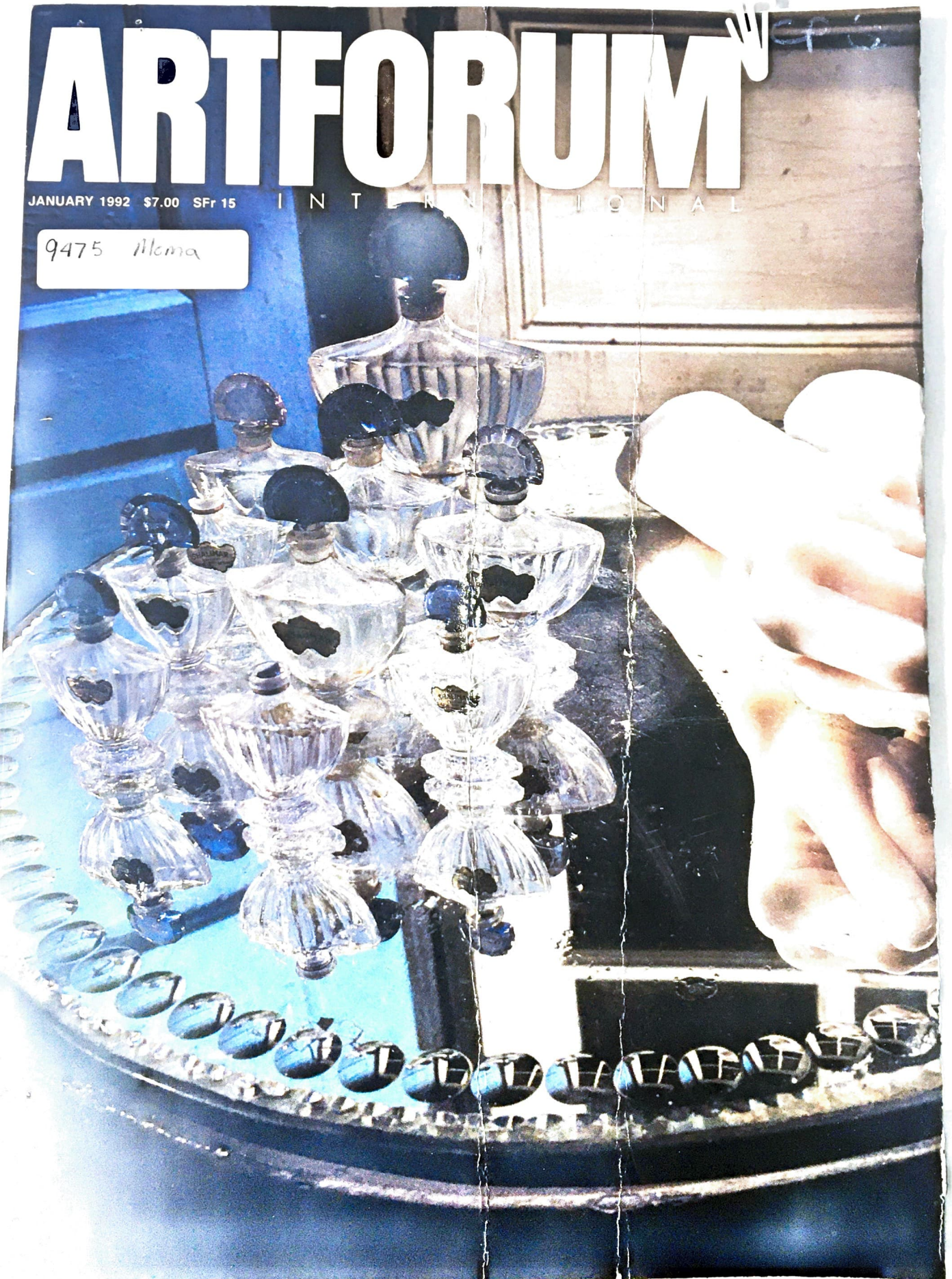
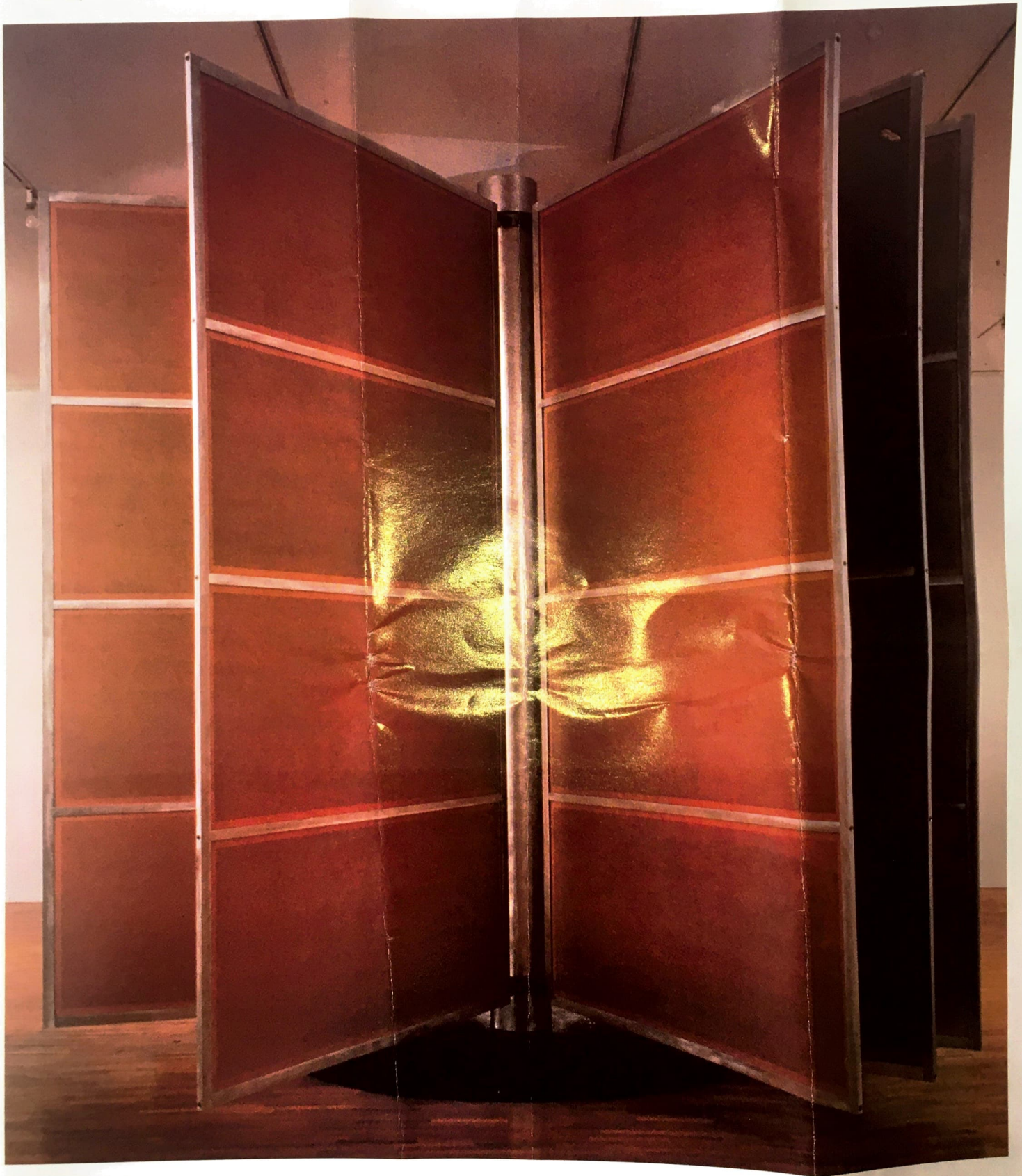




ART ON THE INSTALLATION PLAN

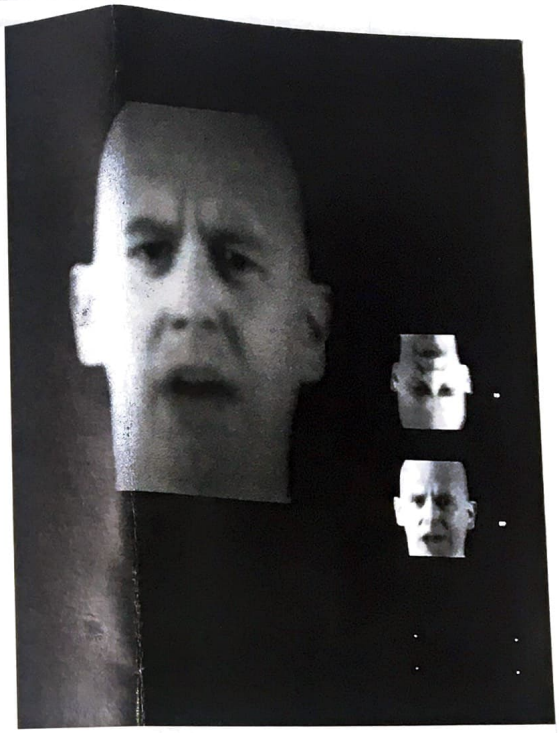
David Deitcher

Twenty years ago New York's Museum of Modern Art initiated a series of modest shows, called "Projects," to "keep the public abreast of recent developments in the visual arts."[1] On the surface this sounds like proof of the Museum's commitment to contemporary art, but it would be more accurate to say that the series only enabled the Modern to avoid a more substantial involvement with new work.

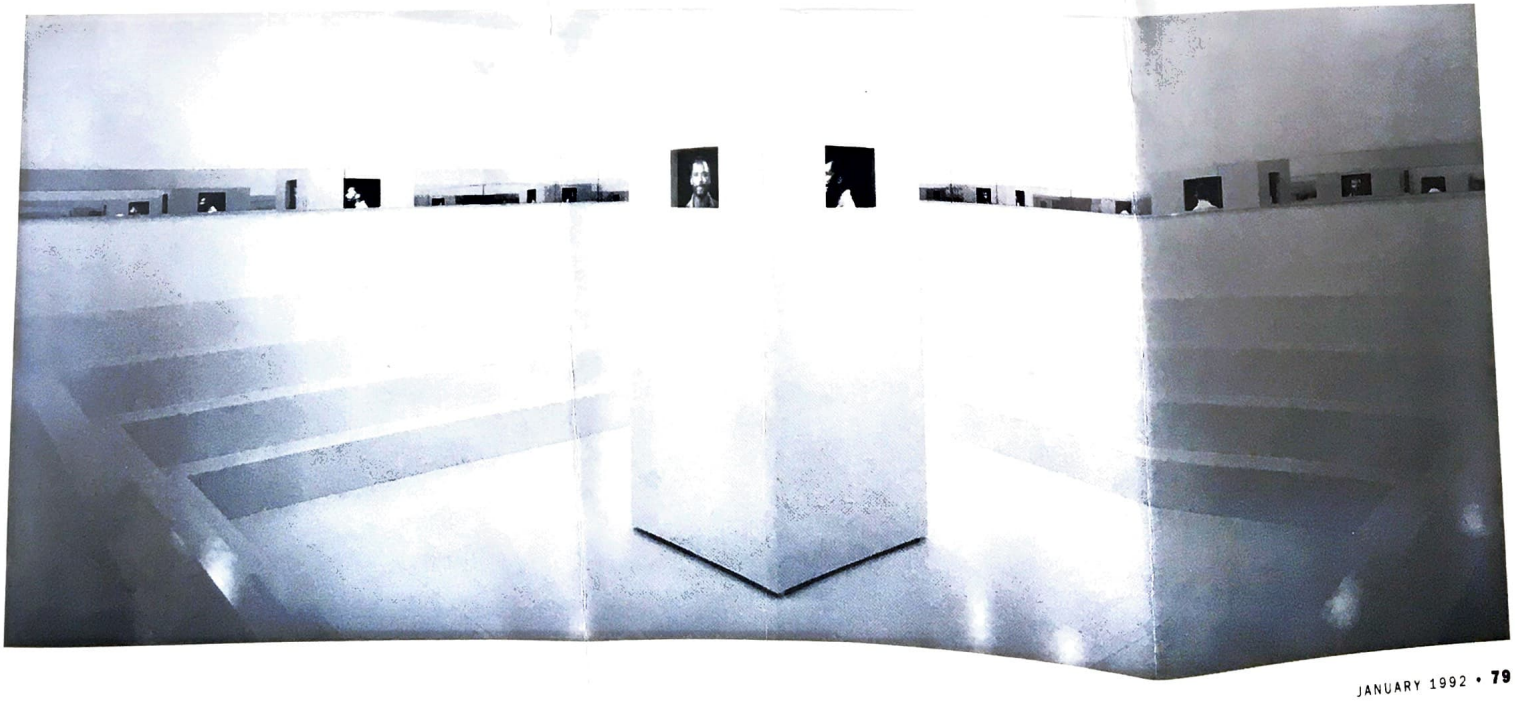
The "Projects" series was launched after one of the most ambitious and controversial contemporary-art shows in MoMA's postwar history, the "Information" exhibition of 1970. This broad, anarchic survey of Conceptual art constituted the museum's response to charges of its indifference to all but the most traditional forms of Modern painting and sculpture. Attacks on the institution's conservatism, leveled by individuals and by groups such as the Art Workers' Coalition, had grown clamorous by the end of the '60s. Yet "Information," organized by Kynaston McShine, generated the kind of critical response that trustees find repugnant.[2] It was in this context that the "Projects" series was conceived, as if to placate both those in the boardroom and those on the streets.

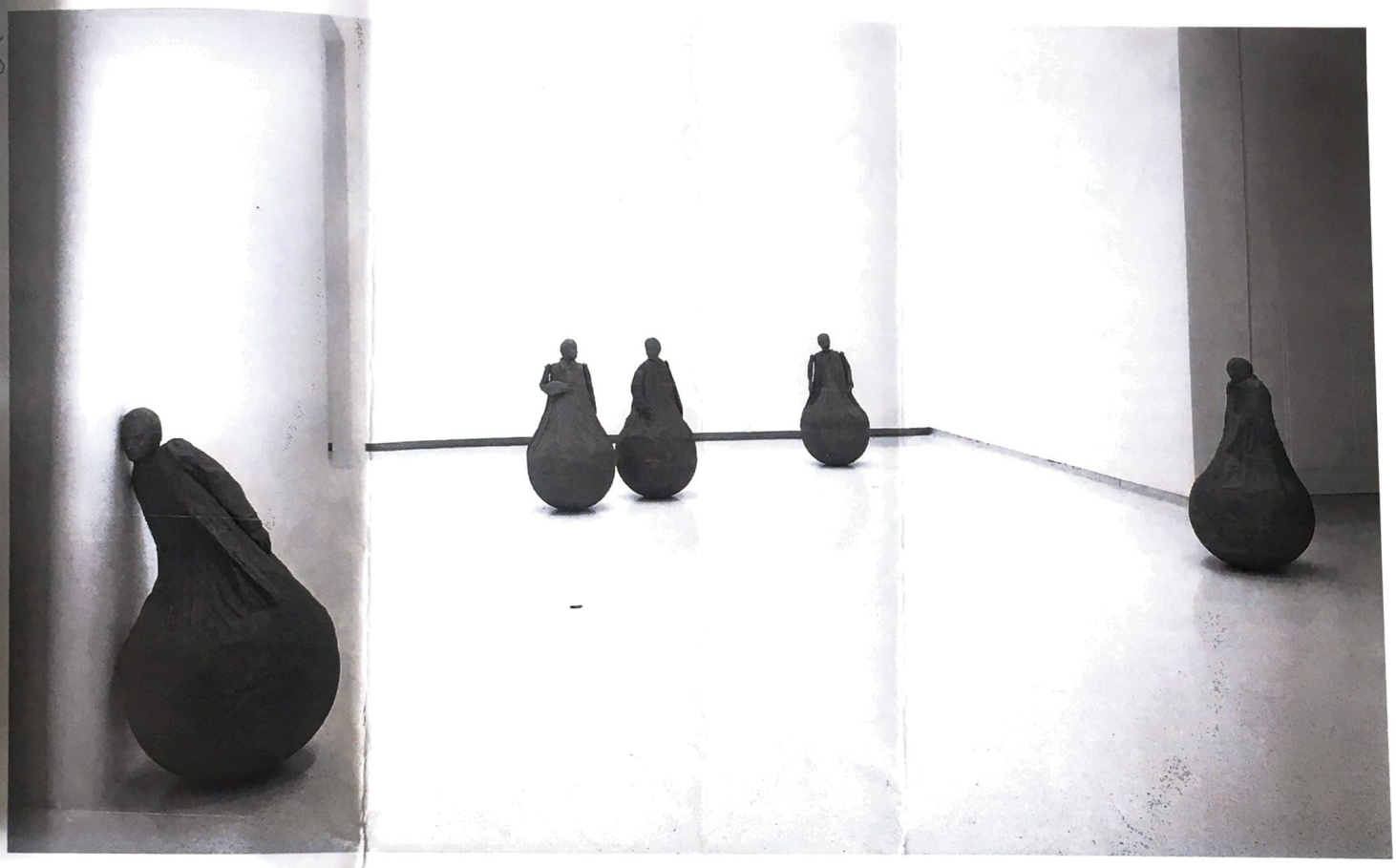
These modest showcases were always handled discreetly; they were never allowed to impinge on the museum's primary business (apparently defined as enhancing and maintaining the permanent collection; organizing monographs of favorite Modern masters—Pablo Picasso, Henri Matisse, Joan Miró, Frank Stella; and staging theme shows largely devoted to compatible historical subjects). Even so, after a surge of increased activity in 1978, the "Projects" series gradually disappeared from MoMA's calendar—just in time to miss the radically interdisciplinary post-Modernist art of the '80s. The newly expanded Modern opened in 1984 with the mammoth "International Survey of Recent Painting and Sculpture," but as an indication of the museum's resolve to deal with contemporary art, the show backfired. By addressing new art without budging from the media-based departmental grid, it offered dramatic proof of the museum's continuing unwillingness to accommodate the work of the day. In this context, the rebirth of the "Projects" series in 1986 seemed more compensatory than convincing, though the program still endures, somewhat isolated, now as then, in gallery space between the lobby and cafeteria.

Twenty years after the first "Projects," and one year after hiring



Above: **Bruce Nauman, *Anthro/Socio*, 1991.** Installation view. Opposite: **Chris Burden, *The Other Vietnam Memorial*, 1991,** steel and etched copper, 13' 8" x 15' 2". Below: **Adrian Piper, *What It's Like, What It Is, No. 3*, 1991.** Installation view.





a new curator, Robert Storr, in the Department of Painting and Sculpture, the Modern is now headlining Storr's first curatorial effort, "*Dis*locations." As a show of seven works of installation art by as many artists, the exhibition resembles a museum-wide "Projects." Nevertheless, "*Dis*locations" is the first serious attempt in two decades to establish MoMA's credibility as a venue for contemporary art.

As such, the show raises questions about the current appeal of installation and site-specific art, about its heritage and contemporary meaning. What did Storr see in this highly visible genre that attracted him to it as the best way to introduce a new curatorial initiative? One thing he might have discerned in the works of Louise Bourgeois, Chris Burden, Sophie Calle, David Hammons, Ilya Kabakov, Bruce Nauman, and Adrian Piper is evidence of the importance of avant-gardist traditions that art museums in general, and MoMA in particular, have found difficult to accommodate.

Virtually all contemporary installation art depends upon a handful of vanguard models. These include Dadaist environments—whether polemical, like the 1920 *Erste Internationale Dada-Messe* in Berlin, or disorienting domestic ones like Kurt Schwitters' *Merzbau* of 1924 or so—as well as the radically interactive Russian Constructivist display techniques pioneered by such artists as El Lissitzky

Above: **Juan Muñoz, *Conversation Piece I–V*, 1991**, bronze, each piece 27½ x 28 x 15¾". Installation view. Right: **Ann Hamilton, *offerings*, 1991.** Installation view.

during the same period. What all of these approaches shared was a determination to transform spectatorship; to rouse individuals from the chronic passivity implicit in the conventional notion of the art audience, a passivity paralleling the torpor urged on the individual in modern civic society. Contemporary artists who work with installation may likewise be attracted to the idea that they can engage the viewer in active esthetic processes that will lead to the production of potentially challenging or disruptive meanings. To the extent that such an intention deviates from MoMA's usual practice, Storr deserves credit for supporting it.

Consistent with the logic of Schwitters' interior, Bourgeois' *Twosome* reiterates the combined terror and bemusement that surfaced in Marcel Duchamp's mechanomorphic brides and bachelors, and that spawned Surrealist progeny such as Alberto Giacometti's *The Couple (Man and Woman)*, 1926, and Miró's *Sculpture-Object*, 1931. But whereas Duchamp, Giacometti, and Miró effected disturbances on an intimate scale, Bourgeois' mechanized phallic whatsit is large enough to live in—an increase in size that yields diminished emotional returns. More akin to the display techniques introduced by Lissitzky, Burden's *Other Vietnam Memorial* encourages viewers to interact with giant steel-and-copper "pages" that pivot off a vertical axis. By feeling the weight of its elements, by running one's fingers over the tight braille of three million names representing those who died on the "other" side during the Vietnam War, one tries to sense the enormity of their losses during America's intervention in that conflict.[3] As a room-sized Rolodex, Burden's monument has bureaucratic connotations that effectively convey the disregard for human life in general, and for Asian life in particular, that fueled the war.

The idea of office-equipment-as-monument brings to mind another, more recent model for contemporary installation, one that was also for some time marginal in MoMA's art history: Pop art. Burden's monument repeats Claes Oldenburg's early-'60s gesture of greatly magnifying vernacular forms. Together with his early environment *The Store*, 1961–62, Oldenburg's enlargements challenged the discursive framework of institutions like the Modern by exposing the arbitrariness with which it systematically privileges some forms of cultural expression while devaluing others.

At its location in Manhattan's Lower East Side, *The Store* was also the site of performances that, like the earlier Happenings, added a performative dimension to installation. In "*Dis*locations" that tradition variously informs the works by Kabakov, Nauman, and Hammons. Kabakov's *Bridge* contrives the spatial index of a fictional "event" to communicate an allegory of revolution in which "little people" overcome the odds to disrupt an authoritarian meeting. Nauman's *Anthro/Socio* depends upon advanced video technology, a puzzling text, and a remarkable performance to convey a menacing allegory of consumerism: on three separate tapes that run simultaneously, a stentorian baritone in tight close-up, seen both right-side-up and upside-down on monitors and in video images projected on the wall, orders "Eat Me/Hurt Me/Feed Me/Help Me," "Feed Me/Eat Me/Anthropology," and "Help Me/Hurt Me/Sociology."

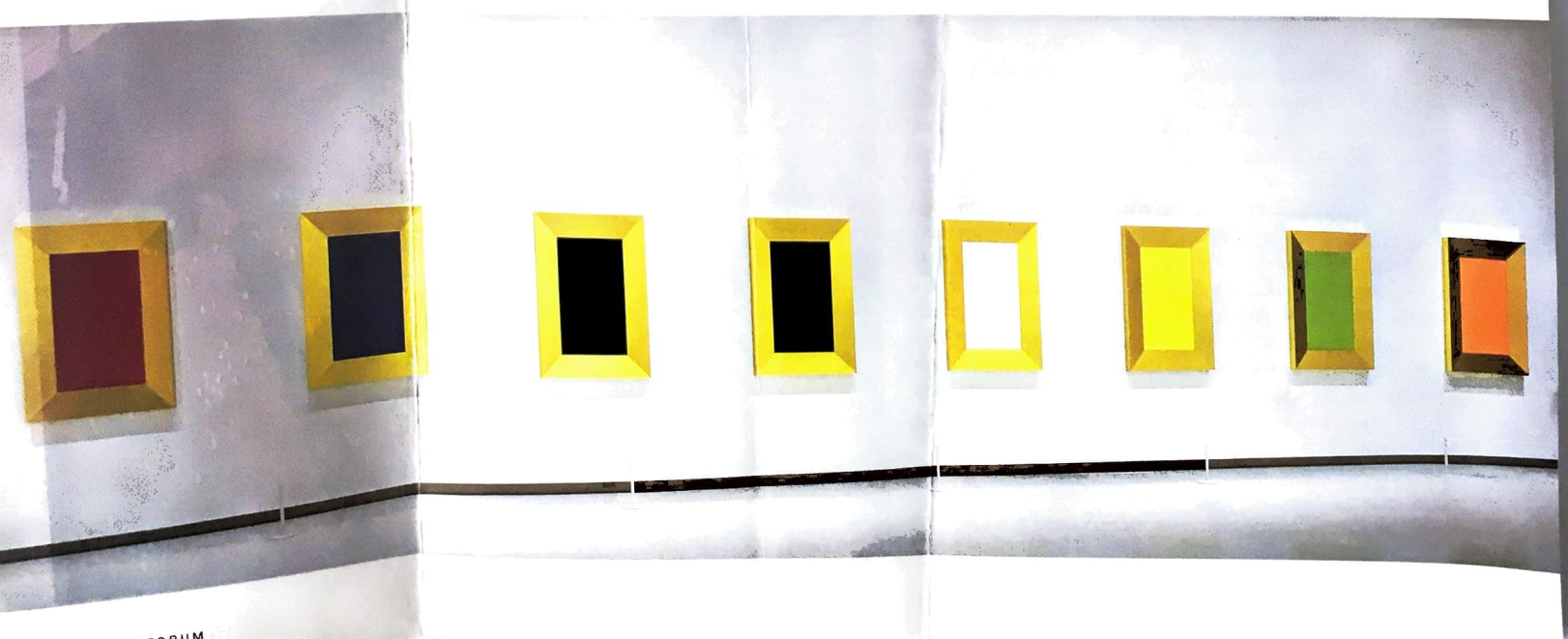
Hammons' *Public Enemy* most nearly effects the sense of turbulent disarray that many Happenings left behind. In a gallery littered with autumn leaves, hung with streamers and balloons, and divided by a police barricade and a low, looping wall of sandbaglike sacks of cement, Hammons has trained automatic weapons and explosives on a huge representation of the monument of Theodore Roosevelt—on horseback, with subservient black and Native American attendants walking on either side—that stands outside New York's Museum of Natural History. As a celebratory assertion of the imminent demise of institutionalized racism and colonial hubris, *Public Enemy*'s success comes not from its rhetoric, which only mirrors that of Roosevelt's monument, but from its situation inside the Museum of Modern Art.

Ilya Kabakov, *The Bridge*, 1991. Installation view.

Right: **Huang Yong Ping, *Unreadable Humidity*, 1991,** pulped paper and Plexiglas, 90" x 14' 7¾" x 28½". Installation view. Below: **Katharina Fritsch, *Acht Bilder mit Acht Farben: Rotes Bild, Blaues Bild, Grünes Bild, Schwarzes Bild, Weisses Bild, Gelbes Bild, Hellgrünes Bild, Oranges Bild* (Eight pictures in eight colors: red picture, blue picture, green picture, black picture, white picture, yellow picture, light green picture, orange picture), 1990–91,** tempera on canvas, wood, metal foil, and gold lacquer, 55⅛ x 39¼ x 3⅜".

It is the site-specific art in "*Dis*locations" that supplies the show's most obvious critiques of the museum and its culture. Calle's *Ghosts*, for example, which puts a populist spin on the insinuating strategies of '70s Conceptualism, is predicated upon the temporary removal of paintings from the Modern's permanent collection (for loans, conservation, etc.), and effects a territorial intrusion upon that collection's hitherto inviolate precincts. Installed directly on the wall where the missing painting hung, each of Calle's five "ghosts" consists of written and rudimentary visual recollections of the absent work, accounts that the artist has solicited from a cross-section of museum employees. By framing as "art" these sometimes affecting, sometimes banal, distinctly nonexpert descriptions of the museum's masterpieces, *Ghosts* suggests the potential wealth of meanings that conventional modes of esthetic analysis and display exclude. As is often the case with Calle's work, the physical realization of *Ghosts* is its least successful aspect, having been diluted by a superfluous third element: an arty large-scale rendering of the missing painting that underlies the entire block of text.

The installations by Hammons and Piper indicate the debt that site-specific critique owes to a final historical model, the readymade. Piper's *What It's Like, What It is, No. 3* takes as a found object the museum-ready esthetics of Minimalism, only to use them just as the ancient Greeks did their wooden horse at Troy. Dead center in a pure white cube of a space that Piper has designed as a Minimalist arena stands a roughly man-sized white box. Four wall-length steps of generous width provide seating around the room's periphery. In a critical departure from the abstract, phenomenological speculations of Minimalism, a video monitor is embedded at eye level in each of the box's four sides, and at any one time each registers the face, profile, or back of an African-American man's head. Turning every so often to confront spectators head on, this man tells



you, in measured tones, not who he is but what he's not: "I'm not rowdy. I'm not horny. I'm not scary. I'm not shiftless. I'm not lazy. I'm not servile." Setting an animated life-size semblance of a black man inside a white box in a white room, Piper evokes the situation of someone trapped inside a prison house of stereotype. The symbolism rapidly expands to readings of institutional esthetics and social structures. By smuggling inside the museum's walls the experiences of people who hitherto have had little reason to feel welcome there, Piper confronts and effectively deconstructs the art history with which museums in general, and MoMA in particular, have been most comfortable.

Five of the seven artists in "*Dis*locations" (Bourgeois, Calle, Hammons, Kabakov, and Nauman) reappear in the Carnegie International in Pittsburgh. Like its European and South American rivals, this triennial exhibition at the Carnegie Museum of Art tends to be realized as a massive potpourri of contemporary work by established American and European artists. In this year's model, however, organizers Mark Francis and Lynne Cooke, determined to enliven the show and to lend it a degree of thematic unity, have also turned to installation and site-specific art. There are works in "*Dis*locations" that prove that the genre can still generate deconstructionist effects. But the Carnegie International proves the opposite: at a time of dwindling enthusiasm for contemporary art, especially for its socially engaged manifestations, installation work can help to *reconstruct* the museum's prestige.

Describing the intended focus of their survey, the curators note the interest of many contemporary artists in institutional modes of collecting, systems of display, and methods of organizing and disseminating information. Many of the 43 artists they selected were encouraged to visit Pittsburgh in advance, scout the museum, and address their works directly to the Carnegie Institute, a building that advances the late-19th-century desire to unite the arts and sciences by including a concert hall, a public library, and a museum of natural history as well as one of art. Yet very few works—among them Hammons' *Yo-yo* and Mike Kelley's *Craft Morphology Flow Chart*—produce the kind of resistant friction that can summon the vanguard heritage of contemporary installation. The tone of the survey is established instead by the academic refinement and high production values in the works by Richard Avedon, Tony Cragg, Richard Deacon, Lili Dujourie, Lisa Milroy, Katharina Fritsch, Reinhard Mucha, and Juan Muñoz, to name only a few.

Moreover, to the extent that Hammons and Kelley address the museum critically (one by foregrounding racial tokenism, the other by parodying connoisseurship), they also deviate from the curators' "guiding principle"—"the *reality* of the museum, rather than a notion of the ideal or imaginary museum," for "the *specificity* of the museum has created possibilities and opportunities."[4] One telling manifestation of the idea of such a meta-Carnegie was *Unreadable Humidity*, by the Chinese-born artist Huang Yong Ping, a discreet yet aggressive work that is installed in the stacks of the Carnegie Library's music and art department. In order to find the (surplus) art publications from the library's collection that constitute *Unreadable Humidity*, it helps to follow one's nose, not one's eyes. In a reference to death and regeneration that recalls the double-edged interventions of Joseph Beuys, Huang has returned these publications to the malodorous condition of decomposing pulp.

Perhaps it is equally fitting that in addition to producing this mass of decaying art discourse, the guiding principle of engaging Andrew Carnegie's 19th-century institution should also yield twelve tons of bones. Allan McCollum's *Lost Objects* consists of 750 concrete casts of dinosaur bones from the collection of the Carnegie Museum of Natural History. Tightly arranged on a low bier, they occupy the indoor sculpture court of the art museum, where, painted a range of glossy earth tones that evoke McCollum's "Surrogate Paintings," 1978–, more than bones, they fail to summon the Southwestern setting where these fossilized remains (the "original" copies) were found. Sadly reversing the rule of thumb in McCollum's successful projects, the direct experience of these lost objects is less absorbing than reflection on the idea that informs them.

Francis and Cooke have further departed from Carnegie tradition by commissioning works for locations outside the museum. Most of these demonstrate how very remote such projects have become from their immediate historical antecedents: the esthetic practices developed by individuals and collectives working outside the gallery and museum system in the late 1970s. Characteristic of the generally conciliatory tone of such work today are Maria Nordman's frail arboretum, *Four Rivers: Penn and Liberty Ave. at Stanwix Street 1991*–, and Ann Hamilton's *offerings*—the latter work also typifying the current fashion for following Gordon Matta-Clark's example to the point of using sometimes abandoned old buildings. *offerings* occupies a gutted row house in a working-class section of Pittsburgh's North Side. The house, which lacks interior walls, is now home to a flock of tuneful canaries. On the third floor, a vitrine lit by heat lamps contains beeswax casts of human heads. As these slowly melt, the wax spills onto the floor and, through it, to the ceilings and floors below, where it simulates stalagmites and stalactites. This site-specific work, which sweetens historical memory with metaphysics, has less to do with the avant-gardist logic

Allan McCollum, *Lost Objects*, 1991, enamel on cast concrete. On the frieze: **Giulio Paolini, *Contemplator Enim*, 1991.** Installation view.

Richard Deacon, *Facts Not Opinions*, 1991, mixed media. Installation view.

of the readymade than with the pre-Modern tradition that locates religious art in churches. Also consistent with Christian tradition, and even more problematic, is the fact that to the extent it addresses the residents of this neighborhood "in transition," *offerings* has less to say about human agency and the present than about obsolescence and the past. It is, after all, such neighbors who would be best equipped to decipher this work's interpretive key: that canaries have been used to test the safety of air inside coal mines.

Noting that the decision to focus on the museum "does not entail a rejection of the kinds of critiques of the museum that burgeoned in the late sixties and early seventies," Cooke and Francis have acknowledged the critical heritage of installation and site-specific art.[6] The exhibition includes works by several artists who are associated directly with that critical tradition, including Michael Asher, Dan Graham, and Richard Serra. Their contributions, as well as those of younger artists such as Judith Barry, Louise Lawler, and Christopher Williams, suggest a curatorial commitment to this critical tradition.

But as the works of Asher, Graham, and Serra have helped elucidate, all art acquires its meaning and value in a particular context. And in the context of this exhibition such work cannot mean what it might under different circumstances. Notwithstanding the curators' references to the precise situation of Pittsburgh, and to the role of the Carnegie in the life of the city's inhabitants, this survey contains no discernible references to the AIDS crisis, unemployment, homelessness, or any other fact of contemporary life.[7] At the Carnegie, "facts" invariably refer to esthetic preoccupations, as in *Facts Not Opinions*, three pieces by Deacon that consist of one or more artworks and other objects, plucked from the museum's collections at the artist's request, and posed on sculptural bases of his own design.

In such a situation, the opacity of, say, Asher's untitled installation can only blend into the nearly total retreat to the museum and its culture that this exhibition more than reflects; it actually promotes.

Now,...at the beginning of the nineties, a swing seems to have occurred back to the museum as a preferred site of activity. At its best, this renewed attention does not entail a rejection of the kinds of critiques of the museum that burgeoned in the late sixties and early seventies but, rather, implies that the museum, notwithstanding its ideological characteristics, might still be preferable to much else as a space for imaginative, contemplative, and critical experiences.[8]

Installation art, whether site specific or not, has emerged as a flexible idiom; so flexible, in fact, that it can function all at once as a means of deconstructing the museum and of reconstructing it. With its vanguard heritage and readymade rhetoric of contextuality, no wonder this genre has acquired its current appeal. These qualities should not, however, obscure the way in which installation is actually functioning at this time. For just as often as it may engage people in a process of producing challenging new meanings and constructing new publics, it may also function as a fetish. With the marketplace for contemporary art all but dried up, and with diminished government funding for the arts and increased meddling in the conduct of individuals and institutions, this idiom may well continue to be called upon to stand in for other manifestations of visual culture. Those forms, by naming as well as by responding poetically to the facts of contemporary life, will continue to be overlooked by museum curators who, like people everywhere, must fear awakening one cold morning to learn that they too have been made obsolete. □

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1. "Projects" (press release), "Projects" file, archive of the Museum of Modern Art, New York. The first project was an interactive video installation by Keith Sonnier.
2. See, for example, Hilton Kramer, "Show at the Modern Raises Questions," *The New York Times*, 2 July 1970, p. 26; and "Miracles, 'Information,' 'Recommended Reading,'" *The New York Times*, 12 July 1970, p. II:19. In the first of these drubbings, Kramer wrote, "There is a fundamental contradiction involved in devoting a large museum exhibition to a phenomenon that is, in its essence, a polemic against the whole concept of museum art and the museumization of art."
3. Since the identities of the Vietnamese dead are not known to us, Burden created permutations of 4,000 Vietnamese names to arrive at the estimated three million casualties.
4. Mark Francis, "State of Change: An Introduction," in *Carnegie International 1991*, exhibition catalogue, Pittsburgh: The Carnegie Museum of Art, 1991, p. 19.
5. Two exceptions: Christopher Wool's billboard on Pittsburgh's North Side recycles a fragment from a text he has used in his paintings. By stating what, in this context, is patently false—"THE SHOW IS OVER"—the billboard recalls the antilogical effects of late-'70s and early-'80s works by artists like John Fekner and Jenny Holzer. And Tim Rollins + K.O.S., in addition to showing paintings at the institute, have created a special collection at the Homewood Branch of the Carnegie Library, to which they have donated one copy of every book they have worked with, each supplemented by original drawings.
6. Francis and Lynne Cooke, "Preface," *Carnegie International 1991*, p. 14.
7. The curators planned to show Derek Jarman's new film *Edward II* as part of the exhibition, but the distributor refused to grant permission. The movie would have brought a much needed, albeit token, queer perspective to the exhibition. A retrospective of Jarman's films has been scheduled.
8. Francis and Cooke, p. 14.

"Dislocations" closes on January 7, the Carnegie International on February 16.

LOS ANGELES TIMES
23 October 1991

MOMA Enters the '90s

By CHRISTOPHER KNIGHT
TIMES ART CRITIC

NEW YORK—Had it been organized anywhere else, "*Dis*locations" would likely be seen as a generally engaging exhibition of specially commissioned installations by eight American and European artists of disparate critical reputation, but all well known to the contemporary art world.

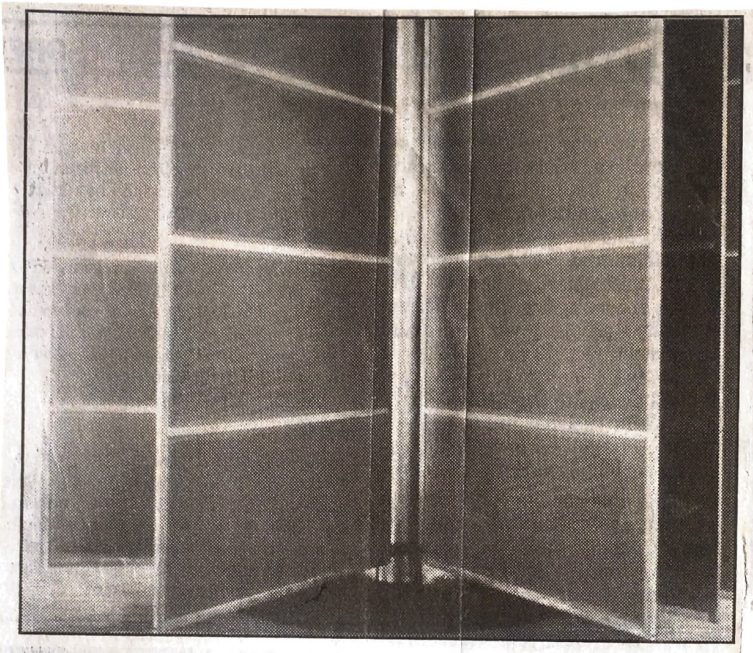
However, as it has been mounted at the Museum of Modern Art, the show has a very different edge than it would anywhere else. So large does MOMA loom in the modern art consciousness, yet so small and inconsequential has been its regard for the complexity of art made since the 1960s, that this ambitious presentation inevitably is read against the backdrop of the institution that houses it.

In the downstairs galleries for special exhibitions, Bruce Nauman's relentless and weirdly operatic video installation, "Anthro/Socio," echoes through adjacent rooms displaying a mysteriously abandoned meeting hall by Moscow's Ilya Kabakov and an infernal machine by Louise Bourgeois.

Upstairs, in third-floor galleries normally given over to contemporary art in the permanent collection, Chris Burden's devastating "The Other Vietnam Memorial," which delivers the show's knockout punch, is flanked by two diverse critiques of racism against African-Americans, one by David Hammons, the other by Adrian Piper. And in the second floor rooms that house MOMA's great collection of European Modernism, the French Conceptualist Sophie Calle has inserted written and doodled remembrances of five paintings temporarily removed from display.

The show, which opened Sunday for an 11-week run (through Jan. 7), was clearly conceived with MOMA in the minds of both its curator, Robert Storr (whose debut this is), and its seven artists. In a way, it picks up where the museum left off about 20 years ago with its last notable exhibitions of contemporary art—"Spaces" and "Information"—devoted to the relatively recent phenomena of environmentally scaled installations and Conceptual art. The Conceptually based installations in "*Dis*locations" reaffirm the continuing vitality of the genre, especially at a time when more traditional sculpture and painting seem to have hit some shoals.

Burden's amazing monument is a touchstone for the exhibition, and for sensibilities dominating American life today. Like a gargantuan steel Rolodex tipped on its side, "The Other Vietnam Memorial" features a dozen movable copper pages etched with small representations of the names of some 3 million Vietnamese soldiers, civilians and refugees, all killed during the American episode of the decades-long Indochina war.



Chris Burden's "Vietnam Memorial" delivers show's knockout punch.

Only about 4,000 actual names are officially recorded or available. To get 3 million, Burden had a computer programmer develop random combinations of these. He also used the word *Liet Si*, or Hero, which is inscribed on thousands of tombs of unknown dead.

Burden's monument couldn't be more different from Maya Lin's famous wall of 57,939 American names in Washington, where cathartic elegy is gently given a space to emerge. "The Other Vietnam Memorial" instead exudes an icy cold beauty, the light falling across its copper leaves transforming metal into mechanized flesh, its finely machined parts recalling the high-tech machinery of war. The vague enormity of the carnage, which the intellect already knows as an abstraction, is here given blunt form. Spectators are left to deal with it as they will.

In assuming no moral position about the fact of death at such enormous scale, Burden's art removes itself from the divisive realm of polemic, while replacing with hard fact any possibility of aggrandizing sentiment. This incisive maneuver symbolically brings into view the victims of war that any opposition must habitually repress, creating an awesome sight that today reverberates against the thousands upon thousands of Iraqi casualties in the recent Gulf War.

Ostensibly, the Vietnam Syndrome was smashed by the Gulf War. But, like the Vietnamese finally commemorated here, dead Iraqis were made utterly invisible last spring through such bureaucratic abstractions as "collateral damage." Burden's haunting monument is a major achievement, and reason alone to claim success for this show.

Desert Storm also makes an oblique appearance in Hammons' theatrical "Public Enemy," where a battle zone filled with autumn leaves is enlivened by balloons and streamers, as if a parade has just passed by. Real weapons and toy ones take direct aim from behind a sand-bag bunker at a life-size photo-mural. The siege is against a familiar equestrian statue of Teddy Roosevelt, flanked by an American Indian and an African, that stands before New York's Museum of Natural History—monumental white warrior riding with pedestrian "noble savages" at his side.

In Hammons' hands, the presumptions of "natural" history collide with those of cultural history at MOMA, where the art of principally white men is enshrined. The parade that's passed by also can be seen as a declaration that the party is definitely over.

If Hammons' installation suffers

a bit from diffuseness, Adrian Piper's couldn't be more pointed. In the center of an amphitheater painted blinding white, video monitors on a white monolith show a black man who repeatedly declares what he is not—"I'm not vulgar, I'm not lazy, I'm not servile, I'm not stupid"—to the assembled faces of those who assume they know what he is. In the background, the Commodores sing "Zoom," as seductive entertainment is interwoven with another kind of black stereotype.

Bravely, Sophie Calle has waded straight into MOMA's celebrated collection, creating five "Ghosts" of paintings by Modigliani, De Chirico, Hopper and others that have been removed from display. Calle interviewed various museum employees, from curators to ticket takers, about the absent art, then wrote excerpts of their replies and hung their drawings of the remembered images over grisaille renderings painted directly on gallery walls.

As she's done before, Calle here projects multiple, even contradictory expressions into museum galleries whose "officialness" suggests that a singular, authoritative reading exists. Perhaps because her chosen form recalls mere captions or labels, however, her "ghosts" grow pale in the company of so much important painting and sculpture. The piece only plays at being subversive.

Kabakov's tilt at officialdom is also thin and disappointing, although it proceeds from an almost opposite situation: The Muscovite isn't operating in the face of a powerful status quo, but in a time of vacuum. His reconstruction of a drab Tenants' Club at a Soviet housing project creates the site of an aborted inquisition about an artist's vanguard work, interrupted mid-stream: Tables, chairs and paintings have been tipped over and shoved against the walls, as if some mad rush to the exits has taken place. In the dim light, and through binoculars placed on a bridge that traverses the room, a strange horde of minuscule white figures floods into view. Sci-fi silliness oscillates with the immaterial presence of an optimistic dream.

The most straightforwardly sculptural object in the show is Bourgeois' "Twosome," composed from two horizontal gas tanks painted black on the outside, red on the inside, and punctured with doors and windows. One slides in and out of the other on a mechanical track. Violent copulation, brute defecation, ritual re-birth and tortured imprisonment are some of the homey, domestic associations this churning machine evokes, its luridness made dizzying by a flashing red police light secreted deep inside its womb.

Nauman's contribution is a large environment of six video monitors and three video projections of a bald, disembodied head, all simultaneously shouting and singing in endless, high-pitched repetition: "Feed Me, Eat Me, Anthropology," and "Help Me, Hurt Me, Sociology." Being surrounded in a darkened room by the cognitive dissonance of such wild wailing is like being trapped inside a brain about to burst from grinding frustration. Nauman's art has the uncanny capacity to embed ephemeral psychological states deep inside your bones and viscera, and this example is first-rate.

Oddly, "*Dis*locations" might be described as an autobiographical show, in the sense that its organizer—an artist and critic who assumed his curatorial position at MOMA just a year ago—has found himself on the inside of an institution whose imperatives he was obliged to challenge in his prior roles of artist and critic. As curator, Storr has perceptively made his own sense of dislocation a subject, and he's invited seven kindred spirits along to light the darkened path.

Finally, it is this faith in living artists and living art that comes through most forcefully in the show, regardless of the success or failure of individual installations. The personal and social "dislocations" that operate in the work of all eight (Storr included) conspire to create the biggest dislocation of all: Being in the Kansas of this engaging display of new work, you can't quite believe you're also in the Oz of the Museum of Modern Art.

THE NEW YORKER
4 November 1991

ROB STORR, MOMA's new curator of painting and sculpture, has boldly fulfilled what must have seemed his most pressing mission: administering a nice big booster shot to what had become a rather etiolated organism, one reluctant to embrace or tackle the vociferous content in so much recent art. "*Dis*locations," Storr's first major exhibition, is ambitious, confrontational, bracing, and histrionic throughout. The seven commissioned installations, by Louise Bourgeois, Chris Burden, Sophie Calle, David Hammons, Ilya Kabakov, Bruce Nauman, and Adrian Piper, form a sort of choral *j'accuse*—a collective reproof of racial, sexual, and class stereotypes, as well as of nationalism, governments, bureaucracies, and war.

Yet the show's greatest strength may be the illusion it conveys of having broken through the infrastructure of the museum's disappointingly corporate 1984 expansion. The French Calle, for instance, a mole by avocation, infiltrates MOMA's permanent collection with wall statements—opinions elicited from museum staff concerning individual works—in spaces temporarily vacated by the paintings appraised. Hammons turns a room with a garden view into the chaotic tableau of a post-parade mock-celebration. Burden's "The Other Vietnam War Memorial," which at first suggests a vault, is actually an enormous metal card carrousel engraved with the names of three million Vietnamese dead—a Claes Oldenburg without the laughs. Piper's and Nauman's video chamber-pieces function as pendants to one another: a futuristic gym with a talking video totem, and a fun house of talking heads.

Bourgeois, ever the puckish Vulcan, seized the opportunity to come down with unprecedented virulence on the act of procreation. In its claustrophobic, last-stop enclosure her thunderous machine—two heavy metal cylinders, one entering the other at regular intervals—suggests hard labor in mines. But it's Kabokov the Ukrainian, who best portrays the passing scene. His tableau, "The Bridge," represents a Moscow tenants'-association headquarters freshly abandoned but now occupied by a mystery army of Lilliputian figures on the march: the party may be over, but there's always someone around to clean up.

ART IN AMERICA
New York
January 1992

Dislocating the Modern

In a notable departure from its traditionally cautious attitude toward contemporary art, the Museum of Modern Art recently staged an exhibition consisting of site-specific installations by seven artists whose works address such political issues as race, war and sexuality.

BY HOLLAND COTTER

"Dislocations" is a show that was eagerly anticipated for several reasons. It was the first time since the "International Survey," curated by Kynaston McShine nearly a decade ago, that the Museum of Modern Art has acknowledged contemporary art with a full-scale show, and it was the first exhibition organized by the recently appointed curator for contemporary art, Robert Storr. The position is notorious for being treated by the museum as a nonfunctional incumbency, but Storr, admired as a critic and teacher (and still too little known as a painter), seems to be getting the green light from painting and sculpture director Kirk Varnedoe. His reinstallations of the contemporary galleries have been critically well received, and while his taste will not suit everyone, his overview of recent art is sensitive and sound, his rejection of theoretical cant refreshing, and his inclusion of women and minority artists (three of the seven artists in "*Dis*locations" are women; two of the artists are black) in this mostly white-male shop indicates a promising shift in art-world demographics.

"*Dis*locations" was also of interest because it showcased what is being touted as the preeminent art form of the '90s, installation. With roots in Dada, Constructivism, Surrealism and theater, installation has constituted a distinct genre for some time now. Installation work thrived in the '60s and '70s, and, from the material pileups of Allan Kaprow's Happenings to the luminist environments of James Turrell, it used psychologically charged space to create the kind of "total" experience no other art form could match. What accounts for its return to popularity now? It's hard to say. Perhaps its aura of being outside, even beyond, the milieu of the salable object makes it attractive to an art world whose mercantile machinery is embarrassingly stalled. Perhaps its elastic nature and its capacity to bridge formal categories suit an art world grown increasingly political over the past few years, where artists seek ever more dynamic ways to amplify their sociopolitical stances. Perhaps it reflects a need on the part of some artists to reclaim a metaphoric density submerged by much of the theory-based work of the past 10 years.

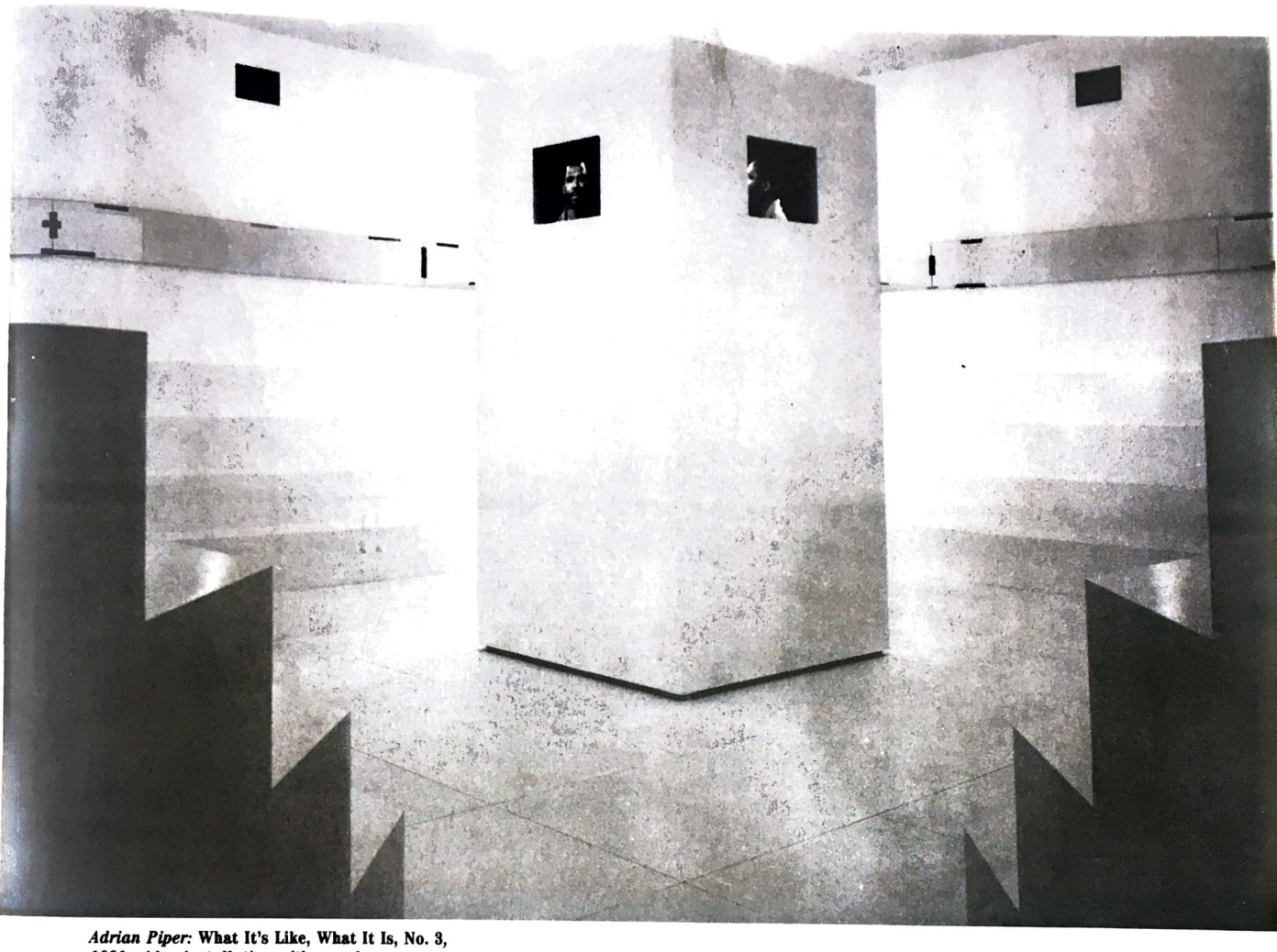
Whatever the reasons, political content certainly marked much of the work in the MOMA show, particularly the three installations set side by side on the third floor. It found its most concentrated form in Adrian Piper's *What It's Like, What It Is, No. 3*. This work consisted of a stark white unitary space with bleacherlike stepped seats on all four sides. Piper has said that the design of the room was intended to evoke Minimalist sculpture, an "apolitical" style in which she herself worked during the '70s, and

with its immaculate, painted-wood surfaces and its allover grid configuration it very chillingly did. At the room's center stood a tall, square column with a video screen facing out from each of its four vertical sides toward the surrounding seats. The image it carried was the head of a black man—full face, both profiles and the back—repeating the phrases, "I am not a thief; I am not scary; I am not sneaky; I am not shiftless"—denying, in effect, a whole litany of racist epithets in a measured but emphatic voice. Since one of the images the space invoked was a sterile operating theater, the suggestion that the man was a patient being dissected by our attention was clear.

Piper's work is intended to—and does—arouse strong feelings. What one values in her work is exactly that it addresses the issues it does—racism, prejudice, fear, etc.—and that in so doing it creates a specific on-the-spot problem for the viewer. A recent gallery installation Piper created, for example, in which she spoke calmly but provocatively about race on videotape, was set up in a way that brought the viewer into immediate and uncomfortable physical proximity to her image and her message. The MOMA installation lacked a sense of either concentration or confrontation. The video screen was too small to be seen easily from the seats, and, at least in the days after the show's opening, the volume of the audio track was kept rather low. As a result, one sensed that the viewers themselves, an essential component of this installation, felt left out. This was too bad, because Piper was offering a complex (and witty) investigation of reversed cultural programming. With luck we'll be able to see *What It's Like, What It Is, No. 3* elsewhere.

Chris Burden's *The Other Vietnam Memorial* (the reference in the title, of course, is to Maya Lin's Vietnam War Memorial in Washington,

View of Bruce Nauman's Anthro/Socio, *1991, video installation with sound; in "Dislocations." Photo Scott Frances.*



Adrian Piper: **What It's Like, What It Is, No. 3,** ***1991, video installation with sound.*** ***Photo Peter Moore.***

D.C.) also had problems, but of a different kind. Burden has been one of America's few really scary artists, and the radical physicality of his performances in the early '70s, which often took violence and danger as their "mediums," suggested that installation would be his natural métier. It may still prove to be, but not here. The piece was composed of huge vertical copper plates leafing out from a central pole; they could be swung open and viewed like posters on a rack or read like the pages of a book. The text, indecipherable until you were up close, consisted of 3,000,000 Vietnamese names representing those who died in the Vietnam conflict, and the numerical contrast to the 57,939 Americans who lost their lives there was surely meant to be pointed in its instruction. (Since the names of many of the Vietnamese dead are unknown, Burden culled 4,000 Vietnamese names, reportedly from telephone books, and used computer-generated variations to produce the 3,000,000 total.)

The sheer size of the piece was imposing, and the tiny black letters, which dissolved into a gray blur from two feet away, gave a subtle, wrenching embodiment to an all-too-abstract fact. The trouble was, once you read the explanatory tag at the entrance, you "got" the piece, and it was hard to take it any further. In addition, the fact that the names of the war dead listed here were essentially stand-ins took away some of the work's emotional charge. You were left wanting to feel more fully drawn into the piece, but it remained essentially an imposingly realized conceptual gesture, and so instead you ended up calculating the effort that must have gone into producing it. One had a similar reaction to Burden's *Medusa* at the Brooklyn Museum last summer—a gigantic multi-ton world globe crisscrossed with trains and pocked with strip mines. As an antimonument to an ecologically devastated world it was absolutely "right," but it was conceptually leaden, a visual minilecture that turned metaphor into illustration.

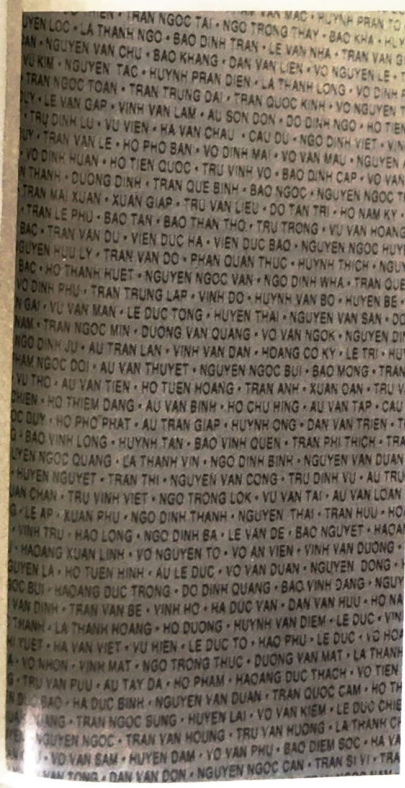
Obviously Burden cannot keep nailing himself to Volkswagens forever (as he once famously did), but one misses the bizarre, risky moral ambivalence of his early work. Sustaining this sense of risk is the challenge that polemical art is faced with. What energy Burden's piece did generate came from its implicit ambition to emulate public sculpture, with the association of officially

sanctioned civic sentiment which that status usually bears—an effect that might have been clearer had the work appeared in MOMA's sculpture garden as originally planned. (The piece's new owners, the Lannan Foundation, insisted it appear indoors.) In fact, the question occurs as to what made *The Other Vietnam Memorial* an installation at all. It did nothing particular with the space it occupied, nor, apart from being readable in the round, did it attempt to engage its audience physically—the very things for which the installation mode was invented.

David Hammons's *Public Enemy*, by contrast, exploited the potential of an environmental format in an unusually imaginative manner; more than with any other artist in the show, one felt that it was *his* medium. He, no less than Piper and Burden, made a polemical statement, in this case about the evils of white supremacy, but phrased in terms that would enchant the viewer on a visceral level. The floor of the room was littered with fragrant autumn leaves and the ceiling crowded with floating balloons, their strings hanging down like a gentle curtain which continually brushed our heads as we moved about. In the center of the room were four close-to-life-size black-and-white photographs of a single public monument, propped up against each other so the statue appeared in the round. It depicted Theodore Roosevelt triumphantly astride a horse, accompanied by a Native American and a black man walking like servants on either side, both nearly naked. Around the monument was a ring of piled-up sandbags on which were propped guns—some of them plastic toys, others the real thing—all pointing inward toward the statue.

Hammons is that rare artist who has a lesson to teach and has developed an inventive and poetic way to do it. He works almost entirely with found materials, many of them taken from the streets, and has a marvelous touch with the metaphorical implications of things around him. The result is that you see the art and experience it sensually before you arrive at its ideas. The leaves and the balloons created an olfactory and tactile atmosphere suggesting, say, a Columbus Day parade, a trope enhanced by the view of the

Why is the installation form popular again? Perhaps its aura of being outside the milieu of the salable object makes it attractive to an art world whose mercantile machinery is stalled.



Right and below (detail), Chris Burden:* The Other Vietnam Memorial, *1991, steel and etched copper, approximately 14 feet high by 15 feet in diameter. Photo Scott Frances.

trees in the museum's garden seen through the room's large window. Only gradually does the import of the statue become clear, and the purpose of the defensive works around it comes into focus even more slowly. Hammons suggests that we all know monuments like this from childhood—the actual statue in the photograph stands, ironically, in front of New York's Museum of Natural History—and it is from childhood that the battle must begin against what they signify. *Public Enemy* was, I should say, nowhere near as richly textured as certain other installations Hammons has done—I think in particular of his extraordinary John Coltrane tribute at Exit Art three years ago [see *A.i.A.*, Sept. '89], which had a depth and complexity *Public Enemy* could not touch—but it still showed the work of an installation artist who is in every way the real thing.

Bruce Nauman is, too, judging by past work, though he seems not to have been inspired to stretch himself here. For his installation, *Anthro/Socio*, several video monitors and larger screens served as spots of light and motion in an otherwise darkened room. The film featured a single talking head, that of a youngish male vocalist who delivered the words "Feed Me, Eat Me, Anthropology. Help Me, Hurt Me, Sociology" in an insistent, repetitive *sprechstimme* which sounded musically scored. The taped voice issued from several speakers at top volume, but the different tracks overlapped. The result was cacophony: you could understand the words only by watching a screen and then lip-reading as you listened. Once you did figure out what was being said, it was hard to know exactly what you'd learned. The words implied that science (anthropology, sociology) is a source of ambivalent power, that no action, good or evil (feed me, eat me), exists without its opposite, but nothing in the installation visually supported or amplified these interesting possibilities. Marooned in their vast empty space (Nauman's piece occupied more square footage than anyone else's, which may have been a disadvantage), the monitors and amps seemed to be making a primal statement about aural chaos rather than ethics.

What *Anthro/Socio* did very effectively, however, was contribute a visual correlative for the "dislocation" theme the show was built around—the sense of disorientation which Storr posited as being a characteristic, even *the* characteristic, of our time and the conceptual ground line of each piece in the show. Unlike the third-floor installations, which gave three artists discrete compartments off a hallway, the three downstairs rooms were connected by narrow passages through which one moved in semidarkness, turning a corner here, stepping up or down a level there. One frequently felt the sensation of having lost one's physical bearings. Nauman's installation, in the first of these rooms, so obscured the features of the space it occupied that it was hard both to determine its extent and to find your way out. (MOMA doesn't provide this kind of fun for us often—the last instance within memory was Justen Ladda's delightful "Projects" installation of five years ago, in which a relatively small room was transformed into a mazelike corridor leading to an image of Michelangelo's Vatican *Pietà* composed entirely of boxes of laundry detergent—so the novelty was amusing in itself.)

Once you found the exit, however, you passed into the Ukrainian artist Ilya Kabakov's installation and a very different world. Kabakov's *The Bridge* is, like other pieces he has done, essentially the staging of a Kafkaesque fictional scenario with curious supernatural overtones. In this case Russian and English texts inform us of a meeting of The Tenants' Club of Moscow Housing Project, No. 8, a meeting which was called to exhibit and critique art evidencing "dangerous bourgeois qualities, attacking our Soviet way of life and denying our ideology. The presence of critics and prominent art historians was planned." The meeting, however, was interrupted by tiny, unidentified and possibly extra-

Installation view of Ilya Kabakov's* The Bridge, *1991, bridge, binoculars, paintings, miniature figures and mixed mediums. Photo Scott Frances.

View of David Hammons's **Public Enemy**, *1991, photographs, balloons, sandbags, guns and other mixed mediums. Photo Scott Frances.*

terrestrial beings. Kabakov's installation presented us with the meeting room itself as it appeared at the moment of the tiny visitors' arrival—its chaos preserved intact by having the museum's larger visitors walk over a wooden bridge raised across its center.

Dimly lit, Kabakov's piece suggested the aftermath of an explosion. Tables and benches were thrown back; paintings hung in near-darkness on the walls. In the middle, an open space was peppered with tiny white cutout "human" silhouettes stuck like pins into the floor. We were invited to scrutinize them through binoculars attached to poles. In an exhibition short on subtlety, Kabakov's purposes seemed vague at first and his installation visually diffuse. Everything was painted institutional green, brown and maroon; no compositional logic obtained, especially in contrast to the high-tech electronics of the Nauman next door. Yet gradually, out of the piles of lumber and furniture, the theatrical narrative took hold, and in fact, Kabakov's piece ended up being the exhibition's main connection to the theater and performance art that had so interactive a relationship with installations of an earlier time. One sensed that its little drama of petty officialdom, academic art and nonspecific foreboding had things both wry and profound to say about spirituality and power, and that these things could not have been said in any other form.

From Kabakov's space we moved on to what was surely the single most arresting and only genuinely funny image in the show, Louise Bourgeois's *Twosome*. The piece consisted of a formidable object in two parts: a pair of black, wheeled cylinders set upon a stretch of locomotive track and illuminated from within by a revolving red light. The smaller cylinder slowly, repeatedly and very noisily trundled into the larger one and then out again in a bizarre sexual encounter whose every consummation was signaled by about 30 seconds of sudden silence and motionlessness. Was this an emblem for an Age of Mechanical Copulation or, in keeping with Bourgeois's reiterated concerns, yet another rendering of the unthinkingly but perpetually abusive family? Since we could not enter the cylinders, and would have been crushed if we could, we had to be content to remain, dwarfed and puzzled voyeurs, outside the bizarre, psycho-industrial spectacle.

Simultaneous with the MOMA show, Bourgeois had a show of sculptures at Robert Miller, some of which complemented her "*Dis*locations" piece. These were altarlike blocks of roughly chiseled black marble, squat and hunkered down like the *Twosome* cylinders. In their top surfaces were embedded glass bulbs resembling the suction cups used in other centuries to leech blood, objects here illuminated by a mysterious blue light which seemed to issue from deep within the stone. Both the MOMA piece and these works at Miller revealed Bourgeois's ability to infuse raw, inanimate material with anthropomorphic presence. The results can be gross or beautiful or both, as in another sculpture at Miller in which two unglamorized carved human legs emerge from a block of marble and cross at mid-calf. Any one of these sculptures set in the middle of a room activates the psychological space around it, and we have few artists who can set up an expressive ambience so effectively.

If MOMA chose to give us Bourgeois at her most sardonically indelicate, delicacy of a high order was to be found in the work of the French artist Sophie Calle, the youngest and in some ways the most successful participant in the show. For one thing, hers was the only piece that specifically drew upon the museum site for its meaning, thereby turning the entire museum into an extension of her installation. She requested that a few well-known paintings (a Magritte, a Seurat and a de Chirico among them—all candidates, by their own concerns, for the theme of "dislocation") be temporarily removed from their

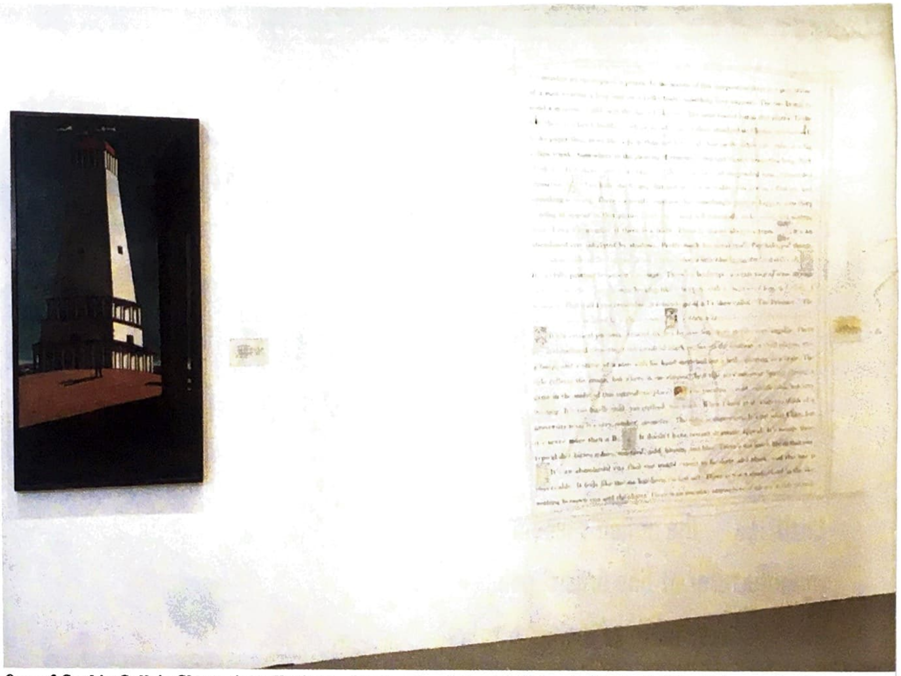
places in the permanent-collection galleries on the second floor. Once they were gone, she asked a number of museum employees—curators, guards and maintenance crew—to describe or sketch the pieces from memory. Their verbal recollections of the pieces (and in every case the word predominated) Calle then had set in type, with the sketches included where appropriate; the results she arranged according to the overall dimensions of the original work in question. Over these "stand-ins" Calle herself applied a bit of scribbly drawing or, in at least one case, a question mark. Finally, she placed these recollections on the museum wall where the pictures themselves had previously hung. The title of the resulting installation, *Ghosts*, derives from the French word for the official cards that museums place where pictures have been temporarily removed.

The effect of Calle's "interventions" into the museum's collections was literally dislocating—and here was the only one of the seven installations of which that could be said. Did the descriptions "capture" the missing object? For the describer, perhaps; for anyone else, certainly not (Edward Hopper's *House by the Railroad* elicits comparisons with both Wyeth and *Psycho*). At a time when art history is concerned precisely with what has been left out or misplaced by the canonical memory, Calle's mnemonic quizzes are apt and politically adept; after all, it is primarily women, people of color and artists of idiosyncratic aspiration who have been "forgotten." And Calle's willingness to pose questions rather than deliver answers gives us an opportunity to occupy her work imaginatively ourselves.

On the whole, however, one came away from "*Dis*locations" feeling somehow disappointed. True, the show had been remarkable in bringing contemporary political art to MOMA at all—and in that respect it did indeed correct a long-standing elision on the museum's part. Yet one wondered how much the MOMA venue itself contributed to an absence of vitality. Had the museum's recent history of procrustean academicism (all those equations! Primitivism-Modernism, Picasso-Braque, High-Low, etc.) seeped into the works? Or is it just in the nature of museums to absorb art that is potentially troublesome and reduce it to yet another meta-experience on the path between, say, Dufy on the second floor and Kiefer on the third? Not one of these installations was messy or conflicted or crazy or exquisite or hideous or transcendent—any of the things, in other words, that could have given the artists' deeply felt messages a more visceral impact. Installation art has the potential for being all of this, and it would be nice to think that its passionate, querulous possibilities will enliven the decade still ahead. □

*"*Dislocations*," curated by Robert Storr, was on view at the Museum of Modern Art, New York, from Oct. 20, 1991, to Jan. 7, 1992. It was accompanied by a catalogue of the same name published by the museum and distributed by Harry N. Abrams, Inc. The show will not travel.*

Author: *Holland Cotter is a writer and critic living in New York.*



One of Sophie Calle's **Ghosts** *installations, showing her "stand-in" for de Chirico's* **The Enigma of a Day,** *which was temporarily removed from MOMA's second-floor gallery. Photo Peter Moore.*

I [illegible]member an open space, a piazza. In the middle of this composition there is a gray statue of a man wearing a long coat on a bulky body, something very ungainly. The size brings to mind a monument, although the figure looks more like some tourist lost in that piazza. To the left, there is a brick building with an arcade, one of those standard de Chirico structures. It looks paper thin, more like a prop than anything real. And on the other side there is a big yellow trunk. Somewhere in the painting, I remember two tiny figures projecting long, dark shadows. It reminds me of a stage [illegible], there's a sense of suspended time, suspended animation. You have the feeling that you are not in reality, you are on a film set, and something is wrong. There's a terrific suspense that something is going to happen, something going to appear in that picture [illegible] will eventually make [illegible] but nothing does. I can't remember if there is a train. There is almost always a train. It's an abandoned city inhabited by shadows. Pretty much his usual stuff. Psychological things. [illegible] color, a little blue [illegible] and that's all. It's a chilly painting because it's empty. There's a landscape, a scenic view of some strange [illegible] man looking like a hostage with [illegible] him, a feeling of isolation. That's all I can remember. It reminds me of a TV show called "The Prisoner." The [illegible] I draw a [illegible]

It's a vertical painting, around six feet by five feet. Very sterile, very angular. There [illegible]hitectural elements, a colonnade of black arches off the roadway, a child playing with a hoop, and a statue of a man with his hand stretched out a little, pointing to a crate. The title reflects the image, but where is the enigma? Is it this very innocent figure, playing a game in the midst of this surrealistic place? The painting is cold, confidential, not very inviting. It's too intellectual, too studied, too much. When I look at it, I always think of a university text. It's very somber, geometric. The color is depressing. It's not what I like, but it's never more than a B. It doesn't have instant dramatic appeal. It's mostly those typical de Chirico colors, mustard, gold, brown, and blue. There's not much life in that one.

It's an abandoned city that you would expect to be dirty and black, and this one is impeccable. It feels like the air has been sucked out. There is not a single cloud in the sky, nothing between you and the object. There is an uncanny atmosphere of silence in the picture.

ELLE
New York
November 1991

ART

MOMA'S LATEST DRAMA

INSTALLING THE NEW AT THE MODERN

Where is a "*dis*location?" For the title of his exhibition now on view at New York's Museum of Modern Art, Robert Storr, an adventurous new curator, coined the wordplay with italics that highlight a bit of African-American slang: "*Dis*" meaning "deliberate disrespect." So a *dis*location would be any place of calculated affront to somebody's or something's dignity.

"*Dis*locations," a show of installations by seven internationally prominent artists, none famous for demure styles, is bound to ruffle feathers, including those of the exceedingly dignified MoMA itself. Will MoMA, a temple of Apollo, awake from the Dionysian revels of "*Dis*locations" a changed and recharged museum, or will it resolve just to forget the whole thing and go back to reshuffling the Matisses and Picassos? The 1990s, a decade so far characterized by the murkiness of its prospects, will gain at least one vivid signpost in the answer to that question.

PIERRE DUFOUR

Curator Robert Storr is bringing the Modern up to date.

Storr's seven *Dis*locators are, in descending order of age, Louise Bourgeois, Ilya Kabakov, Bruce Nauman, David Hammons, Adrian Piper, Chris Burden, and Sophie Calle. Kabakov, with his vast walk-in fictions of life in pre-Gorbachevian Moscow, is Russia's greatest contemporary artist. French-American surrealist Bourgeois has often unleashed blatant sexual content all the more jolting for being handled with consummate sculptural grace. Nauman, philosoper king of American art since the 1960s, makes riddling and profound work in innumerable mediums. Calle is a French documentarian of her own invasions of other people's privacy.

Two of the artists are African-American, very assertively so but with talents that disdain special pleading. Hammons, poet of junk sculpture, who has long worked in chosen obscurity, is emerging to wide acclaim as a sort of Joseph Beuys of urban streets, a shaman-hero for a time and place badly needing one. His jazz-flavored assemblages spiritualize conditions otherwise prey to rancor and despair. Piper is a sharp-witted provocateur, expert at outraging American complacencies about race, as in a video piece insinuating, with a bit of scholarly evidence, that practically every American carries some African blood. "How do you feel about that?" Piper may slyly query, with a psychoanalyst's infuriating detachment.

"*Dis*locations" marks a stunning departure for MoMA: its first coherent, large-scale attempt to address a new art development since "Information," a survey of conceptual work, bombed in 1970 for reasons ranging from its own incoherence to a state of avant-garde battle fatigue in art audiences at the end of the novelty-crazed 1960s. The debacle of *Information* enabled conservative elements in MoMA, such as scholarly painting and sculpture curator William Rubin, to institute what would become a 21-year Sleeping Beauty act in regard to the contemporary, consigned to token exhibits called "Projects."

Kirk Varnedoe, the art historian who ascended to Rubin's position in 1988 and who is hardly a maven of the avant-garde, last year surprised the art world by hiring Storr, a 40-year-old painter, teacher, and critic with an independent, densely informed take on recent art. Some observers doubted that MoMA's balkanized bureaucracy would bend to the newcomer's will. "Some observers" were wrong. Put together with lightning speed in museum terms, Storr's "*Dis*locations" is an in-house wake-up call.

The awakening is sure to be rude, in any case, because the artists in question are honor-bound to make it so. Consider that as of my writing I cannot say with confidence what will be in Storr's show, either because the work does not exist yet or because its effective existence awaits the circumstance of exhibition. *Dis*locational work is a pig in a poke for exhibitors who must commit to an artist without knowing clearly what the artist will do, except that whatever it is will probably exploit the character of the institution to unsettling ends.

There is nothing essentially new about the ambivalent relations (love-hate, perhaps, or sadomasochistic) between artists and institutions that such art entails. Indeed, it was exactly that sort of threat to its authority that MoMA recoiled from in the installations-rife early 1970s. Keep in mind that with curator Storr's show the museum does not simply pick up where it left off then. Recent large events in Western art—collapses of confidence in painting and other conventional forms, for instance, and surging political concerns—have made installations once more a wave of the future. But it is hard to resist a feeling of déjà vu with a differ-

PETER SCHJELDAHL

ence, which is that this time MoMA doesn't just say no. For an institution so poshly self-regarding, the decision requires a measure of courage verging on recklessness, as of a Park Avenue dowager turning her party arrangements over to the Marx Brothers.

Today's cycle of installational work, more than any in the past, gives artists extraordinary license to decide the meaning and direct the course of visual culture. Curators, collectors, dealers, critics, and other parties who like to have a say in the matter increasingly must stand aside, nervously, while artists plot magic and/or mayhem. Just how sensational the results may be is seen in Chris Burden's piece for "*Dis*locations" (being fabricated as I write), a memorial to the estimated three million Vietnamese (North and South, military and civilian) who died in America's Vietnam War. The names of that many Vietnamese are to be etched in copper plates mounted on steel pages of a sort of huge vertical Rolodex. (Most of the names are generated by computer from a few thousand authenticated names, from a country lacking comprehensive records.)

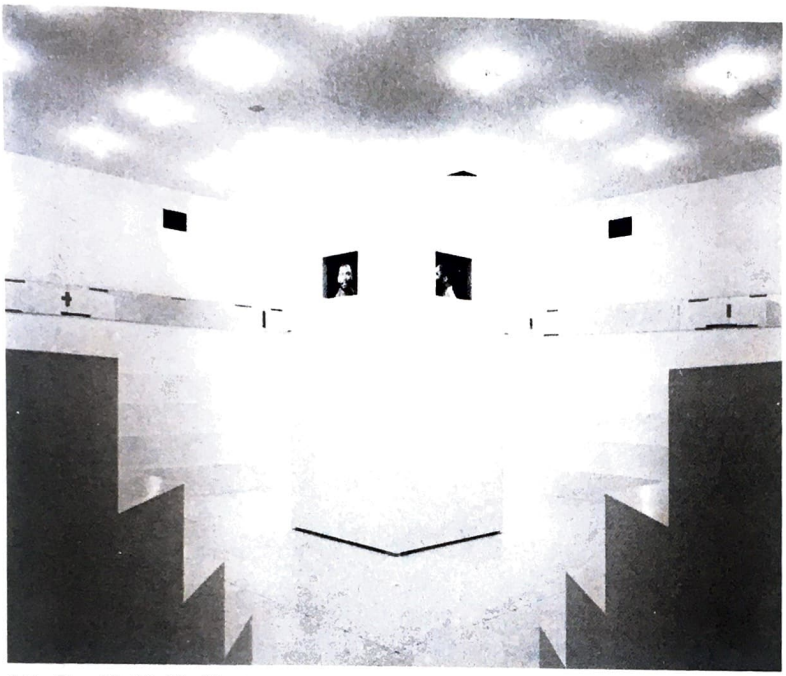
The meaning of Burden's memorial cannot be stated in advance of public reactions—he makes no polemical point with it, unless against forgetfulness—but there is no danger of error in predicting that those reactions will be intense. "Wow" is the automatic response of most people hearing about the project for the first time. The mixture of audacity and almost frighteningly grave emotion in an idea conveyable in a few words is pure Burden. But it is Burden much matured since the period of the early 1970s when (having himself shut up in a small locker for five days or shot in the arm with a rifle) his medium was the art-world grapevine, electrified with shocking rumors of his self-endangerment.

After a decade or so of eclipse, Burden's star is rising with new luster, both because people are catching on to the underrated importance of his early work and because he is displaying such impressive capacity for growth. He is revered by younger artists as a forerunner who best understood the dynamic of installations—an uneasy collaboration of renegade artist and establishment institution, each strangely reinforcing the other.

The suspense of waiting for "*Dis*locations" and, especially, for the art public's verdict on it, is murder. Will this *Perils of Pauline* esthetic melodrama on West 53rd Street consolidate a fashion for cliff-hanger exhibitions in the 1990s, as a growing audience breathlessly attends feats of daredevil meaning by ever bolder artists, while museum directors chomp antacid tablets? Or will the hero of Positive Public Opinion *not* rush to rescue Pauline from the tracks of Negative Public Opinion (whose grumping locomotive I can hear rounding the bend even now)? I describe the uncertain fate of "*Dis*locations" in terms of what fun it is (if art isn't fun, who can bear it?), but the issue has serious import too.

Storr's show tests a possibly epochal experiment, a bet by some of our best and bravest creators that art can, with unprecedented directness, serve civilization as an intellectual and spiritual goad and conscience. The bet springs partly from disgust with an era just past in which art functioned mainly as a luxury commodity's luxury commodity. But it also marks the revival of an old dream that art can make good some of the meaninglessness of modern life and affect society's consciousness for the better. The dream's realization requires art institutions that, beyond cooperating, are game for seeing their cherished illusions of immunity to worldly contradictions routinely teased and often trashed. □

Dislocations



Adrian Piper, *What It's Like, What It Is, No. 3*, Installation View, 1991. ©The Museum of Modern Art.

The very presence of *Dislocations* at the Museum of Modern Art suggested that new forces were at work within the temple of modernism. And installations by Bruce Nauman, David Hammons, Chris Burden, Adrian Piper, Louise Bourgeois, Ilya Kabakov, and Sophie Calle made several things clear: installation has the potential to transform space, to envelop, surround, and, ultimately, to confound the viewer; it's a deliberately designed situation, a breeding ground for the conflation and collision of numerous ideas, a challenge for both the artist, who must negotiate a specific context—a given set of variables, or the neutral space of the "white cube"—and viewers, who come with their own preconceptions and expectations; it's eclectic and hybrid, drawing from many sources, and utilizes various mediums; it can be witty and idiosyncratic, political and ideological, personal and psychological, mysterious and theatrical; its expressions range from reductive and austere to layered and kinesthetic; as a holistic environment that one enters and walks through, installation presents a phenomenological arena with a strong foothold in life.

Life issues animated most of the installations. Even in Bourgeois's *Twosome*, a sculptural analogue for psychosexual drama and family intrigue, and Kabakov's *The Bridge*, a reconstructed historical incident that merged art with mysticism, philosophy and politics seemed like two sides of the same situation. And this was certainly true of Hammons's *Public Enemy*, Piper's *What It's Like, What It Is No. 3*, Burden's *The Other Vietnam Memorial*, Nauman's *Anthro/Socio*, and Calle's *Ghosts*; as situations that critiqued status-quo conventions and perceptions, their sociopolitical inflections and unsettling implications were hard to miss.

Nauman's looming and disorienting images of performance artist-opera singer Rinde Eckert chanting FEED ME/EAT ME/ ANTHROPOLOGY and HELP ME/HURT ME/ SOCIOLOGY were a visual assault that not only tested our tolerance to remain with it, but confronted our basic feelings of frustration, vulnerability, and subjugation. Even though this kind of work isn't new to Nauman, its inclusion in this context made it all the more compelling. Hammons and Piper both addressed issues of marginalization, inequality, and racism. Hammons celebrated the fall of an allegorical abstraction—colonial imperialism—by wiring several packs of dynamite to an over-life-size mockup of an equestrian Theodore Roosevelt flanked on either side by an American Indian and an Afro-American. In *Public Enemy*, the lines were clearly drawn, through barricades and sandbags, and there was no doubt about what was being deconstructed and destroyed. Piper constructed a more minimalist arena—a pristine sculptural amphitheater consisting of a monolithic white column housing four video monitors surrounded on all sides by stepped benches—through which she programmatically projected racial stereotypes by running a tape of a black man reciting, "I'm not sneaky . . . lazy . . . noisy . . . vulgar . . . rowdy . . . horny . . . scary . . . shiftless . . . crazy . . . servile . . . stupid . . . dirty . . . smelly . . . childish . . . evil . . . ," one line after another.

Dislocations provided a forum for more obscure and generally neglected voices. Burden's *Memorial*—a monumental archival rolodex of 3,000,000 Vietnamese names etched on copper plates vertically hinged to a supporting pole—is a statistical nightmare, the untold story of those displaced, defeated, and despoiled by the Vietnam War. Calle humanizes the art experience by replacing the art-object with people's recollections and impressions of it. Stenciled on walls, in phantom spaces left by objects removed, these candid and unpretentious assessments, frequently accompanied by diagrammatic sketches and simplistic notes, introduced a new chorus of voices to the hallowed rooms of the museum's permanent collection.

The voices that emerged from *Dislocations* weren't the *l'art pour l'art* voices one ordinarily encounters in MoMA's sedate galleries, but more provocative and confrontational ones that seemed like a breath of fresh air. In his catalogue introduction, curator Robert Storr traces installational prototypes to Futurist performance and environments, Dada cabaret, *Merz*-rooms, and Surrealist gallery installations. The anarchistic roots of this lineage characterize an art inseparable from life, creative acts hell-bent on humanizing art by making it part of a greater cultural discourse. The Museum of Modern Art has always been a bastion of modernism. But *Dislocations* made few concessions to its utopian and transcendent credo.

In her artist's statement, Louise Bourgeois admitted that installation bothered her because it "is really a form between sculpture and theater." Theater and spectacle have always been antithetical to a transcendent notion of art. But installation is a temporal affair, whose power resides in its ability to create situations that embody life's incongruities, inconsistencies, and even, at times, its mysteries. (*Museum of Modern Art, October 16–January 7*) *Douglas Dreishpoon*

THE NEW YORKER
25 November 1991

THE ART WORLD

Empty Frames

At this year's Carnegie International, the triennial roundup of contemporary art at the Carnegie Museum of Art, in Pittsburgh, the five judges who were to award the prize for best in show went marching through the galleries, notebooks out and eyes narrowed. They were dressed in a manner that is for some reason especially favored by art-world impresarios and Iranian politicians: black suits, and white shirts with no ties but buttoned right up to the top. After a while, they came upon a group of abstract, "gestural" paintings by a new French artist—paintings that were too obviously derivative to be anything but some kind of burlesque and yet too awkwardly painted to be anything but an attempt at forthright expressiveness. The judges stood before the pictures, groping for the right pigeonhole into which to drop this stuff. Ironic pastiche? Ironic pastiche turned inside out, and made into a vehicle for expressive sincerity? Expressive sincerity exposed as ironic pastiche? Finally, the most authoritative of the five turned to the others and announced, with an almost melancholy nod, "I saw this in Paris. Post-stylistic."

"Post-stylistic" about describes the spirit of this year's Carnegie International, in the sense that we seem to have passed the point where anyone believes that endless worrying about style is crucial to making art. There is laconic conceptual art across the room from overelaborated Expressionist art, and hyperrealist art around the corner from blank monochromatic art. Though this diversity is apparently meant to indicate a new and generous pluralism, it has the effect of making most of the history of modern art seem nugatory. Richard Serra, to take one prominent example, is a formal absolutist; the encompassing hum that his work can at times create depends on the puritanical vehemence of its prohibitions. At the Carnegie, where he was given a room with forty-two-foot-long walls to work in, Serra tacked up a big rectangle of Belgian linen, painted black, on the upper half of the right wall and hung an identical rectangle of black Belgian linen on the lower half of the left wall. Approached on its own terms, this is the kind of thing that might convey, as Serra's work has done before, an alarming sense of an art so willfully reductive that it touches the sublime. But as one room in a labyrinth of dozens of rooms filled with old stuffed animals and multimedia picture shows and wax casts of human heads, Serra's piece just looks like a handball court. To present his work as an "option" within a series of options is, unintentionally or not, to ridicule its integrity. Pluralism is meaningless without a sensibility to control what it is being plural about.

You can, however, discern the outlines of a new movement at the Carnegie: a new movement that is, appropriately in this post-stylistic moment, unified more by a common ideology than by a common set of forms—unified more by what it is trying to accomplish than by the way it looks. Artists in the new movement like to create room-size environments that employ a variety of objects and images—photographs, found material, "appropriated" material, projected slides, videos, and also more traditional drawing and sculpture—in ways that are related (sometimes cryptically, sometimes literally) to a single public theme. An "installation" is said to "investigate concerns" or to "explore issues" involving—or, more often, "having to do with"—one or another immense abstraction: perception, identity, the AIDS crisis, death, life, art itself. The new installations mostly recycle old avant-garde manners—the pointed absurdities and impossible projects of Dada, the object-agglomerations of Surrealism, the wordplay and wall texts of conceptualism—but they do so in order to score topical points and raise consciousness about particular issues. The viewer is supposed to enter the installation in his normal state of callous stupor and (the theory goes) leave a better person.

Installation art tends to come in two modes, the numbingly literal and the bafflingly obscure; some of the installations at the Carnegie even manage to combine the two. The California artist Michael Asher, for instance, has installed his work in the Carnegie's Hall of Architecture, which houses an accumulation of plaster casts of classical and medieval architecture and ornament, including the entire façade of a French Romanesque monastery and all the pediment sculpture from the Parthenon. One searches in vain for Asher's contribution among all the casts in this marvellous room, then consults the catalogue and discovers that for this piece Asher has "chosen a practice which avoids the idealization of materials." The installation consists of a few plaster-of-Paris initials that have been fastened to the tops of four radiators. The point of the piece is to help the viewer achieve "a keener knowledge of economic exclusion," and the initials on the radiators "are those of organizations who both test products

and distribute information regarding the health hazards of materials used in the production of art."

The Japanese artist Tatsuo Miyajima has installed his work in a dark room of a converted warehouse temporarily annexed to the Carnegie. The room is divided in half by a partition. Hundreds of what look like tiny digital clocks form a molding that wraps around the walls just below waist level. In one half of the room, all the numbers are green. In the other half, all the numbers are red. Different clocks count to different beats: some count out half seconds, some whole seconds, some tenths of seconds, some thirty seconds. After a while, though, what looks like a chaos of meaningless numbers resolves into a kind of order; the naïve viewer may even find the many clocks a sort of poetic comment on the arbitrariness of the concept of time. But Miyajima means his "time line" to represent, quite literally, the line of time: the piece "once again refers to history by using a long, straight line," he says in his catalogue statement, and he adds that it carries an antiwar, and particularly an anti-Desert Storm, message. "The languages of shapes and symbolic imagery used in art over the past 1500 years are worn out through the (ab)use of the media," Miyajima goes on. "I am seeking a new outlook and want to talk directly with all people of the world. Therefore, I choose to use the language of numbers."

Ken Lum, a Canadian, has hung a series of big canvas banners in the foyer of the Carnegie, each one covered with a poem, often in an exotic, ideographic language. This installation promotes "the metaphoric establishment of a supra-library science that requires dispensing with sovereign borders and accepting the free and unhindered exchange of knowledge as a worldwide public right." The German artist Reinhard Mucha has assembled technical drawings, wall reliefs made of industrial materials, and highly polished aluminum rods. The catalogue explains that this installation "may have been pricked in part by [the Carnegie's] location in Pittsburgh . . . until recently the site of a heavy industrial complex"; it also explains that Mucha has been influenced by modernist literature but that "like Kafka (and despite plans to the contrary), Mucha did not in the end manage to visit prior to making his work."

Some installations are more personal, if just as programmatic. The American Mike Kelley has filled a large room with bridge tables holding stuffed animals. Along the walls he has hung black-and-white photographs of the stuffed animals posed with a ruler beside each one to show its true size. In the catalogue he explains that the work is an extension of his "empathy displacement" series, in which he wants "to remove all vestiges of empathy." The issues of empathy and its displacement sometimes arise, he explains, because "the viewer's immediate tendency to be sucked into a narrativizing situation is repelled when he or she gets close enough to sense the unpleasant tactile qualities of the craft materials."

Other installations explore more parochial art-world issues. The American Stephen Prina has installed a room of "monochrome paintings"; that is, paintings that either are all one color (a kind of gray-beige) or else have the words "monochrome painting" written on them. The joke is supposed to be at the expense of the "transcendental" pretensions of the older monochrome painting practiced by Barnett Newman and his followers. The French artist Sophie Calle has two rooms, one of which is filled with huge, beautifully produced photographs of the empty spaces left behind after the theft of thirteen pictures from the Isabella Stewart Gardner Museum, in Boston, a year ago last spring. (The empty frames, or the vacant spots where the pictures once hung, are, with their labels, still on display at the Gardner.) This piece is meant to be a sardonic, mock-elegiac joke at the expense of the system of "art-historically designated masterpieces" which arbitrarily "valorizes" a handful of works, puts them in the hands of rich people, and then "fetishizes" them, so that even the empty space where a Vermeer once hung is presumed to have a nearly religious value. (You would laugh harder at this joke if you were more confident that the artist really grasped that Vermeer is "valorized" chiefly because his work has value, even if the value is sometimes tarnished by the favor of pedants and rich people, and that the system of arbitrary designation that has "valorized" the work of Vermeer

is at least no more arbitrary than the one that has "valorized" the work of Sophie Calle.)

Down the hall from Calle, a Belgian artist named Lili Dujourie has draped a swath of fabric on one wall of her room and placed several pieces of black and white marble on another wall and on the floor beneath it; nearby is a piece of what looks like nonfunctional metal furniture. The whole arrangement creates a kind of pleasing, three-dimensional paraphrase of a Biedermeier painting, but, according to the catalogue, this little room carries an immense literary weight: Dujourie's aesthetic, it turns out, is "unmistakably Proustian" and also "lightly ruffles this Proustian calm" with a "note of disquiet, frustration, dis-ease" that the artist has apparently absorbed from her reading of Eliot.

SO what's new? Isn't the disproportion between the plain object and the fancy explanation the oldest joke there is about modern art? The difference is that in the past one had always been instructed not that there was more than met the eye but that the simple or homely thing that met the eye—the row of bricks, the Campbell's soup can, the small white square nested inside the big white square—was in itself worthwhile. Even when the work wasn't exactly meant to be admired for the way it looked, it was still meant to be taken for what it was: Duchamp's urinal was shocking because it had no pretensions to be anything except a urinal, and its being a urinal was supposed to set off a train of thought in the spectator's mind about why a urinal was not (or was) art. Serra's catalogue text, annotating his two black rectangles, is typical of the old dispensation: "The black shapes, in functioning as weights in relation to a given architectural volume, create spaces and places within this volume and also create a disjunctive experience of the architecture." One may or may not be persuaded that the big black rectangles are worth so much arguing, but at least the subject of the argument is the black rectangles—not some connection between, say, the rectangles and the case for term limitations for Congress.

The problem is that in order to count as "art" (to get the attention of the curators, to attract money and collectors) a work has to be made to *look* like art; that is, it has to conform

to one or another of the inherited idioms—Dada absurdity or Surrealist juxtaposition or conceptualist brevity—that constitute art today. As a glance at the history of modernist political art suggests, though, these forms are among the least successful idioms of persuasion and argument that have ever been invented (although they are among the most successful idioms of seduction). So to count as art the installation must reveal its meaning reluctantly, in the modern manner, while to make its discursive case the installation has to somehow have an unambiguous message attached. Between these two irreconcilable aims, the work (and, eventually, the viewer) is suspended in a void of airless high-mindedness. What gets lost, meanwhile, is exactly the open-ended indeterminacy—the absurd humor of Dada or the dreamlike illogic of Surrealism or the larksome poetical imagination of conceptualism—that made those modernist movements worth looking at in the first place, and gave them their authentically anarchic edge. Instead, a banal social observation is translated into an oblique, stylish agglomeration of objects, and the viewer's job is to translate it back into the banal social observation.

Fortunately, there are a couple of installations in Pittsburgh that work independent of their liner notes, and replenish form with meaning instead of merely inflecting it with content. Louise Bourgeois has offered a Surrealist maze of blue New England doors, hard metal beds, old perfume bottles, dusty test tubes, and sculptured marble human hands. The doors, set at odd angles, conceal small rooms—each room part artist's garret, part hermit's cell, part sickroom—and the whole environment becomes a kind of nightmare barracks of suffering. (Perhaps because the exhibited work has its own integrity, Bourgeois's catalogue essay is terse, precise, and arresting: "The subject of pain is the business I am in. To give meaning and shape to frustration and suffering . . . . The existence of pains cannot be denied. I propose no remedies or excuses.")

In a different key, the newly fashionable and extremely gifted Ukrainian avant-garde artist Ilya Kabakov has produced another kind of memory house—a two-story space, illuminated by the flashlight that each visitor is offered before entering. Stretching from wall to wall in the lower story are ropes, like clotheslines, from which hang fragments of Soviet-era ephemera—scraps of paper torn, it seems, from official publications. Above, in the second story, more paper—announcements, instructions, rules for the use of communal areas, slogans, schedules—is pinned to bulletin boards. Kabakov calls his work "We Are Leaving Here Forever!" and explains that it represents a recently abandoned orphanage: "The entire two-story building stands empty and semi-dark; only a few dim lights burn weakly in the corridors and in the stairwells. . . . Only those things that nobody has a use for any longer remain: a huge number of papers that have accumulated in the building over all these years. . . . Nobody knows what lies ahead. Many are sorry to leave the old building; nobody understands why it was necessary to give up everything so suddenly and to depart for an unknown destination. . . . Almost all are full of terror before the imminent uncertainty that awaits them." Armed with the flashlight, the viewer walks through the installation, catching sight of, and then losing, the bits and pieces of now defunct propaganda and instruction. It is a surprisingly and bravely poignant memorial to the old order—an order, one suddenly understands, that was for its inmates a dormitory as much as a prison, and that, now ruined, suddenly has a ruin's terror and beauty. Kabakov's installation works for the same reason that the long Dada postscripts to the First World War still reverberate—because it addresses a situation so monstrously absurd that the only rational response is something beautifully absurd. Both Bourgeois's and Kabakov's installations are "political" in the true sense: they are about the connection between a single consciousness and the world around it, but they allow meaning to emerge on its own, unchaperoned by certainty.

IN New York, seven artists have been invited by Robert Storr, the Museum of Modern Art's curator of contemporary art, to install their work at MOMA—three older artists down in the basement, four younger ones on the two main floors. The difference between the genuinely resonant and the merely didactic is even more strongly felt here than it is in Pittsburgh. Downstairs, Bruce Nauman (whose installation in Pittsburgh is a standard assemblage of his signature wax-cast heads) has created a darkened room in which video projectors cast enormous, wall-size images of a hairless man who shouts out, in affectless, electronically distorted speech, "Hit me, hurt me, feed me, eat me!" and "Sociology!" and "Feed me, eat me—anthropology!" The installation is Nauman's nightmare vision of the unadorned id. Storr calls it "Hobbesian": a hallucination of appetite, stripped bare and screaming. You proceed from the Nauman room directly into another installation by Kabakov. This one lets the visitor stand on a wooden bridge suspended above a recently abandoned meeting room, the chairs overturned. Tiny white paper figures are frozen in place in the room—at once a joke about the storming of the Winter Palace and another elegiac monument to the new revolution. And Bourgeois concludes the downstairs installations with a black iron cylinder, on railroad tracks, that inserts itself into another black vessel while a red light flashes from inside the vessel—what art critics call a Metaphor for the Act of Sexual Congress. (Bourgeois's big black machine has been greeted as a successful all-purpose symbolic representation of just about every human activity—not just intercourse but also defecation and internment—as a kind of perpetual-metaphor machine. To me it looks a little like the work of "modern art" that gets wheeled onstage for a laugh in the finale of a musical comedy.) Each of these installations casts a spell and leaves a memory behind. And they gain cumulative power from being placed in close juxtaposition—you hear echoes of Nauman's man in Kabakov's abandoned room, and emerge from Kabakov's half-light into Bourgeois's inferno.

Upstairs, though, the installations can be summed up in a sentence or two, and looking at them isn't very different from reading about them. In the permanent collection, on the second floor, is another installation by Sophie Calle, this one consisting of comments made by museum staffers about some of the pictures that are right now out on loan. On the third floor, David Hammons has created a tableau, including police barriers, a photomural, balloons, and confetti, in which he imagines the people of New York blowing up the statue of Teddy Roosevelt that stands outside the Museum of Natural History, in the

same way that the Muscovites pulled down the statue of Feliks Dzerzhinsky that stood outside the headquarters of the K.G.B. (The Roosevelt statue, in which a mounted T.R. is being guided by a couple of natives—one African and one Native American—is, as Hammons' installation reminds us, more than a little obnoxious.) In the next room Chris Burden, the Evel Knievel of the avant-garde (he once, in a piece that "explored" issues of violence, had himself shot by a friend), has manufactured giant copper sheets that revolve around a spindle; on the sheets are engraved, in tiny type, the names of the three million Vietnamese who were killed in the war. (Well, not really, although that is the way the piece has been described almost everywhere; the fact is that, since those names have not been recorded, Burden has simply generated a set of three million "ordinary" Vietnamese names.) The installation is called "The Other Vietnam Memorial." Next door to it Adrian Piper has constructed a bright, overlit white amphitheatre. In the center of the amphitheatre is a blue pillar with a television screen on each face, and on each screen runs a videotape of a black man chanting, "I'm . . . not . . . stupid," "I'm . . . not . . . horny," etc. You sit down on one of the tiers in the amphitheatre and watch the tape, and that's the piece.

The point of each piece is exactly as obvious as it seems: Hammons thinks that we ought to pull down the statue of T.R. in order to emancipate ourselves from our racist past; Burden thinks we ought to begin to feel at least as much for the Vietnamese we killed as for the Americans who got killed; Piper wants to make us aware of the imprisoning stereotypes that afflict black men. Each of these points is inarguable as far as it goes. But each point is also entirely unargued. The pieces are persuasive only to those who are persuaded, unreflectively, to begin with. Hammons is a very good artist—a kind of Joseph Cornell of the streets, whose assemblages of city materials have often managed to be at once desperate and refined—but anyone who can equate the kind of evil represented by Dzerzhinsky and the headquarters of the K.G.B. with the kind of evil represented by T.R. and the Museum of Natural History is not thinking seriously about history. Burden's point about extending our range of sympathy

when we think about Vietnam is indisputable, but anyone who was really concerned about the rights and wrongs of Vietnam would want to know, in picking his way through that tragedy, not just how many were killed but by whom, and when, and for what cause. Another artist might want to put up alongside Burden's installation one that generated, let's say, names for all the boat people—which would be an extremely cumbersome and time-consuming method of conducting a conversation about Southeast Asian history, and suggests why installation art is not a very efficient way of carrying on any kind of real political discourse. Piper's piece has been seen, bizarrely, as eerily prophetic of the Clarence Thomas hearings, but in fact the Thomas hearings exposed Piper's piece as the substitute for political analysis it is. The point about Thomas is not that he was a victim of racial stereotypes but that it was possible for him to appeal to the existence of such stereotypes in order to distract his listeners' attention from the charges made against him. The Thomas hearings made it clear that the world presents us with moral dilemmas that cannot possibly be solved simply by "disassembling constructed social identities," or by dispelling stereotypes.

Looking at all these installations, with their insistent, one-dimensional point-scoring and lesson-teaching, may put a literary-minded spectator in mind of the don at the Grand Academy of Lagado in "Gulliver's Travels" who wanted to replace language, inadequate in its qualifications and abstractions, with simple, unconfusing objects; when you wanted to say "chair," for instance, you would hold up a chair. Swift's satiric point was that you couldn't do without the abstractions. A defense of the curators and the artists might be, I suppose, that by addressing these issues (what is a stereotype, who takes responsibility for our wars, and so on) this art is at least raising consciousness, provoking debate, and opening up new avenues of inquiry. But the real point of political discourse is not to provoke, or not *just* to provoke; it is to get it right. And getting it right depends on making the kinds of fine discriminations and discursive arguments and chains of complex connections that modernist art, by its nature, is not well equipped to make.

Perhaps no art is well equipped to argue in this way; we don't go to Bellini for discursive chains of historical reasoning, either. But then Bellini never set himself up as Machiavelli. Looking at all this new work, one has the sense that the complicated arguments of contemporary social theory can be incorporated into the idioms of modern art only after they have first been reduced to parodies. It is a parody of "critical theory" to imagine that watching a man chant stereotypes is actually a way of grasping something about the objectification of the "other," or, for that matter, to think that looking at the word "monochrome" actually reveals anything about the social construction of American abstract art. Bruce Nauman at least recognizes this dilemma; his sociological-anthropological rant at the Modern is meant, I think, as a farcical version of those disciplines, and as a gibe at those who believe that raw human desire can be satiated by "theory." But it certainly isn't being taken as a parody. Reading the commentary on the show, one gathers that there are a lot of people who apparently believe that chanting "Feed me, eat me—anthropology!" is actually a contribution to anthropology.

WELL, the argument runs, better parodied anthropology than real "beauty." (The headline in the *Times* discussing the Modern show announced that at last we had "Works Unafraid to Ignore Beauty.") The new political installations, and their centrality at the Carnegie and at MOMA, have become the occasion for a fatuous argument between those who like their art socially engaged and those who stand up for "aesthetic" values. This forced choice between a love of beauty and a passionate engagement with the world is not merely an obviously false opposition; it is the obviously false opposition that a hundred-odd years of modern art was designed to expose. The insistence of so many critics that this new work blessedly rejects aesthetic effects, with all their pretensions to "transcendence," for the truly engaged seems not so much postmodern as just antimodern. The great project of modernism was to propagate more ways in which art could serve as a transmitter between the self and the world, and thereby bridge the gap between mere "art" and real experience. The aesthetic dimension of, say, a Cubist collage is inseparable from its "politics"—

from its insistent reclamation of lived life, freed from clichés of conventional decorum. The point in having a domain of art that, in some rough way, you demarcate from other kinds of thinking is not that you believe art to be specially excluded from the world but that you believe there are ways of access to the world which no activity other than art provides.

Strangely, the new, overtly politicized art calls again and again, in its manifestos and supporting writings, on the authority and example of Eastern European revolutions as a spur to its rejection of "beauty" and its engagement with politics, while entirely missing the central insight of those revolutions about the relationship between art and society—which is that anyone who is serious about beauty is already engaged in a politically empowering act. The decision to put a flowered rug in your living room (or an abstract picture on your bedroom wall) is in itself profoundly political, since it asserts the human love of the nonutilitarian in the face of every kind of social regimentation. Modern art doesn't need to make a political point; its existence *is* a political point. There are always people around who want to regiment and coerce our response to beauty, too, but this is the easiest kind of regimentation in the world to evade. You just decide to see for yourself. The belief, central to this new art (it is the whole subject, for instance, of Sophie Calle's installations), that aesthetic regimentation is comparable to other kinds of social regimentation is possible only for those who have never really experienced the other kinds.

In a sense, though, the argument about art and politics which the new art has inspired is almost irrelevant, since nothing could be less politically effective than most of this art. The entire controversy about political art rests on the doubtful assumption that social change can actually begin in museums. It is a measure of the creeping unreality of the whole discussion that in Pittsburgh a "committed" artist told me that she dreamed of an art that would affect society "like the art of the Weimar Republic." People in the media often make the mistake of believing that because they have influence they have power. People in the art world are occasionally the victims of an even more primitive confusion: they believe

are ropes, like clotheslines, from which hang fragments of Soviet-era ephemera—scraps of paper torn, it seems, from official publications. Above, in the second story, more paper—announcements, instructions, rules for the use of communal areas, slogans, schedules—is pinned to bulletin boards. Kabakov calls his work "We Are Leaving Here Forever!" and explains that it represents a recently abandoned orphanage: "The entire two-story building stands empty and semi-dark; only a few dim lights burn weakly in the corridors and in the stairwells. . . . Only those things that nobody has a use for any longer remain: a huge number of papers that have accumulated in the building over all these years. . . . Nobody knows what lies ahead. Many are sorry to leave the old building; nobody understands why it was necessary to give up everything so suddenly and to depart for an unknown destination. . . . Almost all are full of terror before the imminent uncertainty that awaits them." Armed with the flashlight, the viewer walks through the installation, catching sight of, and then losing, the bits and pieces of now defunct propaganda and instruction. It is a surprisingly and bravely poignant memorial to the old order—an order, one suddenly understands, that was for its inmates a dormitory as much as a prison, and that, now ruined, suddenly has a ruin's terror and beauty. Kabakov's installation works for the same reason that the long Dada postscripts to the First World War still reverberate—because it addresses a situation so monstrously absurd that the only rational response is something beautifully absurd. Both Bourgeois's and Kabakov's installations are "political" in the true sense: they are about the connection between a single consciousness and the world around it, but they allow meaning to emerge on its own, unchaperoned by certainty.

that because they have notoriety they have influence.

Installation art seems, in any case, less worldly than almost any art movement that has come before—more opaque to the uninstructed viewer, and more distant from the rhythms of lived experience. These works may claim the world, but most of them certainly don't *feel* like the world. Instead, they have a rote, self-satisfied peppiness and slickness. What one senses just beneath the contentious surface of the new installations is the complacency of the privileged. In what passes for a catalogue essay Fumio Nanjo, a member of the Carnegie International Advisory Committee, announces that "a new, loosely integrated, 'metacultural' vision of global reality is dawning," and he goes on to say:

> A truly international breed of people is beginning to emerge in the 1990s, people who take an imaginative, eclectic, nonhierarchical view of culture. Rather than subscribe to their native belief system or adopt another one prepackaged, they are enthusiastic about cultural differences and seek to develop an understanding of all cultural ways from which to construct their own codes, rituals, and responses. . . . This transcultural order will adopt a nomadic lifestyle and will thrive on a continuous and intensive change of pace, place, and community, seeking exposure to the widest possible range of cultures and expressions in pursuit of its focused interest. Cross-cultural bonds will be enriched by friendships made at points across the globe. Local, human contacts, as well as phone, fax, and electronic mail communications from far away, will dispel any feelings of isolation. These hypertravelers will feel no need to accumulate goods or achievements in any one community, field, or profession. . . . Instead, in order to avoid the confines of labels, this set will openly carry multiple personalities like a schizophrenic, seeking outlets in an assortment of guises, situations, and sites. As creative "free agents," they will choose their form of expression as the situation suggests it, responding resourcefully by switching medium, style, or attitude.

Like most fantasies, this sounds like an unconscious projection of life as it is being lived now by the fantasist—the life, in this case, of the international art-world apparatchik who assembles exhibitions like the Carnegie International. Mark Francis, one of the curators of the International, writes in the catalogue of the need for "a reassertion of 'felt experience' in opposition to a capitulation in the face of mediated or over-determined stimuli." What could be more admirable, or more desirable? But for how many people does "felt experience" take the form of the permanently jet-lagged, metacultural schizophrenia that is held up as the new ideal? Felt experience tends to be messy and unsure of itself, and is generally too busy trying to make sense of a little corner of the world to be able to hop on a plane with a fax machine and go make sense of "the widest possible range of cultures."

An art that claims all the prerogatives of public discourse without having a loving or attentive relationship to lived experience seems to define just what we mean by academic art. Has there at any time in the past hundred and fifty years—since the old academy first came under fire—been a larger gap between official art and real life? Modern art, whatever its failures, has almost always been at least an authentic expression of a shared human emotion. The Dadaists talked Dada; the Surrealists tried to live surrealistically; Pop people lived pop lives. But the colorless, sexless, humorless, hardhearted work that is currently in vogue does not seem to have much connection to the lives even of the people who sponsor it or make it. Even its "politics" are unreal. When art-world people talk informally about art-world politics, they mean *politics*—horse-trading, coalition-constructing, favor-swapping. By that standard, an exhibition like the Carnegie International is, in no bad sense, a political miracle of platform-building. Yet the "politics" the same people want in their art seem only to be wan, second-generation copies of exhausted ideologies.

The five judges eventually gave the first prize at the Carnegie International to the Japanese-American artist On Kawara, who almost every day since January 25, 1966, has painted the date on a small gray panel—21,483 gray panels by the morning of the Carnegie International's opening. (Among the dates he exhibited in Pittsburgh were October 6, 1971; September 2, 1974; April 14, 1986; and November 20, 1987.) It seems right that at this moment we should be asked to prize an art that helps us not to live in days but just to count them—an art that is, in every sense, merely marking time.

—Adam Gopnik

THE VILLAGE VOICE
New York
5 November 1991

White Cube Crumbling

By Elizabeth Hess

"*Dis*locations"
The Museum of Modern Art
11 West 53 Street
Through January 7

The funniest thing about the opening of "*Dis*locations" at the Museum of Modern Art was that the mobs of people couldn't find the art. Previously, curators led us directly to the basement, home to major exhibitions outside the permanent collection. But for the first time since the '70s, new curator Robert Storr has given seven artists significant space throughout the museum and allowed them to alter it, even mess it up.

Storr deserves congratulations for working with a group of unpredictable (albeit well-established) installation artists for whom freedom is a prerequisite. While the feds try to curtail these freedoms in the art world, it's crucial for museums (not just private galleries) to put up experimental shows. With installations, curators never know exactly what they're getting. They have to trust the artists, something that Congress is unable to do.

Louise Bourgeois, Bruce Nauman, and Ilya Kabakov are downstairs; Sophie Calle is on the second floor; Chris Burden, Adrian Piper, and David Hammons are on the third. Each artist was given the same amount of money for fabrication costs.

Adrian Piper's four video monitors play a tape of a black man stating, over and over: "I'm not pushy. I'm not sneaky. I'm not lazy. I'm not noisy . . . I'm not stupid." The list goes on. Viewers sit on tall white bleachers watching each other's reactions in a mirror that circles the top of the room. Everything is painted white and lit by harsh, bare bulbs. The whiteness in *What It's Like, What It Is, No. 3* seems intentionally oppressive and clichéd. Piper chooses not to break through any of these racist stereotypes, but simply to present them on a minimalist backdrop. The negative phrases repeat over and over like a broken record, inciting viewers to memorize attributes of Piper's generic black man—or leave.

Still, Piper's talking head is nowhere near as annoying as Bruce Nauman's, although their works are surprisingly similar. Nauman's head, seen in large projections on the wall of a dark room and in stacked video monitors, is white, bald, and furious. He's more of a performance artist than Piper's regular guy. "Help me. Hurt Me. Feed me. Eat Me," he shouts, on simultaneous tracks, until the words sound like a Philip Glass tune. The piece is infuriating. The stranger in Nauman's frame is the familiar "other," perhaps gay, homeless, schizophrenic, or all three. But, whoever he is, one wants to roll up the window and drive away.

Nauman attacks viewers, punching us in the gut, while Piper tries to sink slowly into our consciousness. Piper isn't as hostile to her audience as Nauman, although she has no desire to make us comfortable. Her seats are hard and awkward to climb into, and there's a theatrical emptiness in her room that makes us anticipate an event . . . that never happens. It's almost as if she teases us with anticipation. Both Nauman and Piper ask us to witness their protagonists' pain, and neither artist offers any resolution.

David Hammons has no inter-

est in didactic ideology. He's the one artist in this group who knows how to enjoy himself when faced with adversity. Despite the anxieties inscribed in his work, Hammons succeeds in lifting our spirits and taking us somewhere else. We say a fond—not bitter—farewell to a statue of Theodore Roosevelt on a horse, flanked on each side by African and Native American slaves. Hammons surrounds his photographic reproduction with sand bags and weapons; sticks of dynamite wait for the big bang.

Hammons's *Public Enemy* is filled with confetti and balloons to celebrate the death of our "forefathers," or the myth of their great humanity. The floor is covered with leaves and the sweet smell of fall fills the "Roosevelt Wing" as if we were really outside, about to blow up the monument. This surreal tableau combines real and pretend objects (a toy machine gun aimed at the statue spews a line of real bullets), yet Hammons's edge is reality-based. The work is surrounded by blue police barricades, reminding us who's in control.

Ever since Chris Burden had himself shot in 1971, his fans, including me, have been glued to whatever he does. It's difficult and often confusing to simultaneously participate in and protest acts of violence, but that's what Burden is about. He seems to hate what he loves, which most recently turns out to be the military establishment. The idea for *The Other Vietnam Memorial* appears to be new, but the concept of a memorial commemorating the 3 million to 5 million dead Vietnamese men, women, and children has been around ever since Maya Ying Lin's earthwork was first discussed.

Burden built his own private memorial, despite the contradiction, to the Vietnamese people. His researchers located 42,000 names (millions of unknown bodies were put in mass graves), which are repeated over and over to add up to 3 million. The names are etched onto large copper sheets that look like pages in a giant book. But the structure is domineering, not user-friendly. It's difficult to move the pages, and the metal surfaces look as if they shouldn't be touched. (The piece was supposed to be outdoors at the Modern, which might have helped, however it was purchased by a foundation, prior to the show, that wanted it displayed inside.) The artist raises the specter of Vietnam, but doesn't contribute to the debate. Why did all these people die? There are numbers of viewers who will not know the answer.

One must walk through Ilya Kabakov's *The Bridge* to get to Louise Bourgeois's *Twosome*, which makes no sense. The transition from one to the other is awkward. We walk over Kabakov's bridge through a dark room that looks like it's been hit by a cyclone; viewers can stop to read a posted text explaining that an illegal art show has just been disrupted in these quarters; then we look through some binoculars that unfortunately offer little perspective on the chaos. Continuing over the bridge, we go through a guarded doorway toward an odd banging noise. It turns out to be two large, black oil cans on an electric track going in and out of each other like a train going through a tunnel, backing up, and then going through again. A coitus interruptus by Bourgeois. *Twosome* is a mechanical peep show, complete with flashing red lights and a mysterious door that leads inside... Images ranging from sex to Scud missiles stream out of Bourgeois's fucking machine like bombs.

Finding the Sophie Calle requires going on a treasure hunt through the permanent collection. Calle asked members of the museum staff to comment from memory on five classic canvases currently out on loan or repair. Their anonymous comments are painted on the wall where the works ordinarily hang. I suspect that the process involved was the high point

Art

of this work, because the product is tame in comparison to the other installations. The quotations, as expected, are contradictory and occasionally revealing, just as they would be from any other audience. Calle goes after a balance of viewpoints on art history while her own remains unclear.

Apart from Calle, much of the work in "*Dis*locations" feels as if it belongs outside the museum; this may be the greatest compliment the Modern has had in a decade. At their finest, the seven artists break down the barriers between the art world and the real world, describing these obstacles in terms of race, sex, censorship (Kabakov), and war. Here's a show that doesn't remind you every 10 seconds that "nice" art gets sponsored by one corporation or another. "*Dis*locations" opens the way for viewers to think in more controversial terms about what they are seeing, or not seeing, in the museum. ■

David Hammons: *Public Enemy* (detail, 1991)

Art/Kay Larson

THE HUMAN CONDITION

NEW YORK
4 November 1991

"...Some of the work in '*Dis*locations,' at the Museum of Modern Art, is going to push the idle and unwilling over the edge..."

SAND MEN: *The Kalachakra mandala at the IBM Gallery.*

WHAT A WEEK FOR THEATER. IN A WINDOW of the IBM Gallery, on Madison at 56th Street, Tibetan monks rasp metal tubes against each other to guide thin streams of colored sand into the filigreed complexities of the Kalachakra sand mandala; the room fills with a ratchety hum. At the Museum of Modern Art on 53rd Street, a video projection by Bruce Nauman broadcasts the image of a bald man singing in strange antiphonal harmonies at a decibel level that rivals the subways: FEED ME, he bellows, HELP ME. I live in New York for days like this, when it all comes together—the risks, the surprises, the rewards.

The Nauman piece is in ***"Dislocations,"*** an exhibition of seven installations spread out through three levels of MOMA. A warning—it won't be an easy experience. Some of this work is going to push the idle and unwilling over the edge. At the same time, "*Dis*locations" is the most riveting contemporary show I can remember at the moment. Taken one at a time, each piece holds its own, but together, they vibrate in a synchronicity that is the more remarkable because nobody planned it that way. The artists were simply invited by MOMA's curator Robert Storr to "do something." They responded by flash-freezing the human condition at this instant.

Nauman, for example: To get to *Anthro/Socio,* you descend the escalator into what is basically a basement. While you sink into Hades, the bizarre song rises up to meet you. The mystery is confronted in a dark, empty room where stacks of video monitors broadcast—on three walls, like a modern mandala—the bald head of Rinde Eckert, a performance artist and classically trained singer. In six separate tape loops, like a musical round, he sings variations on FEED ME/EAT ME/ANTHROPOLOGY, and HELP ME/HURT ME/SOCIOLOGY.

The song beats in a physical tide against your ears and brain. Need and pain hammer at the walls and clamor for attention. The primal mind cries out its desires in barely tolerable tonalities. There is no one explanation for this extraordinary intensity: Rinde Eckert is the screaming multitudes of the earth, and the body politic; he's the infantile, archetypal child and the insatiable adult. He's as irritating as the homeless who rattle their paper cups in your face, pleading in a surging *Dies Irae.* The pressure to leave is irresistible. But if you fight it, you begin to hear an undertone of the mellifluous and seductive, of monks joining voices in a Gregorian chorus—human pain assuaged through self-recognition. After a while, though, you just have to get out.

But escape leads you into another room. Still within earshot of Rinde Eckert's abrasive song, you walk on Soviet artist Ilya Kabakov's low bridge over the aftermath of some cataclysmic event. In the center, an earth-red floor is scattered with tiny white human figures; binoculars are trained on them from the catwalk. At one level, this brilliant, many-layered installation is a creation myth about tiny humans at play in the fields of the gods. More urgently, it's a metaphor of the Russian Revolution, which swept aside art, philosophy, and law, and froze all politics at the moment of upheaval, instituting perpetual surveillance of its citizens. (Those obnoxious binoculars actually make it harder to view the people, but try telling that to the Soviet state.) Even more urgently, this is a superb parable of the miseries that governments inflict on the humanity wailing next door. When citizens cry out, governments send in the police.

Off the bridge, through a door, and you confront the human paradox in its third aspect. Louise Bourgeois's *Twosome* consists of two dramatic, room-filling black tubes (former gasoline tanks) nested one inside the other. Flashing a red light and grinding its motor, the inside tube rolls in and out of its larger counterpart. This rumbling byplay elicits all possible associations with the big IN-OUT: excretion, ingestion—what babies do. Sex and power—what men and women do. The great motor/engine/machine that drives us to couple, and to live together, and the Freudian phantoms that attend it. Bourgeois has added windows and a door in the configuration of her parents' house, so that overlaid on it all is the archaic mind of childhood.

After this remarkable triple passage through the brain stem, you have to adjust your mental scale. In the big third-floor galleries are three artists who raise painful questions of race, politics, and identity, as though responding to Nauman's rant SOCIOLOGY, ANTHROPOLOGY. Each picked a dangerous limb. Chris Burden does a floor-to-ceiling "book," a disturbing memorial to 3 million North and South Vietnamese killed in "our" war: He calls it "one third of a holocaust." Copper plates are etched with Vietnamese names, tiny as ants, reflecting American estimations of

Photograph by Tria Giovan.

these soldiers' human worth. ("Life is cheap in Asia," said someone to me afterward. Naturally, he's American.)

David Hammons rethinks a Columbus Day parade, from a besieged black view, with police barricades, balloons, sandbags manned with machine guns, and dynamite. It's all toppling a four-sided photograph of the equestrian statue in front of the Museum of Natural History, of an offensively macho Teddy Roosevelt leading an Indian and an African toward Manifest Destiny.

Nearby, Adrian Piper builds an amphitheater covered in white: an auction room (for cattle? Or for slaves?) or an interrogation chamber. The only nonwhite object is the black man on a video monitor, presented like a laboratory specimen or a subject in a medical-school operating theater. He resembles a short-haired Willie Horton—a con man. Futilely, he protests: He's not dirty, not stupid, not lazy, not sleazy. But in this setting, his protestations are just part of the performance.

With primal mind below and politics above, it's appropriate that Sophie Calle's piece about art should be in the middle. On the second floor, Calle requested that some paintings be removed. She asked museum professionals—curators, conservators, and others who should know—to describe the art in absentia. Their words and the small pictures they drew at her request have been put on the wall in place of the originals. Needless to say, even the experts don't remember the same work in the same way. Some are precise, some aren't, but *everybody* remembers what they *feel* about the work, even when they can't exactly reconstruct the image. Opinions take precedence over sight. Even the most visually neutral art is value-loaded from the first viewing.

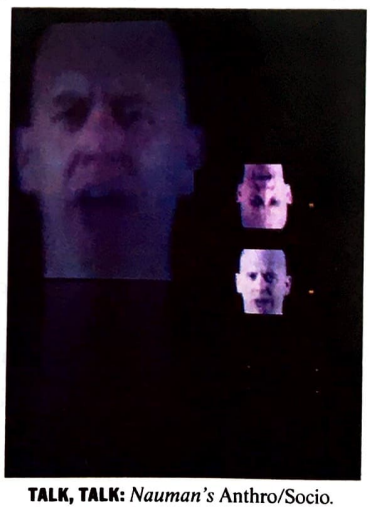
It's a stretch, but you can imagine the Kalachakra mandala as another kind of installation art. Drawn patiently in sand, at a pace that is astonishingly not modern, the mandala is the floor plan of a cosmic palace inhabited by deities and bodhisattvas, with the Buddha at the center. The gorgeously detailed, radiantly colored schematic is transferred to the mind of a meditating monk, who expands it in his imagination, much as Nauman's piece expands with contemplation. (Near the monks at IBM is a fine computer visualization of the full-scale palace.)

"Wisdom and Compassion: The Sacred Art of Tibet" represents a coming-of-age for this exiled nation. Besides assembling perhaps too many great pieces of Tibetan art, this serious, empathetic show sets Buddhist ideas in context. There are sections on Sakyamuni (the historical Buddha), the Arhats (disciples), the four chief sects, and demonology. (Nobody does demons better than the Tibetans, who regard them as evil tamed and put to the defense of good.)

But the key is the Kalachakra, the house where the bodhisattvas of Wisdom and Compassion live. Buddhism solved the mind-body problem that haunted Christianity by dissolving the "reality" of the world of appearances. We live in that world, and we judge by appearances. But to the Tibetans, the real nature of the universe is information, which can be processed in various ways, by various types of beings. Demons, deities, and Buddhas are not "gods" in the Christian sense but incarnations or manifestations of attributes. They are philosophical identities, making themselves known to us across the unknowable breach of the cosmos.

Nauman's crying mind expresses the agony that Buddhism tries to solve, not just with dogma but with compassion for all beings. "Transcendent wisdom," a label explains, is "the direct awareness of reality"; compassion is "the natural expression of such wisdom." One of Buddhism's worst sins is to profess your own enlightenment. Even the highest monks refuse to put themselves above the lowliest.

Modern life wails out in pain and begs for deliverance. Fundamentalism is polarizing the nation. (See *Time*'s alarming interview with right-to-lifer Randall Terry in the October 21 issue.) The Bible-thumpers, reveling in sinful pride, proclaim that God speaks only their language, that He has ordained them to rule the country. Washington is willing to aggravate the schisms, to pit people against people, in order to ram ideology down all those crying throats. There is an eagerness—not to heal but to make things worse, to sling conspiracy theories at the opposition.



TALK, TALK: *Nauman's* Anthro/Socio.

Against this mood, "The Sacred Art of Tibet" is wonderfully contrarian. Perhaps Buddhism won't save America, but at least it does insist that despair is a product of the choices made by oneself and one's society. (MOMA; through January 7, 1992. IBM; through December 28.) ■

Photograph by Scott Frances, courtesy of the Museum of Modern Art.

LOS ANGELES TIMES
28 June 1992

A Monumental Burden

Chris Burden's memorial, etched with the names of real and made-up Vietnamese dead, is an unsentimental reminder of the war

By CHRISTOPHER KNIGHT

No sculpture in recent memory has demonstrated as keen and disturbing an artistic intelligence as Chris Burden's "The Other Vietnam Memorial." A chilling commemoration of a grim facet of the modern American psyche, the memorial offers further compelling evidence that, at 46, Burden is among our most significant artists.

Imagine a desktop Rolodex as designed by the Pentagon, and you'll have some idea of what the sculpture looks like.

COMMENTARY

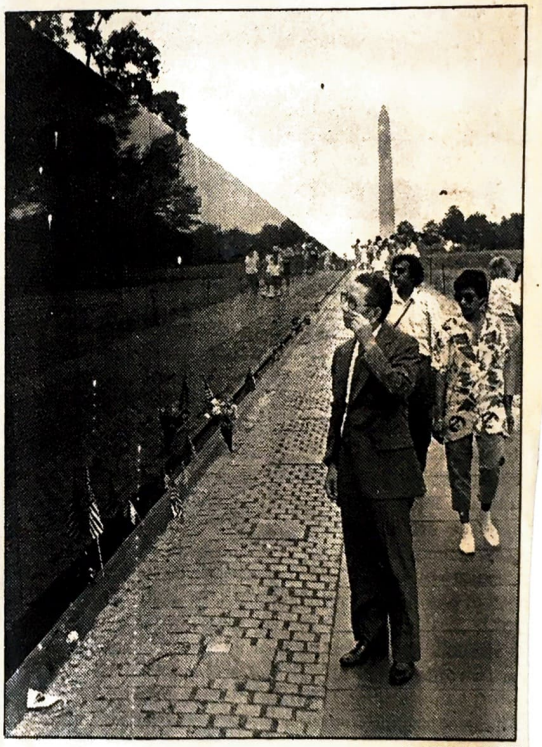
Machined from brute steel, fitted with copper plates in place of revolving paper cards and exploded to enormous scale (it stands 13 feet tall), the sculpture shrouds bureaucratic weaponry with an icy glamour.

The copper sheets, which subtly recall printing plates, are etched with a seemingly endless list of Vietnamese names in tiny black letters. Some identify specific people who perished during U.S. involvement in the Indochina conflict. The rest are computer-generated fabrications.

Exact records being unavailable, Burden used a basic catalogue of nearly 4,000 names and had them mixed-and-matched through a computer. Three million is the total number of war dead during America's involvement, which includes about 250,000 Vietnamese soldiers and 1.5 million civilians in the South, and some 700,000 military and 250,000 missing in action in the North, plus estimates of heavy losses in embattled border regions.

Commissioned last year for "*Dis*locations," the Museum of Modern Art's first substantive show in nearly 20 years that attempted to chart the shifting tides of contemporary art, the memorial is in the collection of the Lannan Foundation in Los Angeles, where it has just gone on public view. (It's being shown with another extraordinary sculpture from the foundation's collection, Burden's 1979 "The Big Wheel.")

There, it does lose one small chord of resonance that reverberated like a tuning fork through MOMA's galleries. In 1970, when MOMA presented its last major contemporary show, a stir was created by German expatriate artist Hans Haacke, whose contribution was a notorious site-specific piece called "MOMA Poll." Visitors to the show—a survey of new Conceptual art, titled "Information"—were invited to cast ballots on the question: "Would the fact that [New York] Governor [Nelson] Rockefeller had not denounced President Nixon's Indochina policy be a reason for you *not* to vote for him in November?"



AL STEPHENSON

Maya Lin's black granite Vietnam Veterans Memorial in Washington lists 57,939 American dead.

Two to one, visitors answered "yes"—even though the Rockefeller name (and money) had been synonymous with the Manhattan museum from the start. Nelson had been chairman of MOMA's board; his brother, David, was its then-chairman, and their mother had been one of the four founders in 1929. But, the poll results were clear.

Burden was a graduate student at the time Haacke took his famous poll; consciously or not, his Vietnam sculpture managed a subtle engagement with MOMA's past. Two decades later, "The Other Vietnam Memorial" reverberates against the sad and savage failures of history.

Of course, the sculpture's "monumental implications" can't be contained by a single art museum. The loss in its change of venue to L.A. hardly matters. Because the

Memorial

sculpture was conceived and built in the wake of last year's Persian Gulf War, the fury of Desert Storm offers an originating context far more significant than one museum's exhibition history.

Before, during and after the military adventure in the gulf, few Americans regarded the Iraqi people as mortal enemies. Enmity was instead focused like a laser beam on their leader, whom we re-created almost overnight from favored U.S. ally to the new Adolf Hitler. A personification of evil, Saddam Hussein stood in for the indifferent crowd.

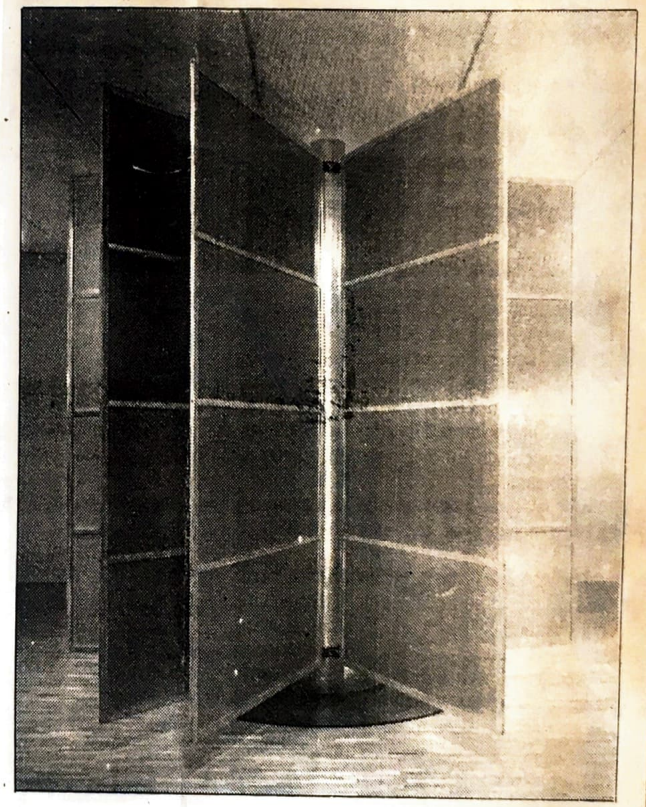
Yet today Hussein remains in place, while scores—perhaps hundreds—of thousands of Iraqi civilians are dead. That we neither know nor seem to care about the actual number of slain "enemies" is less a testament to collective inhumanity than a brutal symptom of the psychological shut-down necessary for war.

Wars cannot effectively be fought against individual men and women, each with a human face and heart. To do so would be unbearable. Therein lies the harrowing power of the Vietnam Veterans Memorial in Washington, Maya Lin's masterful wedge of etched, black granite embedded in the earth, to which Burden's memorial obliquely refers.

The list of the 57,939 dead American men and women on the Vietnam Veterans Memorial does put a viewer face to face with the enormity of the tragic carnage, while personalizing each and every life. Yet, it also accomplishes something unexpected and even more agonizing.

Societies typically build memorials to commemorate their own war dead, not their enemy's. But those distinct boundaries are blurred in Maya Lin's design. The black granite wall is polished to a mirror finish; it reflects the face of every visitor across its sea of names, which seems to stretch to the horizon. All Americans are obliquely acknowledged, regardless of their relationship to the event.

Chris Burden's "The Other Vietnam Memorial," below, is made up of 96 mounted copper sheets and stands 13 feet tall; the sheets are etched with actual and computer-generated names of 3 million Vietnamese war dead, left.



Not unlike the Civil War—which defined the American story as surely as the Peloponnesian did the ancient Greek—the Vietnam conflict was, in heart-wrenching ways, a war in which Americans fought Americans. The Veterans Memorial powerfully remembers those who died, yet it doesn't let us look away from the battle that raged—and still rages—among ourselves. Its emotionally vivid power doubles.

Burden's "The Other Vietnam Memorial" couldn't be more different in intention and effect, but it does elaborate on the great precedent in Washington. For if Lin's showed us that the enemy is ourselves, his shows us how that enemy thinks.

Burden's sculpture luxuriates in the cool refinement and technical complication of its own heavy-industrial manufacture. Sleek, finely tooled and exquisitely crafted, it is first and foremost a brute machine, filing empty integers into a data bank of names. The 96 copper "printing plates" create a kind of smooth metallic skin, into which foreign-sounding names are etched. Fabricated identities for unknown individuals transform flesh and blood into computerized information.

Millions of anonymous dead are made equivalent to John and Jane Doe. The style of the monument, which mimics public sculpture, haplessly befits a bureaucratic culture—especially one that has come to define itself according to technological goals and achievements.

Its title is an important clue to the old-fashioned, deeply entrenched idea that made this foreign adventure possible. "The Oth-

er Vietnam Memorial" doesn't just get you thinking about the other monument in Washington. It also declares that Burden's sculpture has been designed as a memorial to those we habitually conceive to be "the Other."

Transcending topical politics, the hoary conception of a Homogeneous Us versus an Alien Them allowed the fruitless slaughter. "The Other Vietnam Memorial" is as much an officially sanctioned tribute to American fear, ambition and loathing as it is to slain men and women. Its shocking moral ambivalence is the source of its riveting power.

That's why the most distressing feature of its New York debut last fall was the degree of seemingly willful blindness spoken in the critical response, much of which ranged from tepid to angrily dismissive. Burden got rapped, and rapped again, for not sentimentalizing his memorial.

Roberta Smith, who assumed that the scale of the human carnage was the sculpture's main point, wrote in the New York Times: "(There) is often a sense that the message and the medium are out of sync . . . that the concept has been emphasized at the expense of form with results that can be earnest and preachy, or that don't seem inevitable. It's not clear, for example, why the three million names in Mr. Burden's piece . . . had to be etched on copper; the impact of their great numbers would have been much the same had they been printed on paper covering the walls."

Holland Cotter similarly lamented in Art in America: "(Once) you had read the explanatory tag at the entrance, you 'got' the piece, and it was hard to take it any further. The fact that the names of the war dead listed here were essentially stand-ins took away some of the work's emotional charge. You were left wanting to feel more fully drawn into the piece. . . ."

In the Nation, Arthur Danto likewise complained: "It touches no emotions, not least of all because the names are generic Vietnamese names, designating anyone and no one. The power of Maya Lin's masterpiece is that there is a direct causal and semantic tie between each name and a specific individual, so that in touching that name one is multiply related to that very person . . . [Burden's memorial] shows disrespect for the very persons it was meant to represent."

Danto is innocently unaware that the virulent power of just such disrespect is a central subject of "The Other Vietnam Memorial." He and other critics refused to see what Burden had wrought, choosing instead to lament what he had *not* wrought—namely, an equivalent to the black granite wall in Washington. Consider their common discomfort over the computer-generated list of names, discomfort they try to banish rather than to feel. Instead of disturbing their own expectations, the absence of an emotionally vivid, comfortably recognizable experience was repeatedly projected as a sign of the failure of the artist.

Why such a bizarre collapse of critical standards, in which one artist is berated and dismissed for not having produced a work of art that replicates another's? The powerful claim on the American imagination exerted by Maya Lin's great memorial may be one explanation. So might the inexperience of critics in New York with the work of the California-based sculptor. Recall that no museum in Manhattan had the prescience to host Burden's 1988 touring retrospective, which proved to be the most important that year.

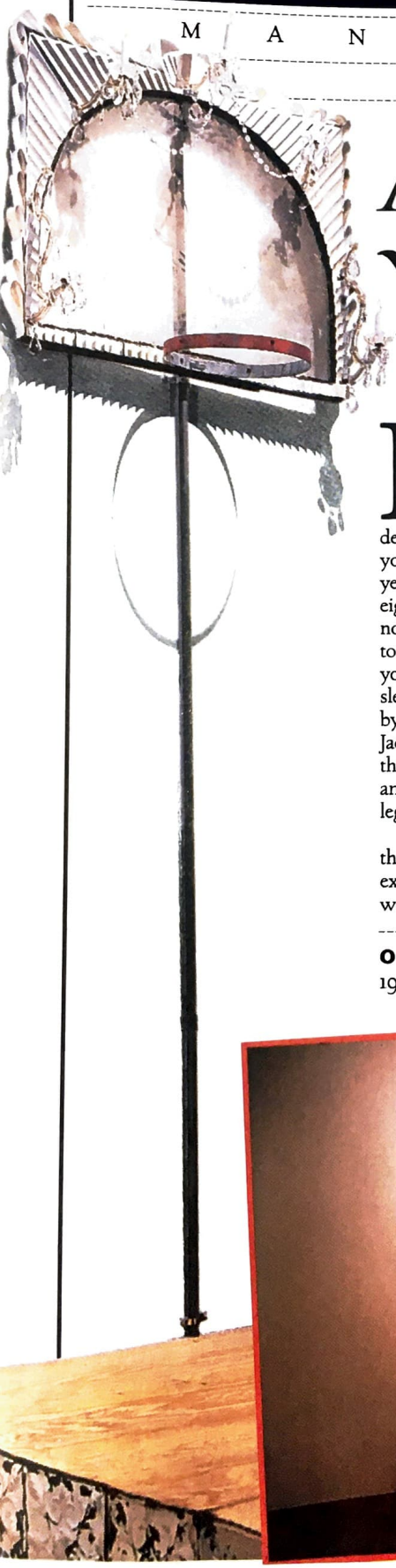
You get the feeling, though, that an even more powerful motive is the lingering, subconscious desire to be absolved of guilt and complicity in the Vietnam debacle. Burden didn't deliver a feel-good catharsis in "The Other Vietnam Memorial." In the shadow of the mountain of corpses, imagine how presumptuous that would have been—especially since Desert Storm showed that nothing much has changed.

The truth is hard but simple. Burden's firm refusal to sentimentalize the conflict is not a defect. In fact, it's the touchstone to the sculpture's enduring brilliance. □

■ *Lannan Foundation, 5401 McConnell Ave., (310) 306-1004, through Sept. 12. Closed Sundays and Mondays.*

Christopher Knight is a Times art critic.

Art in Your Face



DEALING WITH the art audience, artist David Hammons has said, "is like going into a lion's den." But what if they make you into one of the lions? After years of obscurity, the forty-eight-year-old artist began to get noticed three years ago, thanks to a group of Washington youths who objected with sledgehammers to his fourteen-by sixteen-foot billboard of Jesse Jackson. Hammons, who is neither, had painted Jesse as blond and white, accompanied by the legend: HOW YA LIKE ME NOW?

When Hammons displayed the billboard later, he chose to exhibit the sledgehammers as well. To one of them he attached a Lucky Strike package.

Hammons has since been lionized with a major retrospective, a Guggenheim fellowship, a Rome Prize, a MacArthur award, and this fall, inclusion in the Museum of Modern Art's *Dislocations* show, continuing through January 7. The man who once sold snowballs on the street beside homeless vendors now offers pieces at the Jack Tilton Gallery in Manhattan for as much as $50,000.

But Hammons remains wary of the pride—and of pride. He rarely gives interviews; he spends most of his time in Rome. "Overexposure in America," he has said, "will kill you."

For a long time, Hammons had been told he'd never play with the big boys. His first art was basketball. He averaged thirty points a game as a junior high guard back in Springfield, Illinois, but never grew taller than five feet eight. Hoops still obsesses Hammons—as a dangerous myth, offering the illusion of escape from the ghetto. Another image of Jesse Jackson may be more revealing of his art than the billboard: Hammons put Jesse's face on a Wheaties box, where you've gotten used to seeing Michael Jordan.

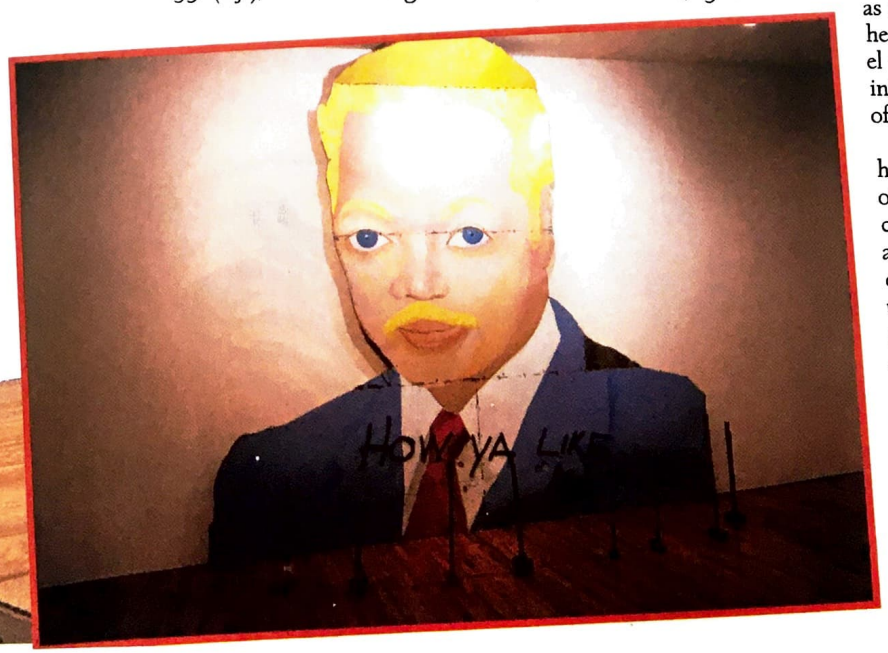
In *Air Jordan* he decorates the rubber of a deflated inner tube with bottle caps, folded so they resemble the cowrie shells used in Africa as currency. His series *Higher Goals* is a group of homemade basketball hoops set on fifty-foot telephone poles mosaicked with bottle caps like Watts Towers. The message is simple: Aim higher than hoops. The first in the series was erected at 125th Street and Lenox Avenue, where Malcolm X used to hold forth, and it became a local landmark. And Hammons became a local character: "He's the cat who did the pole."

Hammons's major work began with the contemplation of an epithet. "I was trying to figure out," he has said, "why black people were called spades as opposed to clubs." In 1973 he draped the head of a shovel with chains and turned it into a double-take evocation of an African mask.

Ever since, Hammons has combined the grammar of avant-garde art—critics compare him to Dubuffet and Duchamp—with a vocabulary of materials picked up on the street: greasy paper bags, chicken wings, and bottles of Night Train, the wino's favorite muscatel. The resulting rhetoric is funny and tragic, accusatory and inspirational.

—PHIL PATTON

OUTSIDE GAME: *Installation from the* Higher Goals *series, 1991 (left); the breakthrough Hammons, with hammers, 1988*



Esquire
Dec. 1991

THE VILLAGE VOICE
New York
17 September 1991

Art Trust

By Peter Schjeldahl

Logy from summer? Limp from the latest from Moscow? Me, too. How are we going to get in shape for an art season that bodes to be crunch time of the '90s, crucible of the 20th century's next, and last, nameable era? I just made up that boding. (If I'm wrong, you won't remember. If I'm right, I'll remind you.) Having rusticated for two months far from Manhattan and the Hamptons (good name for a lounge act), I have as my basis for prophecy only secondhand gossip and straws in the wind. They will have to do.

An intermittently reliable source tells me that a leitmotif of all the Hamptons parties I managed to miss was the keening of midcareer art stars terrified for their lifestyles in the still skidding market. "Remember last year everybody got so nice? Nervous, right? This year we are looking at panic." That makes sense. So does the ongoing consolidation, recently reported by Roberta Smith in the *Times*, of a fresh, downscaled gallery scene on the relatively boutiqueless southern flank of Soho, epicentered around Broome and Wooster.

Every major shift in the New York art world is signaled by establishment anguish and a new neighborhood.

We have accumulated in abundance the indispensable lubricant for a major shift. The lubricant is boredom. We are bored with the market-besotted '80s-type art world and its showroom product lines. (Who are "we"? The bored ones.) We are bored with auctions. We are bored with dealers as celebrities and collectors as celebrities. We are bored also with celebrated theories. Politically corrective critique bores us with its forever unexamined Utopian fatuities. (Amid the clatter of toppling Lenin statues, the plight of a magazine called *October* becomes touching. Will they change the name to *August*?) We aren't bored with multiculturalism. We don't know what it means yet. Multiculturalists retain a shot at center stage, in other words, but should be aware they are playing to a tough house.

The big New York action this season will be in museums. That's how much things are changing. The museums dithered or snoozed through the art bouts of the '80s, except for the Whitney, which hung in like a game, punch-drunk welterweight. The Whitney is under energetic new management, with director David Ross. The Guggenheim, under the grandiosely ambitious old management of director Thomas Krens, will open expanded digs with its international all-star cast of curators and the chance to redeem an institutional penchant for pratfalls.

Meanwhile, circle October 16. That's when MOMA unveils "*Dis*locations," curator Robert Storr's show of installations by Louise Bourgeois, Chris Burden, Sophie Calle, David Hammons, Ilya Kabakov, Bruce Nauman, and Adrian Piper. It will be MOMA's first serious attempt in two decades to catch a breaking wave of contemporary art.

What we want this season ("we" being the wanting ones) is shakedown simplification of the art culture, reduced as much as possible to communions of artists and newly self-conscious audiences. As a practical matter, the favored mode of the art will be installational. We won't much want the distracting complications of objects, with their commodity glamor and squalor, though if we sneak off individually and ogle a few no one will arrest us. We want to walk into spaces temporarily transformed by particular artists to trigger particular thoughts, feelings, and reflections bearing on who they are and who we are. (*They*, *we*: the hot words, the words to track this year.) We are in a mood for philo-

sophical pleasures of clarification pertaining to delirium.

The '90s art world is implosive outside, explosive within. Much is made, notably by putting-the-best-face-on-disaster dealers, of an exodus from the art market of "speculators" and other species of unserious money. (Dealers have an enviably efficient way of identifying people who are serious about art, by the names signed on checks most recently.) Less noted is an evaporation of *spectators*, definitive class of the wider '80s art world—a milieu in which calculating artists, collectors, dealers, independent curators, and attendant hustlers were the active inner circle of a game that radiated outwards through ever more passive rings of institutions and media to a crowded periphery of mere onlookers. (Octobrists and other academic intellectuals played a countergame—sociologizing art culture and moralizing the sociology—that was hardly less overbearing than the commercial and way less fun.) Onlooker status is being abolished. Now everybody is a player, or at least not provably a nonplayer, if only he or she commits to weighing personally the new art.

The '80s art world was like a stock market, with brokers broadcasting the latest values to a distant constituency. The '90s art world is like a laboratory that broadcasts very little to the outside, over the short term, other than the occasional muffled kaboom when an experiment blows up. That's a mark of successful art now: scorches on the psyches of an audience whose presence set something off. You have to be there. ("There" being any site—museum, alternative space, downscaled gallery—free enough of bullying agendas to afford clean contact of artist and audience.) By our scorches we know ourselves.

Who do you trust? That will be our question this year, addressed to each other when we compare notes on the hosts of contemporary artists claiming to illuminate

Art

and change our lives. Do you trust Bruce Nauman? Almost everybody seems to trust Bruce Nauman, out there in New Mexico creating sculptures and videos about the iffiness of being an artist at all. How about Adrian Piper? Is the reliable pain (for *some of us*) of Adrian Piper's punches below the belt of American racial anxieties a feeling tantamount to trust? It is if it makes a difference. Putting ourselves in the hands of artists, we will discover which hands are good, which are bad, and which are cruel to be kind. The same goes for curators, critics, and other mediators, who had better look sharp because the going level of diddle tolerance in the better (mainly but not exclusively younger) segments of art's audience seems very low.

The most sensational single artwork of the coming season will be Chris Burden's contribution to "*Dis*locations," a huge copper-plated steel structure, a sort of vertical Rolodex, functioning as a memorial to the Vietnamese war dead. "Their" dead. Up to 3 million names (most of them computer-scrambled variants on the few thousand that research could authenticate) are even now being engraved on the copper plates, representing the native toll North and South, military and civilian, of America's Southeast Asian catastrophe. Anyone who has been devastated by a visit to Maya Lin's Vietnam memorial in Washington, D.C., can only tremble to imagine the impact of Burden's at MOMA. Can it fail? Anything can fail. (This makes life interesting.) But already, simply by his concept, Burden has expanded the thinkable possibilities and sharply raised the stakes of present art.

Contemporary art is again something you get to be in on, to be party to, without taking an oath to manipulate or be manipulated. (To be challenged is not to be manipulated.) That's the good news. There is no bad news. It's like the benefits and ordeals of democracy in the Soviet Union, if it develops well. Everybody there will have a portion whether or not they were in the smallish crowd outside the parliament building when the tanks threatened. Those in the crowd will have, additionally, only the memory of an experience. Such memories shared by a few, of things significant for many, may be too much to hope for from mere art, but it is too late now to stop hoping.

Here we go. ■

ART & ANTIQUES
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ART TRUST

Sense and sensibility in an age of diminishing expectations.

By Jed Perl

Bloom, The Tip of the Iceberg, Installation, *1991.*

Art that seduces rather than clobbers seems especially suited to installations, where the artist has the viewer surrounded anyway. **Barbara Bloom**, unlike many of her contemporaries, understands this. Painter David Salle once called her "the perfect hostess," and although the label raises some hackles, it also describes how her pieces work. In *The Tip of the Iceberg* she provides a variety of objects and subjects, but leaves her "guests" free to make their own connections and draw their own conclusions. Near the entrance of the installation there's a wall shelf with books that you can flip through. They include a report on the sinking of the *Titanic* and a list of junk left in space by various expeditions. In the main gallery there is a round table piled with replicas of *Titanic* china under a round skylight with rim reliefs of gloves, cameras, and other objects left in space. In another gallery, deck chairs are stacked in front of a large photograph of the *Titanic*'s captain. Some didactic point could undoubtedly have been made, using these materials, about ocean depths and outer spaces that have been mapped or marked by human debris. Bloom, thank heavens, provides instead a delicate, open-ended, meditative environment; it feels as if you have walked into one of Joseph Cornell's boxes. The dreaminess and the mix of science and myth are here. And, as with Cornell's allusive, elusive objects, there's a sense of layers of possible meanings that may not be fully visible to anyone, even the artist, but are so intriguing that your mind doesn't want to let go of them. Bloom does not seem to want to, either; a number of her installation themes have been further developed in her books, films, and essays. Two years ago, for example, she explored *The Reign of Narcissism* in a book and also in an exhibition that, when I saw it, felt smug and self-referential. Now that I think about it, though, that's what narcissism is. And the free-floating atmosphere of *The Tip of the Iceberg* puts you in a kind of weightless state, like a diver or astronaut. The difference between talking about something and showing what it might be like is a distinction not made by most of the artists in "Dislocations," the Museum of Modern Art's current installation exhibition. It's a loud show with very little to say; Bloom's approach is the opposite. "We're bombarded with so much information that we don't know how to sift through or make meaning out of things," Bloom says. "I'm very strict about not being prescriptive about the reading of the work." Bloom has the sense to trust her audience, and the sensibility that's needed to put together an elegant and intriguing show. (Jay Gorney, New York)

NANCY GROVE

Bloom, Olive Branch Brooch, *1991.*

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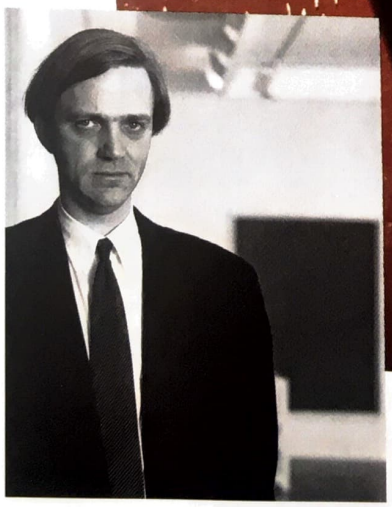
THE CHANGING



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as a new generation takes over, **christian leigh** explores the reemergence of new york's museums on the contemporary art scene

OF THE GUARD

To live in New York City, you often hear, is a decision made despite the facts. At best, it is a harsh place softened by a few esoteric perks. Typically, high expectations and a certain jadedness seem to come with the territory, especially for those to whom its museums often seem like one of the few compelling reasons to remain in town. Especially where contemporary art is concerned, the allure of museums diminished in the last decade, while the galleries became the hot center of the search for—and high-profile promotion of—the new and exciting. Still, those of us who have become accustomed to ignoring the seemingly staid museums have begun taking note of a transformation that has been going on in them over the last year or so.

The Museum of Modern Art, the Whitney Museum of American Art and the Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum have all been going through some heavy-duty changes recently—changes that should alter what happens in their great halls for years to come. While these changes have been the familiar stuff of news and gossip for months now, what is less commented upon is the systemic, even seismic, shift they are causing in the structure of power and influence in the world of contemporary art. The 1990s are seeing these institutions step into a role similar to the one that in the mid- and late '80s was filled by galleries. Not the least reason for this, of course, is a shrewd, strategic appreciation by the museums of the fact that their own long-term interests will be hurt if collectors, corporations and other potential patrons begin to feel, in these sluggish times in the market, that there is nothing new happening in the art world. Museums are hardly eager to let their supporters, much less the public, come to believe that the glamour and promise that has so characterized the whole image of contemporary art might turn out to have been cardboard and tinsel.

One central factor in the shake-up at New York's museums is a direct legacy of the 1980s. There has been a delayed rise to power of a new generation of museum directors and curators—as witness the arrival of paintings and sculpture curator Robert Storr, age 42, at MoMA, on the heels of that department's new director Kirk Varnedoe, 46; the appointment a year ago of David A. Ross, 43, as director of the Whitney; and the establishment of a cadre of new curators at the Guggenheim. Younger artists, critics and exhibition organizers changed the face and character of the art world in the 1980s, with the diverse styles and strategies that went under the name of Postmodernism. The curatorial old guard, on the other hand, with its ties to the modernist orthodoxy characteristically associated with Clement Greenberg and to the artists of the '50s and '60s who had been *their* buddies and exemplars, remained solidly in place at most of New York's museums (the Whitney being the one important exception). The various movements, whether Neo-Expressionism, Neo-Geo or Appropriation, that dominated the art and thought of the 1980s were frequently treated with the sort of arm's-length edginess one would show toward a loud but unlettered student. It was not until the members of the older museum generation began to retire—some voluntarily, some not—

The Museum of Modern Art's 1991 show "*DISLOCATIONS*" featured such politically charged installations as Ilya Kabakov's *The Bridge* (opposite). Curated by Robert Storr (inset), the exhibition is emblematic of a new era of aesthetic and intellectual growth at the Modern.

that the "younger" directors and curators, many already in their 40s, had at last their own shot at the big time, both institutionally and aesthetically. We may, in fact, see what is going on in museums now as the last wave of the '80s—and perhaps its strongest, the one that will institutionalize and carry forward its ideas and energies.

TAKE THE CASE OF ROB STORR. "*DIS*LOCATIONS," HIS FIRST major show at the Modern, is emblematic of the generational and ideological shift. A shrewd mix of installations—by the established Louise Bourgeois and Bruce Nauman as well as less well known, politically oriented artists Ilya Kabakov, David Hammons, Chris Burden, Sophie Calle and Adrian Piper—it offered something for everyone and won the museum some of its best notices in years. In contrast to 1990's much-awaited, then much-criticized "High & Low: Modern Art and Popular Culture," curated by Varnedoe and *New Yorker* art critic Adam Gopnik, an exhibition that was high on inventory and low on imagination, "*DIS*LOCATIONS" had an undeniable energy. Anywhere else, it would have been a good show, but at MoMA, it was a seminal show. Antiformalist yet object-conscious, "*DIS*LOCATIONS" was entirely in keeping with the sensibility Storr has demonstrated in his writings and may be seen as prefiguring some of what he intends to do at MoMA.

The very fact that the museum was exhibiting such politically charged art was enough to guarantee a positive reception in many quarters. More effectively than "High & Low," Storr's show seems to have brought the Modern a new intellectual and aesthetic capaciousness, one that finally moved beyond the formalist approach favored by MoMA's former director of paintings and sculpture William S. Rubin—the "Bismarck of modernism," as critic Robert Hughes once tagged him. What many see as the MoMA board of trustees' gamble in hiring Storr—that they could co-opt the museum's longtime critics by bringing a representative of the moderate aesthetic left into the fold—was starting to pay off. Now it appears that Storr has become something of a golden boy, and it is said that he has been given a relatively free hand with future exhibitions.

Another important staff change at the Modern, and another marker of the generational shift, has been the appointment of 40-year-old Peter Galassi as director of the photography department, succeeding the legendary John Szarkowski, who had held the post for 29 years. Although he worked closely with Szarkowski, Galassi's approach is said to be more eclectic than that of his formalistically inclined mentor. Galassi's first exhibition as director, significantly entitled "More Than One Photography," scheduled to open on May 13, will focus on contemporary art that uses photography but is not considered photography as such. In a radical departure from the strict separation of departments that marked the reigns of Iron John and the Iron Chancellor, the show will feature works from many of the museum's other departments. This new attitude is cer-

The Brooklyn Museum disdains the curatorial star system, but Charlotta Kotik (above), director of paintings and sculpture, has been instrumental in the museum's revitalized exhibition program, including the 1990 installation "The Play of the Unmentionable" (top), put together by artist Joseph Kosuth.

IT HAS BEEN ALMOST SOLELY THE TASK OF THE GALLERIES TO

tainly welcome in a photography department that has continually ignored artists like Richard Prince, Cindy Sherman and Sherrie Levine.

Although "High & Low" did not fulfill initial hopes, Varnedoe is still well respected and in control at the Modern. His cool, professional style is much appreciated by the museum's board. Crucial for the museum's future will be how relationships between Storr, Galassi, Varnedoe and the other top curators play out, and also what kind of chemistry develops between the board's recently named president, Agnes Gund, known for her personal warmth and earnest involvement with contemporary art, and Varnedoe.

OVER THE PAST DECADE OR SO, THE WHITNEY HAS BEEN the best of the big New York museums for viewing contemporary art, as curators Lisa Phillips, Richard Armstrong and Richard Marshall have led the way in the search—to some exciting, to others overzealous—for the next, newest thing. Enter David Ross, named director in February 1991 following the bungled ouster of Thomas Armstrong. Ross is seen in some circles as a peacekeeping force, bridging the gap between the Whitney's conservative board and the freewheeling New York contemporary art world without doing anything terribly rash or difficult. He has been very successful thus far in maintaining a solid reputation for his museum among collectors, artists and galleries: the Whitney's plans for shows by painter Terry Winters and L.A. Conceptualist Mike Kelley are popular with this constituency. Yet Ross has been equally effective in keeping the powers that be at the Whitney happy. Like Varnedoe, he seems to think like a businessman, a trait that plays well with the board, although he comes across more as an independent entrepreneur.

Still, some say they are beginning to see some spotting on the Ross rose. He has irritated a few important people in the New York art world by making it all too clear that he knows who he likes, and doesn't like, to be with. And plans for the first large-scale exhibition of his tenure, a comprehensive retrospective of fashion photographer Richard Avedon tentatively scheduled for 1994, have run into stiff opposition, some of it from the museum's own board. The show could cover as much as two full floors of the museum, giving it a scope that only the masters have had, and there are those who speculate that by so doing Ross is primarily catering to the fashion community, in particular the family of Whitney President Leonard Lauder, Estée's son. Still, it is important to point out that Ross is a fan of Avedon's who has done two shows of the photographer's work before. Plainly, though, some pacification of his critics, both inside and outside the institution, must be on his agenda.

Ross brought Elisabeth Sussman *(continued on page 138)*

Curator Elisabeth Sussman (above), who followed Director David Ross to the Whitney last year, has been named head of the curatorial committee for the museum's Biennial in 1993. Top, a view of the 1991 Biennial.

FURTHER CONTEMPORARY ART; IT IS TIME THIS BURDEN WAS SHARED

THE CHANGING OF THE GUARD

(continued from page 109) with him from Boston's Institute of Contemporary Art to be a curator at the Whitney, and he has placed in her hands the museum's trump card—or live grenade—the Whitney Biennial, for which Sussman will be the head of the curatorial committee in 1993. In so naming Sussman, Ross has altered its structure in a way that is sure to prove controversial: rather than being the product of a number of curatorial equals, which tends to diffuse the blame for any failures, the 1993 Biennial will have Sussman as its overall voice, or target.

For her part, Sussman, though well liked personally, has been described by some as simply an extension of Ross's own reach, his way of taking control more firmly without stepping on anybody's toes and, if need be, of protecting himself from any Biennial flack. Sussman's low profile may be appealing to the Whitney's board, but her selection has not been especially popular with the Armstrong-appointed curators: while having her in the post rather than a bigger star may in many ways be a relief to them, they probably see her as a Ross cat's-paw and may resent her being given the keys to the Biennial. Those whose sensibilities happen to mesh with Ross's—particularly Phillips, who is said to have been instrumental in convincing Ross to accept the job after he had reportedly refused it once—seem more or less content for now; but one member of the curatorial triumvirate is reportedly shopping around for a post elsewhere.

NOT EVEN COUNTING HOW MUCH TIME HE MUST spend reading articles about himself, Guggenheim Director Thomas Krens, age 45, obviously has his hands full. The art world has been filled with stories of his ideas about expanding the Guggenheim, most notably establishing museum outposts in SoHo (opening this June), Salzburg and Bilbao, Spain—to say nothing of his long involvement in the controversial, and still shaky, project to build MASS MoCA in a remote area of northwestern Massachusetts.

While Krens's greatest impact on the Guggenheim will undoubtedly be institutional, his aesthetic impact is far less clear. To help shape the museum's programs, he has hired, in addition to deputy director Diane Waldman, a holdover from the regime of his predecessor Thomas Messer, a battery of big-name (and big-ticket) curators, including Germano Celant, Carmen Giménez and Mark Rosenthal. To date, however, their reputations appear to be more solid than their plans.

In fact, art world wags say that Krens is playing a game some have dubbed Find the Curators, running around the globe in search of his wheeling and dealing staff, all of whom have many outside projects to keep them busy. The Italian Celant has brought the career of the free-lance critic/curator to new heights, accumulating frequent-flier miles the way his beloved Arte Povera artists piled up soil and twigs. The Robert Mapplethorpe retrospective he put together for Denmark's Louisiana Museum (on view through May 24) is said to have earned him the kind of money curators very rarely see. Giménez, who made her reputation at the Centro de Arte Reina Sofía in Madrid, is still consulting with a number of other museums. And Rosenthal, formerly at the Philadelphia Museum of Art, though less flamboyant and more scholarly than Celant or Giménez, is said to be actively advising private collectors in Philadelphia. All in all, while it is, of course, these curators' connections to the outside art world that make them so important to the Guggenheim's plans for the future, they have yet to do anything substantial in terms of programs that would indicate a firm aesthetic direction for their new Manhattan home.

Quotable and in his own way glamorous, Krens himself will undoubtedly continue to be the stuff of dinner-party chatter and brunch conjecture. In contrast to the polished Varnedoe and Ross, Krens comes across as something of a Yankee cowboy. He is hardly the hippest of museum directors (one important New York collector was aghast when he recently told her he had never heard of Mike Kelley), but to his credit, what Krens does know—for instance, German figurative painting or American minimalism—he knows better than anybody. And he is not unpopular among his staff. In fact, he is very good at making people like him; his problem seems to be figuring out who it is that he *needs* to make like him. Krens's greatest weakness, and one worth tracking, is his seeming naïveté about why people say the things they do about him. In this sense, he has become sort of the art world's answer to Oliver Stone and Steven Spielberg.

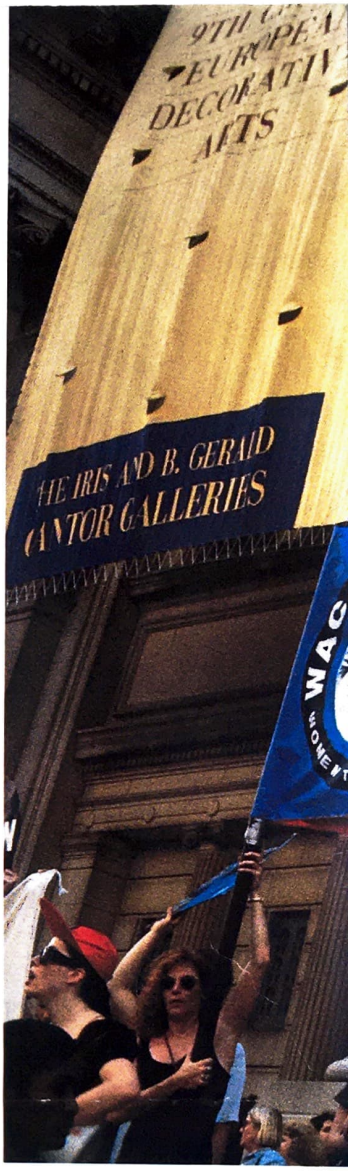
A nice recent surprise has been the revitalization of the Brooklyn Museum, despite serious budget cuts. Although the museum does not have a curatorial star system, there is little doubt that contemporary art curator Charlotta Kotik, age 50, recently also named chairman of paintings and sculpture, has been responsible for many of the best things going on there lately. Never an institution to go for frills and thrills and headlines, it nonetheless achieved all three last year when Sigmar Polke chose it as the New York site for his traveling retrospective. Then, too, there are the museum's challenging lobby exhibitions, which have featured interesting work by, among others, Leon Golub, Chris Burden and Nancy Spero. Perhaps the most important of these was the 1990 show "The Brooklyn Museum Collection: The Play of the Unmentionable," put together by artist Joseph Kosuth, which addressed issues of censorship. Kosuth created from art other than his own an autonomous work of great aspirations. It, like an excellent exhibition of portraits curated by artist Chuck Close at MoMA last year, made the institution that housed it feel fresh and alive, while expanding the boundaries and the reach of exhibition-making.

FINALLY, A PIECE OF HEARTFELT IF unsolicited advice: As they get used to their positions and begin to grow into their jobs, the new generation of curators and directors would do well to think a bit about the European model of art exhibition and its relationship to contemporary artists and thinkers, as embodied in the *Kunsthalles* and *Kunstvereins*. While such artists as Gunther Forg, Reinhard Mucha, Remy Zaugg and Katharina Fritsch can have exhibitions in noncommercial institutions all over Europe, comparable artists in the U.S., like Peter Halley, Haim Steinbach and Barbara Kruger, very rarely do. It has been almost solely the task of the galleries to further contemporary art, and it is time this burden was shared. Museums must learn to respond to the art community as well as to their boards. With the flexibility afforded by the changed situation in the art market, now would be the perfect time for these institutions to rethink their relationships with artists, curators, critics and gallerists alike, and not close out what is exciting, fresh and new in favor of what is tried and true and "important." As we watch the transfer of power within the institutions from one generation to the next—indeed, from one view of modern art and culture to another—let us hope that such a shift brings about changes in policy as well as in stationery. (A&A)

Christian Leigh is a New York–based curator and writer.

ARTnews / September 1992

THE WE DECADE



The people who make art, show it, and sell it are increasingly involved with issues and the role that the art world can play in the real world

BY ROBIN CEMBALEST

There once was a time when museums had all the money they needed, auction records soared ever higher, and gallery shows sold out before they even opened.

Of course, everyone knows the art world of the '80s wasn't exactly like that—even though it might sometimes seem so now, when all of those things are the exception rather than the rule. Even back when the market was its strongest, there was the sense that things had gotten out of hand, that some kind of perspective had been lost if people were talking as much about the designer suits Jean-Michel Basquiat wore while he worked as about what was on the canvas. A common refrain of the time was that artists who hadn't achieved success by the age of 30 got depressed—they felt they hadn't "made it."

But the pressure to produce sell-out shows, says Dominique Bozo, director of the Centre Pompidou in Paris, often led artists to sell out in the other sense of the term. Until the '80s, "one used to be able to go to an artist's studio and see a lifetime of work. Suddenly the studios were empty. Artists were turning things out so quickly, they all became little factories. It banalized the process of creating." Now, Bozo believes, artists can profit from the one thing they

TERRI SLOTKIN

Members of the Women's Action Coalition protest in front of New York's Metropolitan Museum of Art during the Democratic Convention. Founded by a group of art-world women, WAC has 1,600 members.

often couldn't afford before—time. "This is a period of more questioning, of slowing down, of doubt," he says.

Many members of the art world express similar sentiments. On the one hand, most suspect, it will be a long time before they see the sums of money that routinely passed through their hands in the '80s, before another van Gogh surpasses $82 million at auction, before young artists' paintings reach $300,000 in the span of a few years. But on the other hand, they say philosophically, the downturn in the market may not be such a bad thing for the art—and for the institutions that show it and sell it. The profits may be down, but in many ways the pressure is off.

The growing focus on ideas and issues, many say, reflects not only the collapse of the market but the collapse of communism and other major political events of recent years, along with concerns about such increasingly urgent matters as race, the environment, and AIDS. While of course some artists have always been active in political causes, what is new is the degree of organization that artists are bringing to their activism. Artists were instrumental in organizing the Neue Forum, a progressive party that arose in East Germany in 1990. They were on the barricades during the attempted coup in the Soviet Union. They were at the Global Ecological Convention in Rio de Janeiro last summer.

While art that examines political and social topics is not new, curators and dealers do report seeing a lot more of it lately. "The issues five years ago were money and power in a generalized way," says Martha Wilson, who directs Franklin Furnace, a 16-year-old alternative space in the Tribeca district of Manhattan. "The shows this year are more sociological—how culture works, how values change." She mentions exhibitions of the work of Daniel Tisdale, whose installation of cultural artifacts associated with African-American life addresses "how white culture identifies black culture," and Nicole Eisenman and Chris Martin, whose show "The Lesbian Museum: 10,000 Years of Penis Envy" dealt with "how lesbians perceive the male dominated culture in which they live."

"Things that have happened in the last decade have forced people out of their complacency," says 38-year-old artist Kiki Smith, who has explored issues of gender and the body in her work for the last two decades. "I'm doing the same

COURTESY CENTRE GEORGES POMPIDOU

Dominique Bozo, director of the Centre Pompidou in Paris, sees the '90s as a time of "questioning, slowing down."

thing I did in the '70s, but ten years ago I didn't get the attention." What has happened, she believes, is that people who grew up in the '60s are coming into positions of power—and that people whose parents grew up in the '60s are now grown up themselves.

Much of the art coming out of graduate sculpture programs these days tends to be issue-oriented, says Bill Arning, who runs the New York alternative space White Columns. And, he observes, it tends to address those issues in the installation format. "The politically based photo-text stuff seems to be dying off a bit," he reports. "We're seeing less of the faux Kruger, Haacke, Lawler that were so dominant in the late '80s."

Museums are venturing more often into political and social territory, says Robert Storr, a curator in the department of painting and sculpture at New York's Museum of Modern Art. In the exhibition "Dislocations," presented at the museum last year, he included such works as Chris Burden's memorial to anonymous Vietnamese who died in the war and Adrian Piper's installation—modeled after a Minimalist sculpture—that contains a video of an African-American man voicing a series of racial epithets and denying them. Most of the artists in the show have been on the scene for some time, Storr points out. But people are beginning to pay more attention to them now, he believes, because "in general terms this country is in a very uncomfortable and uneasy state of mind. A lot of installation art distills that discomfort and confusion and addresses it. Totally self-referential art games don't have the same immediacy for people."

That's not as true in Europe, he adds—there is plenty of installation art, but not as much that addresses current events and concerns. Documenta, the mammoth exhibition held in Kassel, Germany, last summer, "was exceptional in the way that it did not deal with these issues. Documenta was about Art with a capital A."

What curators across the globe do report is a growing trend to mix media. "We're seeing a younger generation of artists coming to the fore who have learned from Conceptual art, the abstract, the figurative, and Neo-Expressionist and who are synthesizing media and genres," says Uwe Schneede, director of Hamburg's Kunsthalle. "The dividing lines between objects, sculptures, painting, and new techniques are starting to disappear. It's becoming increasingly difficult to distinguish painting from sculpture, for example in the work of Harald Klingelhöller, Reinhard Mucha, Thomas Schütte, and Katharina Fritsh." Ramon Tio Bellido, artistic director of Hôtel des Arts, an exhibition space in Paris, observes a similar tendency. "There is a return of the neo-Conceptual, a reinvestment in the object," he says. "With a lot of artists, this is accompanied by technology—computers, videos—used as tools of expression."

In Spain, where there are few alternative spaces compared with the rest of Europe, the situation is still "very closed," according to curator Mar Villaespesa, who organized a multi-exhibition project entitled "Plus Ultra" in conjunction with Expo '92, the world's fair currently under way in Seville. Part of the project consists of site-specific installations in each province of Andalusia, the region in which the fair is based. At the Expo site, an anonymous artists' collective called Agencia de Viaje (Travel Agency) will install an "interactive" time capsule that members of the public will participate in creating. In Malaga the artists' group Agustín Parejo petitioned the city government to allow them to recreate a 1931 event during which a statue of an aristocrat was toppled and replaced with that of a worker (it was restored to its original state after Franco's forces won the civil war in 1939).

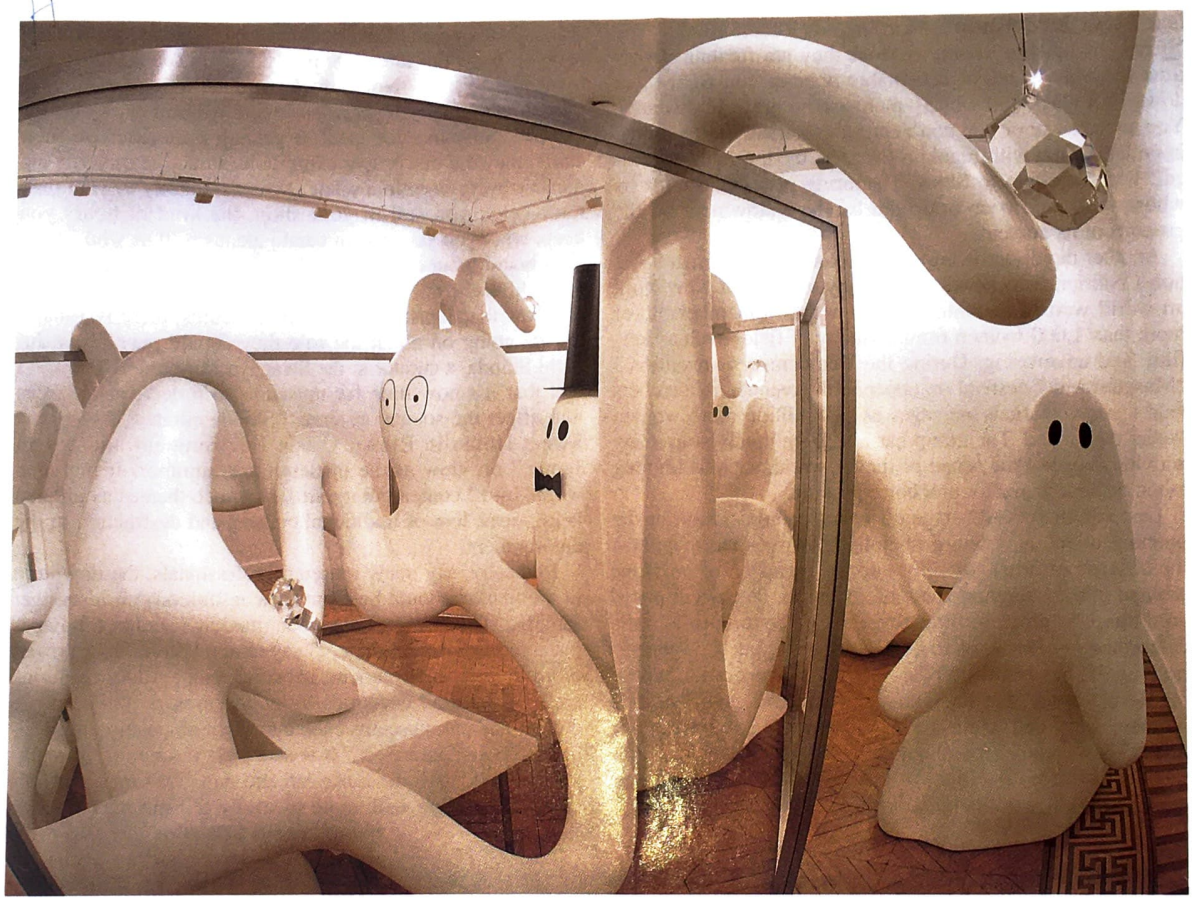
The city hall's refusal prompted a great deal of media attention along with criticisms that the government was unwilling to focus attention on its fascist past. That kind of publicity, along with the workshops open to the public for each project, have caused "many repercussions," says Villaespesa. "People see possibilities that there are other options."

Art also clashed with politics in Italy last winter when Vito Acconci presented a piece entitled "Home Entertainment Centers," composed of a dozen inflatable sex dolls in lewd poses, at his one-man show in the Museo Pecci in Prato. The Christian Democrats, whose Prato office partially finances the museum, officially stated that "sponsorship would be much more difficult in the future." One politician denounced the show as "squalid" and said that the dolls were "ostentatious symbols of forced sexual imposition that do not correspond to the act of love as taught by the Catholic world." Amnon Barzel, at that time the Pecci's director, went on national television to defend the show.

Nowhere have more controversies about the content of contemporary art erupted than in the United States. One particularly difficult area has been public art—in the last few years sculptures across the country have been criticized on the basis of their representation of ethnic groups. A recent example oc-

ELAINE TINNYO

"The politically based photo-text stuff seems to be dying off a bit," reports Bill Arning, who runs the New York space White Columns.



KLEINNEFENN/COURTESY HOTEL DES ARTS

Alain Sechas' *La Pieuvre* (The Octopus), 1990, installed at the Hôtel des Arts, an exhibition space in Paris.

curred in lower Manhattan, when artist Richard Haas agreed to paint over a mural on the White Street Detention Center after a group called "Latinos Against the Mural on Baxter" complained that a panel depicting the Lower East Side contained negative images of Latinos. "What you're seeing are communities that have historically been sort of marginalized, that have not been represented in the decision-making process about public works, finally coming forward and asserting themselves more vocally in terms of how they're represented," says New York City cultural commissioner Luis Cancel. "That's a trend that anyone who's working in public art should be sensitive to."

Those issues are certainly on the minds of the curators organizing the Whitney Museum of American Art's next Biennial, says Elisabeth Sussman, the curator who heads the team. "Voices are coming out of divisions that no longer melt in the melting pot," she says. "You have to break it down—the Asian-American community, the African-American community, the African-American gay men community."

Some curators, however, are left cold by much socially and politically oriented work. "When works of art come first not from an artistic agenda but from a social agenda, the work sometimes has a tendency to be didactic," says Paul Schimmel, chief curator of Los Angeles' Museum of Contemporary Art. "On the one hand, artists don't work in a vacuum. But if they don't focus on making works of art first, it can be problematic." Schimmel's heavily attended exhibition "Helter Skelter" last January was the target of criticisms that "the cynicism and satire and mocking of certain cultural values and beliefs was not as pervasive as the impression left by the exhibition," according to Howard Fox, curator of contemporary art at the Los Angeles County Museum of Art.

Schimmel responds by pointing out that Pop art too was considered cynical in its time. Besides, he adds, cynicism may well be a very realistic attitude. "Within the younger generation of artists dealing with social and political issues, there is both a sense of what their work can do to effect changes and a certain realistic cynicism about the limitations of its power to effect those changes. It's a double-edged sword."

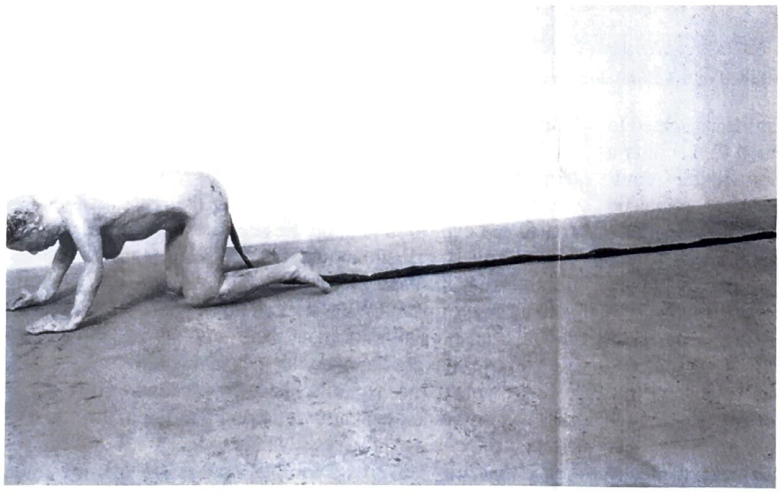
A growing number of artists have concluded that it is necessary to move outside the art world and into the mainstream to effect change. For many the galvanizing factor was the controversy that erupted around the National Endowment for the Arts when the Mississippi-based American Family Association and North Carolina Senator Jesse Helms attacked the agency for funding exhibitions that included works that they considered "obscene" by Robert Mapplethorpe and Andres Serrano. "The arts community until late 1989 was asleep at the switch," says David Mendoza, who runs the National Campaign for Freedom of Expression, an advocacy group that works in defense of First Amendment issues. "We took a lot of things for granted. We never thought that some fundamentalist ministers from Mississippi could really have an impact on what artists from Manhattan or Seattle or San Francisco could make as art. It became clear that the arts community was going to have to defend itself."

"There has been a rebirth of a kind of McCarthyistic

fear," says Brooklyn Museum director Robert Buck. "The NEA is as much a victim as those they are funding. Every time the ugly heads of censorship appear, you fight them down. It's black and white—there are no grays in this area. You declare war or you don't enter the battle." Last summer, in collaboration with Franklin Furnace, the museum presented "Too Shocking to Show," featuring performance artists whose work had been criticized by the endowment on the grounds of its content.

Another rapidly growing organization is the Women's Action Coalition, which was founded by a group of New York art-world women in January and now has a membership of more than 1,600 women from a variety of fields such as law, film, and advertising. During the Democratic Convention's "Museum Mile" festival on upper Fifth Avenue, its marchers held signs with such messages as "10 million more women voters than men." The group has also been involved in many activities beyond the scope of the art world, such as training clinic defense teams for prochoice protests.

Last summer WAC staged a noisy demonstration at the opening of the new Guggenheim Museum SoHo to protest the absence of artists of color and the inclusion of only one woman in the inaugural show of six artists. The event posed an unfamiliar problem for art-worlders preparing to join the celebration—to cross or to honor the picket line. "A generational shift has occurred. Curators of my generation would just never make that mistake—to show five guys and one woman," says Bill Arning, who chose not to cross the picket line. "That's really second nature to our generation." (Others who didn't cross declined to be identified, citing fears of damaging their working relationship with the Guggenheim.)



COURTESY FAWBUSH, NY

Kiki Smith's *Tale*, 1992. "I'm doing the same thing I did in the '70s, but ten years ago I didn't get the attention," she says of her work dealing with issues of gender and the body.

Many museum professionals describe confusion and discomfort concerning the role their institutions should play in today's society. "I do believe that museums are among the most conservative and retarded institutions in our society," concedes Tom Freudenheim, assistant secretary for arts and humanities at the Smithsonian Institution in Washington, D.C. "They tend to be responsible rather than aggressively doing something in the forefront." But that's not all bad, he adds. On the one hand, "everybody can't be fighting this society."

On the other hand, museums are beginning to make strides in the arena of multiculturalism. "The serious cultural revolution in the late '60s really left museums fairly untouched," he says. "Now I think there are serious attempts to rethink community responsibility and cultural equity issues. Before, museums focused on getting minorities on their staffs; they did one or two exhibitions attracting minority audiences every once in a while. Now the totality is what matters—what you sell in your shop, the kind of hours you keep, what you say in your catalogue, as well as who sits on your board, your committees. I do think that's going to make a big difference."

"Now that Japan has so many museums, there is a major debate going on about the role they should play," says Junichi Shioda, a curator at the Setagaya Museum in Tokyo. "I feel that it's now time for museums to reflect social issues that affect the society at large." Shioda curated "My Home Sweet Home in Ruins: Urban Environment and Art in Japan," on view at the museum last summer. It included works by 12 contemporary artists on such themes as inflated land prices, loss of traditional culture, and destruction of the environment.

Ironically, say many museum professionals, the downturn in the market should help put their institutions on a stronger footing. "There was a time when museums couldn't move as fast as collectors and dealers," says Robert Storr. "In a slower, more diverse environment, in which money doesn't define credibility, good decisions by good curators will resonate more—and put museums back into a central position for evaluating contemporary art." It is also a good time for museums to buy work. "All the European and American museum officials I'm dealing with quite gleefully tell me that they are being treated like gods these days by dealers who never had any time for them before," says London dealer Karsten Schubert.

"My perception is that the principal buyers, particularly of contemporary work, remain private collectors—the economic power simply isn't there with museums," says Kevin Consey, director of Chicago's Museum of Contemporary Art. "But it's a little less competitive. Because the market is slower, there's a little more of an opportunity for museums to reflect and contemplate about acquisition of work without having it bought out from under them by 50 private collectors who are willing to pay cash immediately. Now it's 10 for every museum."

Consey says that his museum is not facing extreme financial difficulties—"we have either a slight deficit or break even"—a fact he attributes to the "halo effect" of plans for its new building, located at the site of the Chicago Avenue National Guard Armory, which will open in 1995. As with most of the museums that are opening and expanding around the world, the expansion program began in the '80s. In France a number of institutions have recently opened, among them a contemporary art museum in Nice. In Spain, where cultural

Robin Cembalest is a senior editor of ARTnews. *Additional reporting by Ginger Danto, Paris; John Dornberg, Munich; James Hall, London; Carol Lutfy, Tokyo; Jonathan Turner, Rome; and Nancy Kapitanoff, Los Angeles.*

activities are highly subsidized by the federal government, new museums of contemporary art are under way in Barcelona and Seville, while the regional government of the Basque country in the north is planning to invest $100 million in the Guggenheim Museum Bilbao. In Italy plans are under way for a contemporary art museum in Florence, which will be directed by Amnon Barzel, scheduled to open in 1994, and critics in Milan are hoping to convince that city's government to help fund another contemporary art museum in an old factory. Australia's first contemporary art museum was just inaugurated in an Art Deco building across from the Sydney opera house. In England the success of the Tate Gallery's Liverpool branch has led to plans for new branches in St. Ives and Norwich.

COURTESY JACK TILTON GALLERY

David Hammons' *Public Enemy*, 1991, in the show "Dislocations" at New York's Museum of Modern Art. Installations, says curator Robert Storr, address people's "discomfort."

While Britain's art-worlders were heartened by the newly reelected conservative government's decision to establish a Department of National Heritage—and to give its director, David Mellor, a seat in the cabinet—they are waiting to see just how much arts institutions will benefit from the change. Purchase grants have been frozen at $24.7 million since 1985. The government is currently considering plans to institute a lottery, similar to Germany's, that could generate up to $1.9 billion for "good causes" such as the arts and sports. "More people visit museums than go to soccer matches, so I'm sure museums will get a good chunk of it," says Graham Greene, chairman of the country's Museums and Galleries Commission. "I see the lottery as one of the few ways forward in the current economic climate," says Norman Rosenthal, exhibitions secretary of London's Royal Academy.

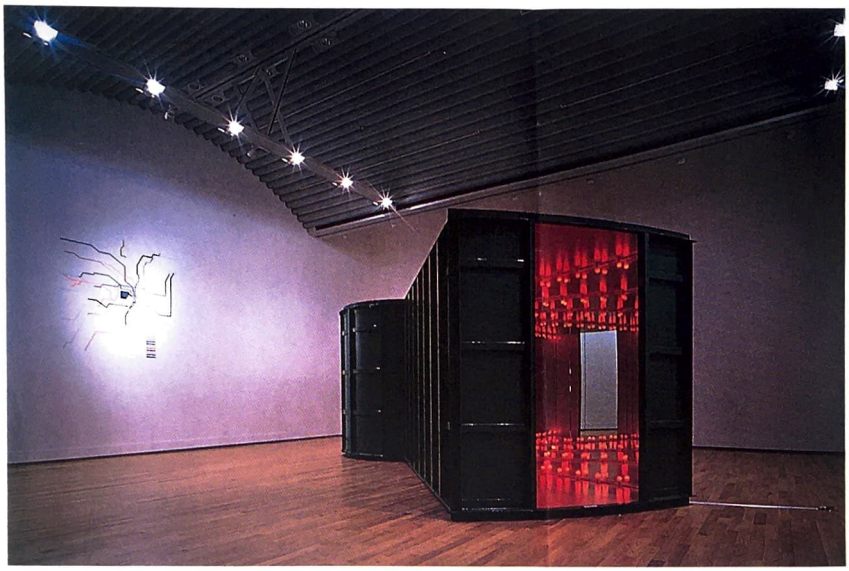
No European country has built more museums during the last decade than Germany. The boom culminates this spring with the $27 million extension of the Sprengel Museum in Hannover and the $151 million Bundeskunsthalle and Kunstmuseum in Bonn. Those will probably be the last for awhile, says Siegfried Rietschel, president of the German Museum Federation. "All the splendid museums built in the 1980s and early '90s were planned in the '60s and '70s. But now it's over, except for what's being or has been done in Berlin, where the state museums are being stitched back together, and the former East Germany, where there were no new constructions for more than 50 years."

And even in Germany museums are beginning to feel the recession. "Not only are the federal government's debt and budget deficits skyrocketing, but the state and local governments, which provide most of the funding for culture and art, are broke," says Armin Zweite, director of the Kunstsammlung Nordrhein-Westfalen in Düsseldorf. "We all have to tighten our belts and cannot expect in the '90s what we got used to in the '70s and '80s." Just how much German museums receive from the government depends on the region. In Baden Württemberg and Northrhine-Westphalia all proceeds of the state-run lotto drawings and soccer pools are earmarked for art and culture. Frankfurt's municipal Stadel museum has a relatively high percentage of its funds earmarked for acquisitions because the city of Frankfurt sets aside nearly 13 percent of its entire annual budget for cultural activities.

Art institutions in the United States lag far behind European museums when it comes to government funding. In Germany per capita spending on the arts is $27; in France, $32. In the United States it is $0.68. "German museums are hurting—by their standards," says Thomas Messer, director emeritus of New York's Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum and currently senior counselor for the arts at the Caixa Foundation based in Barcelona. Messer, who travels frequently throughout the continent, believes that the greater level of government funding in Europe puts its museums "head and shoulders above the usual American art museum. They have worked out satisfactory re-

PABLO JULIA

Spanish curator Mar Villaespesa, who organized a series of site-specific exhibitions across Andalusia this summer.



COURTESY SETAGAYA MUSEUM

Yukinori Yanagi's *Hinomaru Container*, 1992, was in the exhibition "My Home Sweet Home in Ruins: Urban Environment and Art in Japan" at Tokyo's Setagaya Museum.

lationships clearly superior to ours. Even in difficult financial times, they cannot collapse or go down the drain."

Certainly nearly every American museum that receives public funding now receives less, and many have had to cut back on hours, staff, and programming. Arts administrators do not expect the trend to reverse any time soon. "The general economy has to substantially improve before you see improvement in levels of state support for the arts," says Luis Cancel, New York City's cultural commissioner. "The cultural community in New York definitely is suffering. There have been cutbacks to the tune of about 70 percent in the last two years. I receive constant telephone calls from organizations really facing decisions about how they can stay open. I expect to see closures. The city will not be in a position to turn that around."

One of the hardest hit institutions is the Brooklyn Museum. "The city and its politicians have no memory," says director Robert Buck. He points out that although the municipal government provided $14 million of the cost for the museum's $30 million new wing—which was planned in the '80s, is the size of the Whitney Museum, and opens in November—the slash of $1.5 million per year in city funding has left the museum without money to operate it. "They were out with a meat cleaver," says Buck. While Cancel "made a very elegant appeal," he adds, "now it rests with the mayor and his deputies. This fall we need some answers."

Another less-lamented casualty of the recession is the blockbuster exhibition, made more and more difficult by rising shipping and insurance costs. Earl "Rusty" Powell, new director of the National Gallery of Art in Washington, D.C., has repeatedly stated that he favors intimate, scholarly shows over the kind of mega-exhibitions the museum has presented in the past, such as the recent "Circa 1492," which included more than 600 works. "I doubt we will see any shows as expansive as '1492' for a while, because the cost of doing them is going to escalate beyond reasonable levels," he says. Instead, he prefers a strategy increasingly favored by museum directors—"using the permanent collections in new and interpretive ways."

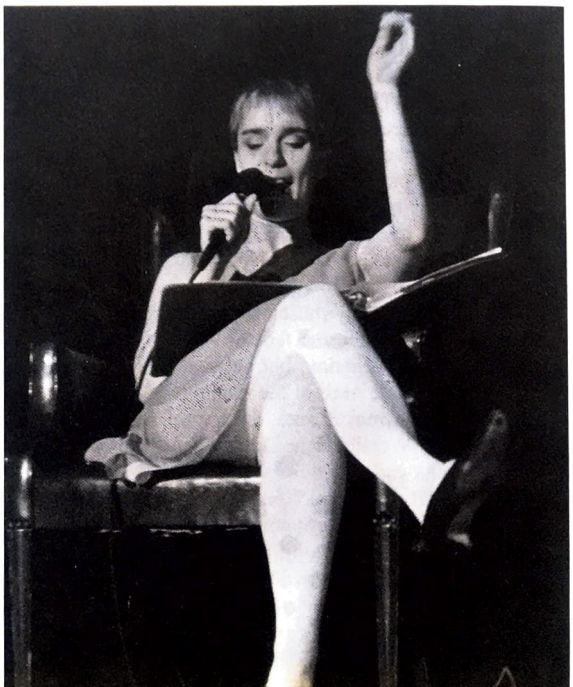
Japan's department-store museums still house enormous shows, although the content has changed. "Impressionism is too expensive," says Tetsuya Akayama of the Isetan Museum of Art in Tokyo. He reports that the focus has shifted to what he calls "old contemporary art"—living masters including Jim Dine, David Hockney, and Jasper Johns.

In Germany, however, the mega-exhibitions will continue, forecasts Peter Beye, director of Stüttgart's Staatsgalerie. "Many are the obituaries that have been written about blockbuster exhibitions in recent years, but they keep rising from the dead," he says. "The costs in terms of transport, insurance, and conservation are exorbitant. So are the intangible costs of providing exhibition space—you have to take down pictures of the permanent exhibition, and that's wrong. But somehow they keep being staged because they draw masses of visitors, which is what interests sponsors."

Blockbusters are definitely the wrong strategy for contemporary art, Robert Storr believes. "Creating mega-exhibitions is not the best way to treat art of the moment," he says. "Bigger is not always better in terms of what you get from artists. If you make it clear that you can't do their version of *Apocalypse Now* but they have to do it smaller, you often get better work."

"I would imagine that blockbusters will return at some point as the economy returns and show business returns," says Kevin Consey, predicting that future blockbusters are contingent on the success of the more than 400-work Henri Matisse retrospective, which opens at New York's Museum of Modern Art on the 24th of this month.

The Matisse show is funded in part by Philip Morris, one of



©DONA ANN MCADAMS

Holly Hughes performing at the Brooklyn Museum in "Too Shocking to Show," which featured artists criticized by the NEA.

COURTESY MUSEUM OF CONTEMPOARARY ART, PRATO

ABOVE Amnon Barzel, former director of the Museo Pecci in Prato and founding director of Florence's new contemporary art museum. BELOW The $151 million Bundeskunsthalle and Kunstmuseum in Bonn, which opened this year.

several large companies—such as Daimler-Benz, Siemens, and BMW in Germany and the Banco Bilbao in Spain—that regularly make large contributions to the arts. More and more, arts institutions are also turning to private foundations such as the Caixa, Spain's largest. According to Messer, $30 million of its $100 million budget is devoted to culture. One of his goals, he says, is to focus on the "void between classical modernism and wholly contemporary art," which has not often been presented in Spain. The foundation often shares exhibitions with other institutions. One example is the Wifredo Lam retrospective that was originated in New York by the Americas Society and will be shown in several Spanish venues, including the Caixa's exhibition space in Barcelona. "By paying one half, it pays much more than a fee it would pay as a venue," Messer explains. "It amounts to sponsorship. We call it co-originating."

In the United States private foundations such as those established by the wills of Robert Mapplethorpe and Andy Warhol frequently assist alternative venues that find it difficult to get funding from traditional sources. "We're in a good position to support exhibitions that may turn out to be provocative to people, because we are independent, not associated with a corporation or community," says Archibald Gillies, director of the Warhol Foundation. Last year the foundation, established in 1987, gave nearly $7 million in grants to projects "that run the full range, from the most 'safe' to the most potentially provocative," Gillies says. They range from $10,000 for the restoration of New York City's Bryant Park to $20,000 for the legal defense fund of Cincinnati's Contemporary Arts Center to defray trial-related costs in the center's litigation involving the Robert Mapplethorpe exhibition.

When artists and dealers recall the market of the mid-'80s, they rarely fail to omit stories of the sudden association of art and artists with power and glamour. "Everybody bought, it almost didn't matter what," says Paris dealer Yvon Lambert. "People opened galleries the way they might open a café or boutique, without knowing much. The idea was investment."

Today, gallery owners report, collectors are "serious." The market is "slow." "The '80s market was sick because so many people were playing the money game," comments Susumu Yamamoto, president of Fuji Television Gallery in Tokyo, adding that speculative buying comprised about 80 percent of all market activity in the '80s. "Though it's much smaller now, the market is healthier. I think there's more of

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©DAVID GAMBLE

Norman Rosenthal, exhibitions secretary of London's Royal Academy, supports a lottery as a way to finance art shows.

an interest in understanding quality."

On the other hand, some artists point out, the relief that the hysteria of the '80s is over has led to an unjustified, wholesale rejection of the achievements of the era. "There's this thing about the '80s that there was something corrupt about them—that artists rode on the coattails of this mania to buy work, so we ought to just get back to real values, sort of ignore the work that was done in the '80s," says artist Eric Fischl. He describes the market for his own paintings—which are priced at $100,000 to $200,000, a 20 percent drop from last year—as "all right." But, he adds, "a lot of people I know are depressed and nervous" about the market slump.

"Things are really slow right now," says painter April Gornik, whose paintings are in the $40,000 range. "I know a lot of people in that boat." Gornik disputes Dominique Bozo's contention that the market slowdown will have positive effects on artists' creativity. "Making art is a lonely profession. There's a momentum from knowing people want your work. If it slows down, if you get the feeling there's less interest, you feel it."

However, artists and dealers say, the market is less difficult for artists who are just starting out, because collectors are willing to take a chance. "I'm glad I didn't make it in the '80s because then I'd be stuck with $60,000 prices and works I couldn't sell," says artist Fred Tomaselli, half in jest. Tomaselli's painterly constructions composed of "psycho-active chemicals" from aspirin to stronger drugs have been shown at several East Coast venues as well as at the Christopher Grimes Gallery in Los Angeles, where most of the works in his one-man show last spring, priced in the $1,000-to-$3,000 range, sold. Today's atmosphere, he adds, "doesn't seem so involved with money, success, and fame, but with the idea of doing your best work, whatever that might mean."

"In this economic situation, where there is not as much money to buy art as there was in the '80s, what is there becomes more visible," says New York dealer Pat Hearn, one of many gallery owners to report a surge in calls for studio visits.

The Japanese, the most visible buyers in the late '80s, have dropped back after a string of messy art scandals last year. "There's currently an unwillingness to make splashy investments, whether in real estate or in art," says John L. Tancock, acting president of Sotheby's Japan. "I would be surprised if 1 or 2 percent of the successful bids at Sotheby's Impressionism sale last spring had been made by Japanese."

The German market is in relatively good shape, according to Munich-based Peter Graf zu Eltz, a partner in Berlin's Villa Grisebach, one of the country's most successful auction houses. "We do notice our own little recession and the pessimism engendered by the fiscal and economic problems of German reunification," he explains. "But it is not dramatic, and there are no signs of gloom and doom among German collectors, who account for the overwhelming majority of our customers. They have simply become more selective and cautious than they were two or three years ago, and we are encouraging them in that direction." The volume of sales, zu Eltz reports, grew by 10 percent last year. Düsseldorf dealer Hans Mayer describes the German market as "very healthy for art. The speculation is finished. Many of the old collectors are coming back. From '87 to '90 they were afraid to buy because everything was so crazy."

European buyers are also accounting for an increasing

COURTESY TATE GALLERY, LIVERPOOL

The Tate Gallery's branch in Liverpool. Its success has led to plans for new branches in St. Ives and Norwich.

portion of sales in the U.S., according to Hearn and other dealers. Hearn, for example, says that European buyers—Germans, Swiss, French—account for about 70 percent of her sales these days. In the case of Julia Scher, an artist whose large, high-tech installations exploring the psychology of security systems cost about $25,000, Europeans "understand it immediately."

The recession has forced galleries around the globe to shut their doors. Still, new spaces have opened that focus not on sales but on intimacy and discussion. A/C Project Room is located in the lower Manhattan offices of Art Cart, an art-moving company run by artists. The esthetics of the space, a former sweatshop, reflect its philosophy, says Paul Bloodgood, a painter who curates shows of emerging as well as established artists there. "It's good for the work to have to compete with the history of the room, rather than being shown in a totally sterile space. It's more interesting curatorially to show it in ways it won't be shown in other galleries."

Other curators are also finding alternative sites in which to show art, and not just for financial reasons. "I put on exhibitions in spaces that best suit the work," says London curator Jay Jopling. "It might be a gallery, but more often than not it will be an independent space—such as a riverside apartment or an old printing factory. It circumvents the restrictions of the 'white cube' gallery space." Brian D. Butler, former director of the Burnett Miller Gallery in Los Angeles, says he shows work in his Santa Monica apartment "to concentrate on the artists, not on the running of the gallery." Last June sculptor Alain Kirili, who splits his time between New York and Paris, hosted a week-long exhibition entitled "Quiet Days in Clichy" in a private Paris apartment. "It's the kind of project that could not be realized by institutions, which must plan far in advance, go through a bureaucracy," says Kirili. "But it is essential to keep the cultural situation alive."

A growing tendency is not to curate in the traditional sense of the term, but to put out a call for works on a specific theme—and to hold panel discussions on the day of the opening. "We put quality on the back burner here. Our basic premise, instead of commodity exchange, is the exchange of ideas," says artist Mike Ballou, who runs an alternative space called Four Walls out of his garage in the Greenpoint section of Brooklyn. "It's a different kind of concept of an exhibition," says artist Adam Simon, who cofounded the space in his Hoboken loft in 1984. "It starts out like an opening and turns into a forum where the audience is on some kind of equal footing with the artists. The artists are there, actually responding, having an exchange with the audience." Four Walls exhibitions have been based on such subjects as "Neurotic Art," "Technocracy," and deadpan abstraction, a theme conceived by painter Amy Sillman. She was responding, she says, to "women who were painting abstractly, fighting this subversive struggle in their minds that they were trying to work out somehow with their painting. That's the great thing about Four Walls," she explains. "You can come in and say, 'I've got a hunch about something—can I do a show?' and they say 'Sure,' and if it doesn't come off they're not mad at you." Ballou concurs. "The stakes aren't as high here," he says. "You can quite easily fall on your face and it would be just fine. It's about artists doing what they want to do." ■

MICHAEL HOWARD

Adam Simon, cofounder of the Brooklyn alternative space Four Walls, introduces the artists in the show "Transmission of Violence." "It's a different kind of concept of an exhibition," he says. "The artists are actually having an exchange with the audience."

CONNOISSEUR
New York
November 1991

The Discreet Charm of Louise Bourgeois

LOUISE BOURGEOIS LEADS A VISITOR THROUGH HER labyrinthine studio, a huge Brooklyn loft cluttered with wrought iron gateways, shelves of glass bottles, marble blocks chiseled into body parts, an inventory of tools, ancient tin boxes, and innumerable mysterious objects. The seventy-nine-year-old Bourgeois, a diminutive woman in a blue smock, pushes her way into a tiny chamber constructed from old doors. Inside, an oversize marble ear rests on a rough base. Smiling mischievously, the artist picks up a wooden gong and strikes a large circular piece of metal that leans against the wall, producing a resounding ring.

"This room explores the dialectic between pain and pleasure," says the artist. "It is a place for one person to meditate upon their own level of tolerance—to noise as well as other kinds of suffering."

Many of Bourgeois's sculptures call to mind primal terrors and raw sexual nightmares. A savage surrealist wit infuses the artist's visual probes into such universal dichotomies as alienation and intimacy, liberation and claustrophobia. Revulsion, cruelty, and the urge to tease are among her constant themes. "My father was a teaser, and now I am a teaser too," she says.

Bourgeois's parents restored tapestries in a large mansion cum workshop outside Paris. She studied mathematics at the Sorbonne before discovering her vocation as an artist. Her marriage to Robert Goldwater, an American art historian, led to a 1938 move to New York. But Bourgeois's work only began to be taken seriously after Goldwater's death in 1973, and it wasn't until the late 1970s that she became widely recognized as a pioneer of trends in contemporary

The Surreal Thing: Bourgeois in her studio.

A detail of *Ventouse* (1991; marble, glass, and electric light; 34″ × 33″ × 78″), now at the Robert Miller Gallery.

art and one of the most important living sculptors. "I don't have to show my work," she says. "It is not a necessity. In any case, art cannot be made for money or acclaim. It is made for self-affirmation, to preserve sanity, and above all for survival."

This month, Bourgeois is one of forty-three artists included in the massive "Carnegie International" show in Pittsburgh. One of the exhibit's august presences, she is represented by six of her small rooms made from doors, which she calls cells. "I like the different connotations of the word *cell*. It suggests both prisons and the biological." Meanwhile, in "Louise Bourgeois: Recent Sculpture," the Robert Miller Gallery in New York City is presenting a large piece titled *Ventouse*, named after the French cupping jars applied to the skin to draw out poisons, which have been incorporated into the work. (As a child, Bourgeois used these devices on her mother, who suffered from emphysema.) Also this month, at New York City's Museum of Modern Art, Bourgeois's *Twosome*, a thirty-six-foot-long construction made of oil drums, is part of "Disloca-

tions," a show that features works by other contemporary artists such as David Hammons, Sophie Calle, Ilya Kabakov, and Bruce Nauman.

Bourgeois's career spans almost all the movements of twentieth-century art. She studied with Fernand Léger in Paris in the 1930s, befriended Marcel Duchamp in New York after the war, and knew the Abstract Expressionists when they were eager paint-splattered youths crowding around the Cedar Tavern in Greenwich Village. These days, her work is admired by acknowledged leaders of the younger generation, from Jenny Holzer to Robert Gober, and seems especially topical at a time when many artists are examining issues of sexual rage, censorship, and repression in this anxiety-ridden age of AIDS. "With sculpture," says the artist, "you keep pushing against the limits until the limits destroy themselves." —*D. P.*

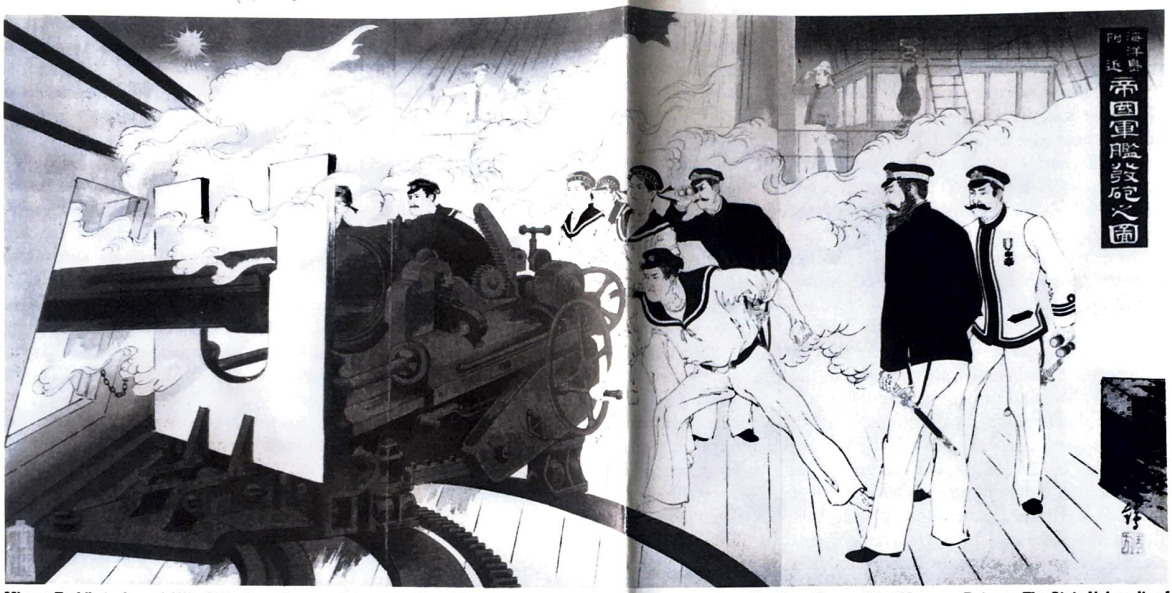
"Carnegie International," The Carnegie Museum of Art, 4400 Forbes Ave., Pittsburgh, PA 15213, 412-622-3131; through February 16. "Louise Bourgeois: Recent Sculpture," Robert Miller Gallery, 41 E. Fifty-seventh St., New York, NY 10022, 212-980-5454; through November 16. "Dislocations," Museum of Modern Art, 11 W. Fifty-third St., New York, NY 10019, 212-708-9480; through January 7.

Louise Bourgeois's *Cell* (1991; glass, marble, and mixed media) is currently on view at the "Carnegie International" exhibit in Pittsburgh.

FIELD WORK

Paul Mattick, Jr.

9475



Mizuno Toshikata, Imperial War Ships Open Fire near Haiyangtao, Oban Triptych, 1894, Woodbock rint. Courtesy Jane Voorhees Zimmerli Art Museum, Rutgers, The State University of New Jersey. Gift of Mr. and Mrs. Herbert D. Schimmel.

October

New World Order. On October 17th *the House voted, by 286 to 135, to support a provision previously* passed by the Senate (by 68 to 28) imposing restrictions on the National Endowment for the Arts. Formulated by Jesse Helms, the measure prohibited the Endowment from using tax dollars "to promote, disseminate or produce materials that depict or describe, in a patently offensive way, sexual or excretory activities or organs." A few weeks later, the House narrowly voted the "corn for porn" measure, dropping Helm's provision in exchange for cheaper grazing rights for the Western ranchers. This, finally, led to a Senate vote against the Helms measure. Nevertheless, it is striking that these legislative events seemed to pass almost unnoticed by an art world that only a year ago was up in arms about Senator Helms's assault on a right to state-financed free speech.

Then, artists demonstrated and signed manifestos; museums held symposia and lobbied congressmen; art magazines discussed the matter endlessly while gallery shows and performance pieces bravely provoked the powers that be; talk radio was full of it. This year I haven't run into a person giving it more than a passing thought. Th ttacks visited by right-wing newspapermen nd Senator Stevens of Alaska on the Smith onian-sponsored exhibition devoted to *The Vest as America*—which led to threats to cut he Smithsonian's funding and the cancellat on of a second venue for the show—were co ntered by a few journalists and historians defending the show's revisionist approach; artists and museum people displayed littl active solidarity, or even interest.

Defense of the Federal muse was thus left to liberal politicians, who may well find it easier to fight for culture than for national health insurance. (The handful of New York artists and arts administrators who testified at the end of the month against anti-obscenity restrictions on the N.E.A. were summoned to the Brooklyn Museum by Representative Barbara Boxer, whose subcommittee was preparing a report on the Endowment.) And above all it is the right-wing pols who have remained faithful to this issue. After all, it worked, to some extent, for them: Helms was reelected, and his fellow conservatives garnered a good bit of publicity (and no doubt electoral support) from enthusiasts of Family Values, while the taxpayers' money could be defended without mention of tobacco subsidies, military spending, or the space program.

A cynic might suggest that last year's free-speech brouhaha, though doubtless sincere at the time, turned out to be an art-fashion Theme of the Year. A more sympathetic viewer might ascribe the remarkable obliviousness of today's art world to the continuing travails of the N.E.A. to an understandable preoccupation with the deepening effects of the economic recession on museum funding, the art market, and teaching jobs. Is art on the way to being returned by the force majeure of the economy, whose antagonist in the ideal scheme of things it is, to the minor position that is its traditional lot in American life? Could it have been largely the debt-sparked economic miracle of the Reagan years that gave it wings for once to fly? Might it be that in a preoccupation with economic survival, art workers will find themselves on the same ground as the American public at large?

A Spurned Woman. The exhibition called *Dislocations* wished, among other things, to bring the politics of race and gender into The Museum of Modern Art. However slight or strong the work on display, it was eclipsed during the opening (October 16th) by the just-concluded Senate hearings on the confirmation of Clarence Thomas to the Supreme Court. Among the people I ran into at MoMA, at any rate, sound bites on the show rapidly gave way to long discussions of the high points of the hearings and their

Art Trust

9175

By Peter Schjeldahl

Logy from summer? Limp from the latest from Moscow? Me, too. How are we going to get in shape for an art season that bodes to be crunch time of the '90s, crucible of the 20th century's next, and last, nameable era? I just made up that boding. (If I'm wrong, you won't remember. If I'm right, I'll remind you.) Having rusticated for two months far from Manhattan and the Hamptons (good name for a lounge act), I have as my basis for prophecy only secondhand gossip and straws in the wind. They will have to do.

An intermittently reliable source tells me that a leitmotif of all the Hamptons parties I managed to miss was the keening of midcareer art stars terrified for their lifestyles in the still skidding market. "Remember last year everybody got so nice? Nervous, right? This year we are looking at panic." That makes sense. So does the ongoing consolidation, recently reported by Roberta Smith in the *Times*, of a fresh, downscaled gallery scene on the relatively boutiqueless southern flank of Soho, epicentered around Broome and Wooster.

Every major shift in the New York art world is signaled by establishment anguish and a new neighborhood.

We have accumulated in abundance the indispensable lubricant for a major shift. The lubricant is boredom. We are bored with the market-besotted '80s-type art world and its showroom product lines. (Who are "we"? The bored ones.) We are bored with auctions. We are bored with dealers as celebrities and collectors as celebrities. We are bored also with celebrated theories. Politically corrective critique bores us with its forever unexamined Utopian fatuities. (Amid the clatter of toppling Lenin statues, the plight of a magazine called *October* becomes touching. Will they change the name to *August*?) We aren't bored with multiculturalism. We don't know what it means yet. Multiculturalists retain a shot at center stage, in other words, but should be aware they are playing to a tough house.

The big New York action this season will be in museums. That's how much things are changing. The museums dithered or snoozed through the art bouts of the '80s, except for the Whitney, which hung in like a game, punch-drunk welterweight. The Whitney is under energetic new management, with director David Ross. The Guggenheim, under the grandiosely ambitious old management of director Thomas Krens, will open [illegible] digs with its international [illegible] cast of curators and the chance to redeem an institutional [illegible] rant for pratfalls.

Meanwhile, circle [illegible] October 16. That's when MOMA [illegible] "Dislocations," curator [illegible] storr's show of installations [illegible] Louise Bourgeois, Chris Bur[illegible]den, Sophie Calle, David Hamm[illegible], Ilya Kabakov, Bruce Nauma[illegible] and Adrian Piper. It will be [illegible]MA's first serious attempt in t[illegible] decades to catch a breaking wa[illegible] of contemporary art.

What we want [illegible] season ("we" being the wa[illegible]ng ones) is shakedown simplific[illegible]n of the art culture, reduced [illegible] as much as possible to communi[illegible]ons of artists and newly self-con[illegible]ous audiences. As a practical matter, the favored mode of the [illegible] art will be installational. We won't much want the distracting complications of objects, with their commodity glamor and squalor, though if we sneak off individually and ogle a few [illegible] one will arrest us. We want to walk into spaces temporarily transformed by particular artists' [illegible] trigger particular thoughts, feelings [illegible] and reflections bearing on [illegible] they are and who we are. [illegible] the hot words, the words to track this year.) We are in a mood for philosophical pleasures of clarification pertaining to delirium.

The '90s art world is implosive outside, explosive within. Much is made, notably by putting-the-best-face-on-disaster dealers, of an exodus from the art market of "speculators" and other species of unserious money. (Dealers have an enviably efficient way of identifying people who are serious about art, by the names signed on checks most recently.) Less noted is an evaporation of *spectators*, definitive class of the wider '80s art world—a milieu in which calculating artists, collectors, dealers, independent curators, and attendant hustlers were the active inner circle of a game that radiated outwards through ever more passive rings of institutions and media to a crowded periphery of mere onlookers. (Octobrists and other academic intellectuals played a countergame—sociologizing art culture and moralizing the sociology—that was hardly less overbearing than the commercial and way less fun.) Onlooker status is being abolished. Now everybody is a player, or at least not provably a nonplayer, if only he or she commits to weighing personally the new art.

The '80s art world was like a stock market, with brokers broadcasting the latest values to a distant constituency. The '90s art world is like a laboratory that broadcasts very little to the outside, over the short term, other than the occasional muffled kaboom when an experiment blows up. That's a mark of successful art now: scorches on the psyches of an audience whose presence set something off. You have to be there. ("There" being any site—museum, alternative space, downscaled gallery—free enough of bullying agendas to afford clean contact of artist and audience.) By our scorches we know ourselves.

Who do you trust? That will be our question this year, addressed to each other when we compare notes on the hosts of contemporary artists claiming to illuminate and change our lives. Do you trust Bruce Nauman? Almost everybody seems to trust Bruce Nauman, out there in New Mexico creating sculptures and videos about the iffiness of being an artist at all. How about Adrian Piper? Is the reliable pain (for *some of us*) of Adrian Piper's punches below the belt of American racial anxieties a feeling tantamount to trust? It is if it makes a difference. Putting ourselves in the hands of artists, we will discover which hands are good, which are bad, and which are cruel to be kind. The same goes for curators, critics, and other mediators, who had better look sharp because the going level of diddle tolerance in the better (mainly but not exclusively younger) segments of art's audience seems very low.

The most sensational single artwork of the coming season will be Chris Burden's contribution to "*Dislocations*," a huge copper-plated steel structure, a sort of vertical Rolodex, functioning as a memorial to the Vietnamese war dead. "Their" dead. Up to 3 million names (most of them computer-scrambled variants on the few thousand that research could authenticate) are even now being engraved on the copper plates, representing the native toll North and South, military and civilian, of America's Southeast Asian catastrophe. Anyone who has been devastated by a visit to Maya Lin's Vietnam memorial in Washington, D.C., can only tremble to imagine the impact of Burden's at MOMA. Can it fail? Anything can fail. (This makes life interesting.) But already, simply by his concept, Burden has expanded the thinkable possibilities and sharply raised the stakes of present art.

Contemporary art is again something you get to be in on, to be party to, without taking an oath to manipulate or be manipulated. (To be challenged is not to be manipulated.) That's the good news. There is no bad news. It's like the benefits and ordeals of democracy in the Soviet Union, if it develops well. Everybody there will have a portion whether or not they were in the smallish crowd outside the parliament building when the tanks threatened. Those in the crowd will have, additionally, only the memory of an experience. Such memories shared by a few, of things significant for many, may be too much to hope for from mere art, but it is too late now to stop hoping.

Here we go. ■

Review/Art

At the Modern, Works Unafraid To Ignore Beauty

9475

By ROBERTA SMITH

FOR those who still see art and the art museum as respite from the pressures and problems of everyday life, "Dislocations," the Museum of Modern Art's latest foray into the contemporary, is going to be hard to take, at least at first. This exhibition, which is the first one organized by Robert Storr, the museum's new curator of painting and sculpture, is devoted to challenging, discomforting installation pieces, created especially for the show.

The seven artists Mr. Storr has selected represent a consciously varied mix of sex, race, generation and viewpoint, but are all well-known excavators of the substrata of late 20th-century life: the Americans Chris Burden, Louise Bourgeois, David Hammons, Bruce Nauman and Adrian Piper, the French artist Sophie Calle and the Russian Ilya Kabakov.

The exhibition formed by their efforts is at once moving and infuriating, one-sided in its esthetic approach but encompassing in the issues it tackles.

The museum has been unusually generous in giving itself over to this often difficult art, allowing the artists free rein in the lower gallery, on the third floor and even in the hallowed permanent collection itself. This show reflects an increased sensitivity to contemporary art and a heartening desire to respond to its special needs, although it is in fact not unprecedented at the museum. It should be remembered that its 1970 "Spaces" exhibition presented installations by five artists and one artists' collaborative in specially designed galleries.

Scott Frances/Museum of Modern Art

Detail of "Anthro/Socio," by Bruce Nauman, in "Dislocations" at the Modern.

Like "Spaces," "Dislocations" celebrates the determination to move beyond the portable art object, supposedly making art more real and engaging, closer to life itself. In keeping with the fashions of the moment, which favor clear-cut, preferably political, subjects, the show comes at you from all sides, often with the tribulations of war, colonialism, racial prejudice, childhood pain, memory and simple human existence utmost on its mind.

The show's flaws stem from the fact that these efforts sometimes have a streamlined, simplifed quality, as if all wrinkles had been ironed out for the museum's large public. Mr. Nauman's video installations are better when they also include his sculptures; Mr. Hammons's efforts are more visceral when they emphasize discarded or psychologically charged materials, from bottle caps to human hair. In addition, there is often a sense that the message and medium are out of sync in these pieces, that the concept has been emphasized at the expense of form with results that can be earnest and preachy, or that don't seem inevitable. It's not clear, for example, why the three million names in Mr. Burden's piece, "The Other Vietnam War Memorial," had to be etched on copper; the impact of their great numbers would have been much the same had they been printed on paper covering the walls.

Adding to the earnestness is a consistent and rather puritanical disdain for simple visual pleasure as an important experience in itself and vehicle for understanding the world. At certain points, the exhibition, which opens on Sunday, swings between extremes of art-as-funhouse and art-as-tutorial, bent on making each viewer a better citizen or a more self-aware person. (It can convey the rather creepy feeling that art is now going to spend the 90's doing penance for the 80's.) But with time, the show becomes engrossing — especially in the ways the individual works play off one another — even though a steady diet of this type of art would leave one extremely undernourished.

In the museum's downstairs galleries, one can be harangued by Mr. Nauman's "Anthro/Socio," in which a bald white man, seen in enormous video projections, half-shouts and half-sings, in relentless repetition: "Feed me. Help me. Eat me. Hurt me." A hellish onslaught of sound that suggests a Gregorian chant by way of "Mad Max," it can send one running from the room or force an inner confrontation with one's own conflicted desires to be independent but also protected.

The barren assault of the Nauman piece is juxtaposed with the silent, abandoned stage set that is Mr. Kabakov's "Bridge," another of the crowded, evocative scenes for which this Conceptualist is well known and the most purely magical work in the show. This installation re-creates a Moscow meeting hall in disarray, weaving an elaborate narrative about a display of unofficial Russian art interrupted by the arrival of a horde

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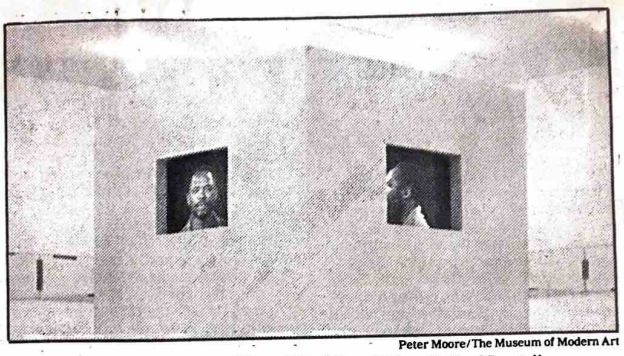

Peter Moore/The Museum of Modern Art

Detail of Adrian Piper's "What It's Like, What It Is, No. 3."

At the Modern, Artworks Unafraid to Ignore Beauty

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Continued From Page C1

of tiny white figures. With the art and benches pushed chaotically against the walls, these nearly infinitesimal beings drift across the room's center like migrants across the steppes or workers across Red Square. From a wooden bridge that traverses the room, visitors can watch their progress through binoculars, experiencing fact and fiction, real space and the imaginary kind in a single child-like instant.

Childhood takes hold in a more nightmarish way in Ms. Bourgeois's "Twosome," a monster machine made of two oil tanks whose added doors and windows suggest a playhouse for children, but whose incessant coupling evokes something more parental, as well as a dangerous trap.

Upstairs, the contrast between the theatrical and the austere continues. Like Mr. Nauman, Mr. Burden offers brutal simplicity: his installation "The Other Vietnam War Memorial" pays homage to the Vietnamese who died during the United States involvement in Southeast Asia with a giant card carousel. Its 12 big copper leaves are engraved front and back with three million names, far more than the 58,000 names on the Vietnam Veterans Memorial in Washington.

Next door is Mr. Hammons's densely theatrical concoction "Public Enemy," a humorous diatribe against politics, great white warriors past and present, and the acquisitive nature of museums, all rolled into one. At its center is a nearly life-size photographic re-creation of the equestrian statue of Theodore Roosevelt that guards the entrance of the American Museum of Natural History on Central Park West, while Indian and African companions cling to his stirrups. Here it is seen under siege, surrounded by sandbags, dynamite, artillery, toy cannons and even a small wooden rifle, and that's only the beginning. Balloons, streamers and confetti evoke the hysteria of a political convention and enormous aromatic piles of damp leaves conjure an odd assortment of associations: the passage of time, autumn elections and, somehow, a sense of thousands and thousands of people trampled underfoot by war, by politics, by imperialism.

Sharpening and purifying the anger implicit in Mr. Hammons's piece is Adrian Piper's "What It's Like, What It Is, No. 3," a bright, clinically white amphitheater in which the viewer can watch a black man on a video monitor intone "I'm not sneaky; I'm not lazy; I'm not noisy; I'm not vulgar; I'm not rowdy," as if peeling away layer upon layer of stereotype and false accusation.

The award for the show's lightest touch goes to Ms. Calle, whose "Ghosts" occupies the display spaces left empty by five paintings temporarily relocated from the permanent collection to the frame shop or outside exhibitions. (Georges Seurat's "Evening, Honfleur," for example, is uptown at the Metropolitan Museum of Art's Seurat retrospective.) Ms. Calle asked 10 members of the museum staff to draw pictures and write descriptions of these works from memory, and their words and pictures have been elegantly transferred to the walls where the paintings usually hang. As these descriptions unfold, full of admiration, personal memory and sometimes dismissal, one is reminded, with some relief, that the pleasures of art are no less varied than art itself.

Somehow Ms. Calle's piece ends up reconciling the disparate subversive strands of "Dislocations" with the very tradition that many of its artists seem to disavow. This unexpected denouement underscores the probability that none of these installations could have quite the same impact alone that they have playing off one another. In the end it is simply the experience of seeing the Modern open its doors to so many different artists and, by implication, so many different art worlds that makes the most lasting impression.

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"Dislocations" opens on Sunday and remains at the Museum of Modern Art, 11 West 53d Street, Manhattan, through Jan. 7.

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THE MAGIC KINGDOM OF THE MUSEUM

Donald Kuspit

Whether artists produce or rich people die, whatever happens is good for the museums. Like casinos, they cannot lose, and that is their curse. For people become hopelessly lost in the galleries, isolated in the midst of so much art. The only other possible reaction to this situation is the one which Valéry sees as the general, ominous result of any and all progress in the domination of material—increasing superficiality. Art becomes a matter of education and information; Venus becomes a document. Education defeats art.

—Theodor W. Adorno,
"Valéry Proust Museum," 1967

When Billy Graham once strolled with him through the Eden of the Magic Kingdom, the evangelist congratulated Walt on having built such a marvelous garden of fantasy. "This is the real world here," Walt sternly replied. "The fantasy world is outside."

—Disney World: 20 Years of Magic, 1991

To say that an artwork has been shown or bought by a museum still affords it enormous cachet, despite the fact that the museum has been discredited as a mausoleum.[1] "Museum quality" still seems the correct model of value, for even the most ideologically correct art wants to cash in at the casino. The point of the recent "Dislocations" show, for example, is its location in the prestigious Museum of Modern Art in New York, not the ostensibly subversive effect of the art on display there. For art's quasi-revolutionary power to disturb and disrupt consciousness is, in fact, neutralized and reified by being given the imprimatur of the museum's authority. The irony and pathos of art's museum destiny were recognized long ago by Paul Gauguin, who in 1895 wrote that "in art there are only two types of people: revolutionaries and plagiarists. And, in the end, doesn't the revolutionary's work become official, once the State takes it over?"[2] To become official is a kind of living death: "Courier's words are still true: 'What the State encourages languishes, what it protects dies.'"[3] Gauguin was alluding to the state museum, the Louvre. But every museum, whether carrying the authority of the state or not (and what museum today is not state supported, however indirectly?), seems to function like a little principality—a sort of Monaco.

What Gauguin missed was the fact that even the most would-be-revolutionary art, as eager to reeducate us as any commissar, longs for a safe haven in a museum. When it has lost favor in the eyes of the world it was made for, it looks for favor in the eyes of posterity, which is represented by the museum. Art identifies with the museum as the site of immortality, for it is the institution that is immortal, not the art. Art knows that its "afterlife" depends upon its institutionalization, which is why, for all the artist's protestations to the contrary, he or she is hardly loathe to be institutionalized. Even Gauguin, for all his independence, tried to manipulate his way to official success. Indeed, today's museums are veritable "salons of independents."

Every artwork, then, is produced with an eye to the imaginary, ideal audience of posterity. This fantasy audience is necessarily the museum audience, for it is here that art will live after the artist's death. Here it will be taken at face value, loved for itself and unchallenged, as if by an eternally good, caring, uncritical parent, shown off to the future, which, in the artist's museum fantasy, is a kindly mirror saying his or her art is the fairest of them all. Thus the museum is not only the

Above: **Richard Hamilton, *The Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum*, 1965,** screenprint from five stencils, 23 x 23". Edition of 50. Opposite: **Gerhard Merz, *Salire*, 1987,** murals, pigment, and silkscreen on canvas and wood. Installation view at the Kunsthalle Baden-Baden, 1987. Photo: Philipp Schönborn.

madonna of the pietà, the madonna in whose all-caring arms art dies the way Leonardo da Vinci apocryphally died in the arms of Francis I (the state), but also the madonna of the Nativity—or, more precisely, the madonna of the second birth. The museum is a much more magical, dialectical place than Adorno thought. It cannot automatically be damned as a cemetery wherein art is necessarily reified and neutralized. Art may, in fact, be reprocessed by the institution, be born again as a spiritual phenomenon superior to its mere material existence in its premuseum life.

The museum is thus not so much a tomb as a perverse fountain of youth. Accepted for membership in the exclusive club of the museum, an artwork can lead a glamorous life that makes the life it had before it joined the club pale in comparison. Or else it finds that it doesn't fit in, and dies in mortification at not living up to expectations. Seen in the museum, an artwork seems either more significant than it ever seemed before or completely insignificant. It is either a devotional object of communion—a sacred relic able to perform emotional miracles if prayed to with the proper respect—or a bone in the desert.

The museum audience, however intellectually sophisticated, unconsciously makes snap emotional judgments about art, deciding its fate in what might seem like a peculiarly gratuitous, peremptory way. For the audience has waited a long time to be, at last, alone with the art in the museum, far from the rough and tumble of the everyday world. Indeed, the goal is to enter into a peculiarly unreflective, yet intense and consummate, relationship with the art object. The theory supporting art demands delayed gratification from it; now, self-conscious in its supposedly rightful place in the museum, that art had better put up emotionally or shut up.

The expected rewards are great. If the museum audience can internalize art as an ideal phenomenon—a perfect thing in an imperfect world—that mirrors its unconscious belief in its own inner ideality or perfection, it will have all the archaic emotional satisfaction it ever wanted. (Interestingly enough, the artist also uses art as a narcissistic vehicle—as an objectification and symbolization of his or her own imagined perfection.) It is art's function as narcissistic fuel for the audience, and as narcissistic projection for the artist, that gives it archaic vitality, making it seem a fountain of emotional youth. To use Adorno's phrase, rejuvenation is the real "*promesse du bonheur*" of art.[4] Narcissism expresses itself most profoundly in the unconscious—and not so unconscious—wish for eternal life, and the museum, as the place where the immortality of art is trumpeted, is presumably the place one can expect this wish to be satisfied, at least in fantasy.

The museum, then, is the place socially set apart for the profoundly intimate relationship—transaction—between artist and audience. The art is the medium between them, as Marcel Duchamp emphasized. The museum is really as private a place as any bedroom, and the stakes in it are higher: the audience's gamble on the immortality of the artist, which it wants to share—even identify with. The rendezvous between audience and artist may or may not work out, depending on the depth of the narcissistic expectations each has of the other. Does the artist make universal claims—does he or she need to be mirrored and idealized by everyone? Or is the artist for the happy few who truly understand his or her sense of entitlement and inward perfection—who are as narcissistically extravagant and self-privileging as the artist? If the reciprocity between audience and artist is good, they appear to merge seamlessly—appear made for each other. If it isn't, they go their separate emotional ways.

But what Duchamp called "the pole of the viewer"

has the last word. Indeed, he thought the audience was ultimately more to the point of art than the so-called art object.[5] For him, if the audience thought an object was "art" then its producer was an artist: one is only nominally an artist until the audience thinks one is. Extending Duchamp's argument, one can say that unless the object satisfies the audience's unconscious narcissistic needs it will not be experienced as immortal. Indeed, it will become a kind of grasshopper, mirroring the fate of the unfortunate woman of Greek mythology who, granted her wish for immortality, forgot to ask for the vitality to go with it. She dwindled away, never quite dying, and, as such, truly experienced a living death. Museums are plagued with many such objects, or "object-locusts," to use a more apt term.

Of course, the audience's fickleness is notorious. People are not lost and isolated in museums, as Adorno thought, but wander around in dissatisfaction, looking for the next art fix—a new art they can fixate on. They look lost and isolated because they are between infatuations. Museum priests assume that some art is inherently more important—magical—than other art, but just in case the audience doesn't appreciate it, they keep other art around. Legions of artists, generation after generation, relentlessly work to satisfy their own and the audience's narcissism. They may never quite get it right, yet they are condemned to make every creative effort, or the museum would have to close its doors and artists would go out of business.

While art's narcissistic importance has been recognized,[6] the fact that the wish for immortality includes the wish to be vital forever has not. Satisfaction of the wish for everlasting vitality is necessarily hallucinatory—no society or individual lasts forever, and both lose vitality before they die—and the museum is the hallucinatory scene of its satisfaction. Art remains attractive as long as the illusion of immortality lasts. Since the

unconscious has no idea of death, this may be a long time. But sooner or later one becomes wide awake in conscious recognition of the reality of death. The bubble of the illusion bursts, and the futility of both art and the museum becomes transparent. Of course, some people—esthetes?—never wake up. They die unconsciously believing that they and the art they identify with are immortal, especially because the art is of museum quality. The pleasure principle has won out over the reality principle in their inner life. Most people, however, cannot afford not to awaken. Their survival in the world and individuation depend on it.

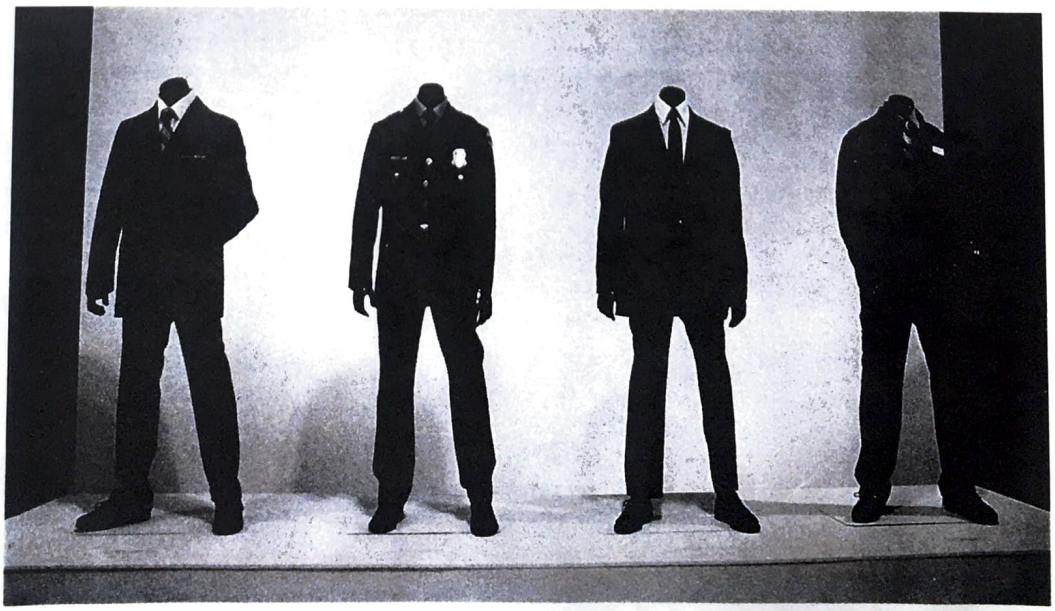
The museum may or may not work magic in the relationship between the artist and audience, but it always works magic on the art object. As Adorno says, the museum turns it into an educational document. The question is whether this trivializes it, as he thought, or whether it can make it more profound, as I think. The object is never what it seems to be, but is always more superficial or more profound—under- or overestimated—for it has no necessary, fixed identity in the audience's eyes. It is only as a public document that the object has a fixed, necessary identity, indeed, becomes "art," transcending its seemingly inescapable narcissistic function. (Some snobbish audiences prefer their narcissistic pleasure the hard, masochistic way, so they let themselves be emotionally victimized by profound "avant-garde" objects. Others prefer easy, fast pleasure, enjoying superficial "kitsch" objects. But, of course, what is profound to one person will be superficial to another, and vice versa. It is rare to find an individual equally satisfied by profound and superficial objects—the optimal state of emotional grace, that is, narcissistic balance. And it is equally rare to find an object that remains profound or superficial—strictly avant-garde or strictly kitsch—forever.)

No doubt, once in the museum, the art object becomes superior capitalist material or property—this is what, in ironical parlance, it means to be of "museum quality"—and is thus allowed the privilege of dominance (with imagined immortality the ultimate category). Material dominance means to be elevated into an idol for posterity, or to become an object of supposedly everlasting interest. Material dominance means that the media gatekeepers open their pearly gates to admit the art into their informational and opinionated heaven—that other magic kingdom. But, in both cases, the artwork is turned into an educational document. And it is the immortality of the art document that is at stake in the museum, not the immortality of the art object. In fact, it is only as document that art *can* be immortal. Indeed, the "documentation" of the object is an attempt to stabilize its identity in time so that it can be self-identical for all time. Lifted out of process by documentation, it seems eternally real, and as such true and immortal—museum-quality art. But the question is: What is the eternal truth of immortal art? And more particularly: What is the right way of documenting the art object? What kind of document is it anyway? The answers depend on what the art document is supposed to educate us to. The very definition and dominance of the museum depends on its interpretation of the educational mission of art.

The museum world is not of one mind about this matter. In fact, there are at least two schools of

thought about the nature of the education art gives us. One is exemplified by Harald Szeemann, free-lance exhibition curator at the Kunsthaus Zurich. Art, he writes, must be assessed "by its mastery and/or freedom of expression....It may be a constantly renewed encounter between inner nature—always active, saturated with images and destinies—and outer surrounding nature which synchronously becomes a sediment."[7] Thus "art is at its best when it is a concentrated essence of life, imagination and dream and of the audacities, weaknesses, the fears and the desires of human beings and their goals....Art's creations are a synthesis of body, soul, heart and eros."[8] The other way of thinking is exemplified by Robert Storr, curator in the Department of Painting and Sculpture at the Museum of Modern Art in New York. He describes himself as "representing the *underdog*," because the underdog is "where the action is."[9] There is clearly an enormous distance between Szeemann's dense, enigmatic language—as much an "enigmatic display of being" as art[10]—and Storr's journalistically thin, sloganeering language. But more crucial is the unbridgeable difference between Szeemann's conception of art as a dialectically rich matrix of internal and external worlds and Storr's one-dimensional conception of art as a site of the oppositional—the social space where the difference between the action of the rebellious underdog and the comfortable passivity of the establishment top dog is disclosed.

Storr's advocacy of the underdog against the top dog shows the prejudicial character of his hierarchical division of the art world, which is intended to be emblematic of the basic class division of Western society. But is it? There is, in fact, a simplistic Solomonic wisdom in Storr's separation of artists into top dogs and



underdogs (also insiders/outsiders).[11] It is implicitly modeled on the Cartesian mind/body distinction, or, more pointedly, the distinction between the mind's higher effete intellectual functions and the body's lower "instinctive" ones. But is the "action" really more in one place than in the other? Is the one really more necessary and authentic than and thus preferable to the other? Who determines which "action" is more legitimate? Both sides suffer from Storr's facile, obsolete, nondialectical distinction.

In fact, the locus of Storr's distinction is the museum. Art already institutionalized is top dog, art uninstitutionalized is underdog. Narcissistically—almost solipsistically—Storr thinks the institution he works for is the arbiter of artistic significance. In practice this means that art is de facto significant if it is shown in and/or owned by the museum. But Storr wants it both ways: he wants to straddle the establishment and nonestablishment worlds, playing off each against the other. He is in incomplete revolt against both. In practice, his only sense of an artwork's significance is its standing vis-à-vis the museum, the presumed essence and center of the art world, the very lever that moves it. Storr wants to bring the underdogs into the museum, in rebellion against the top dogs. But brought into the museum, the underdogs become top dogs, by the museum's self-definition as the pinnacle of the art world—of more sublime importance than any art gallery or art magazine or art school. Storr is compelled to scramble for new underdogs to sustain his revolt. But what is it a revolt against? In fact, it is not a true revolt, because it never questions the museum's claim to be the sacred space of true significance. Storr is trapped in the vicious circle of the museum's conceit. In a sense, all he is doing is feeding the museum lion fresh artistic fodder, so that it will never die of boredom. Since there are always more underdogs than top dogs, by reason of the museum's exclusivity, Storr can play turnstile forever. Access is always limited, and many artists just never have the right change to get in.

It is worth noting that however inadequate, even hollow, the top dog/underdog distinction might be, it persists as a criterion of significance in the American museum, suggesting that the American curator cannot understand art outside the museum context. There might seem to be evidence to the contrary: for example, David Ross' advocacy of video as quintessentially of the zeitgeist, Kirk Varnedoe's conception of avant-garde art as a "fine disregard" for the existing rules of the art game, and Storr's own interest in the "encounter between the subjectivity of the creator and the objectivity of material reality."[12] But the fact of the matter is

Opposite, above: **Susan Wides, *Masterpiece Theater*, 1986,** Ektacolor print, 30 x 30". Opposite, below: **Fred Wilson, *Guarded View*, 1991,** four mannequins with museum-guard uniforms, 75 x 48 x 166". Installation view at Metro Pictures, N.Y. This page: **Thomas Struth, *Louvre 2, Paris*, 1989,** Cibachrome print, 86 x 72⅛". Edition of ten.

that video becomes emblematic of the "real time" of the zeitgeist because it stands in opposition to the unreal time—timeless spirit—of the museum; the existing codes of art are maintained and enforced by the museum; and it is the museum that "objectively" and "subjectively" defines what material will be considered art. Ross, Varnedoe, and Storr, as museum curators, want no doubt to indicate that the museum will catch up with actual "art" practice—open its doors to the different new objects proposing themselves as art—but the closed system of the museum is implicitly their point of departure and their touchstone. The museum may not be hermetically sealed, but it is closed in that it thinks that the art in it is objectively significant.

It is precisely when an art object does not seem to measure up to the standards of objective significance, and thus seems opposed to the very idea of the museum, that it becomes of interest to it. For the museum, as understood by Storr, this threatening opposition is the real reason the art is "different." The other likely

reason, what Szeemann describes as the artwork's life-world significance (which is different in kind from that of the art already preserved in the museum), is understood as less important. The threat represented by the opposition must be dealt with—and the best way of doing so, after a decorous interval symbolizing the museum's support of the art already in it, is to accept the "revolutionarily" different art into the museum, later rationalizing it as far from different, that is, as an evolutionary step in the history of art.[13] The fact that "the art of our contemporaries has no precise history," as Rudi Fuchs says, and that the museum's attempt to give it one denies the dialectical journey in which it really participates,[14] suggests that the museum offers a false consciousness of contemporary art. It tends to view an alien art defensively through an idealized vision of art's overall history, that is, one that forces it into a linear procrustean bed, when it is, in fact, as Robert Smithson said, "a sprawling development," like nature.[15] Forced into historical place, the new art loses its threatening alienness; it seems, after all, to be playing by the rules, including the avant-garde rule of breaking the rules. That authentically different art couldn't care less about the museum and the rules of past art—that its struggle is to effect the expressive synthesis of inner and outer worlds, as Szeemann remarks, and that it will survive as art if it becomes their concentrated essence, independently of the museum and the art in it—never occurs to the museum.

The distinction between Szeemann's sense of art, which carries it beyond the museum, and Storr's sense of art, which trivializes it into a museum phenomenon, is implicitly a distinction between European and American attitudes to art. It is a distinction embedded in Adorno's account of the difference between Valéry's and Proust's attitudes to art, and how these reflect what the experience of art in a museum can be. Valéry's "own attitude, the elevation of art to idolatry, did in fact contribute to the process of reification and dilapidation which, according to Valéry's accusation, art undergoes in museums. For it is only in the museum, where paintings are offered for contemplation as ends in themselves, that they become as absolute as Valéry desired, and he shrinks back in terror from the realization of his dream. Proust knows the cure for this. In a sense works return home when they become elements of the observer's subjective stream of consciousness. Thus they renounce [the] cultic prerogative" they have in the museum.[16] The American curator—a kind of vulgarized Valéryan—tends to invest art with the objective necessity the museum is supposed to occupy as the place of art's manifest destiny. Through the idolatry of art—presenting works of art as cult objects—the museum contemplates its own absolute authority. Testifying to that authority, art obtains its own and becomes as tautologically indispensable as the museum believes itself to be. At the same time, it is flattened into one-dimensionality.

The European curator—a sophisticated Proustian—tends to give art the subjective necessity that the

individual has. This provides it with a kind of "roundedness," to allude to E. M. Forster's distinction between flat and round characters. Szeemann's work of art is in fact a microcosm of the tensions—audacity/ weakness, desire/fear, body/soul—that constitute human freedom, cryptically encoded in artifactual form. The curator decodes them through their effect on his or her own subjectivity. Of course, as Adorno says of Proust, this "overestimates the act of freedom in art, as would an amateur,"[17] as well as the curator's own subjective freedom in responding to it. The subjective stream of consciousness takes objective historical form, just as the museum's objective historical form represses subjectivity, diluting and reducing it to a trace mineral in art.[18]

Nonetheless, the European curator attempts to prevent the facile reconciliation of objective museum and subjective art, maintaining that impossibility by emphasizing the museum as the viewer's rather than the object's space. As Jean-Christophe Ammann, director of the Museum für Moderne Kunst in Frankfurt-am-Main, writes, "A work of art, though traditionally an artifact placed in an environment...must seek the opposite of this and address the spectator's perception."[19] Amman and Szeemann, two of the organizers of Documenta 5, in 1972, conceived of the exhibition as a forum for discourse, as its subtitle, "Questioning Reality—Image-worlds today," suggested. Indeed, the critic Jürgen Harten thought that the show would become "some kind of theory-crazed rampage against the established artist-collector-public set-up."[20] The point was to bring canonical conceptualizations of art into question as well as to challenge the idea that any of the art exhibited was itself canonical. This spirit of discourse, implicating the viewer in a marathon of ideas, is maintained by Jan Hoet, the organizer of Documenta 9, which will open in June 1992. As Hoet says of the relationship between museum and audience, "We must come into a discussion, into a dialogue. A verbal dialogue regarding the things placed there just to look at."[21]

There is an attempt by the European curator to use the museum space to emphasize the irreconcilability of art with itself—that is, to present contradictory kinds of art. There is no endeavor, as in the American museum, to resolve artistic differences in a grand panoramic spectacle. Fuchs, for example, describes his philosophy of presentation as one of "combination and encounter," in which works are hung in such a way "that they are continually influenced by others nearby." The individual work is no more than a fragment, "in that in a different environment it receives new significance."[22] For Szeemann, the curatorial "act of

Above: **David Diao, *W.I.M.P. (What Is Modern Painting?)*, 1990,** acrylic on canvas, 48 x 66". Opposite: **Joseph Kosuth, Installation for *"Chambres d'Amis,"* 1986,** Ghent.

choice" is, of necessity, self-contradictory.[23] Thus he tends to run concurrent exhibitions, in 1967, for example, simultaneously showing Pierre Bonnard's paintings with imagery related to science fiction, and Alfred Jarry's "Pataphysics" with work from the contemporary Zurich art scene. Hoet has perhaps the most radical conception of the museum, as his 1986 "*Chambres d'Amis*" show suggests. The exhibition, in which 58 Ghent families opened their homes to 50 artists, in effect disseminated the museum, and the museum itself became a work of art—a genuine installation.

The European curator's principle of irreconcilability in exhibition—the creation of a space that becomes a play of conflicting artistic forces, making both sides seem equally dissident, and implying that they are equally valid parallel lines that can meet only in the viewer's imagination—reaffirms the museum as a place where discontinuity and difference rather than continuity and sameness are disclosed. Thus, the European museum denies a common immortality for art, and in so doing frustrates the audience's wish for immortality. By demonstrating the unresolved tensions within art, it forces the audience back upon the real contradictions in its own life. □

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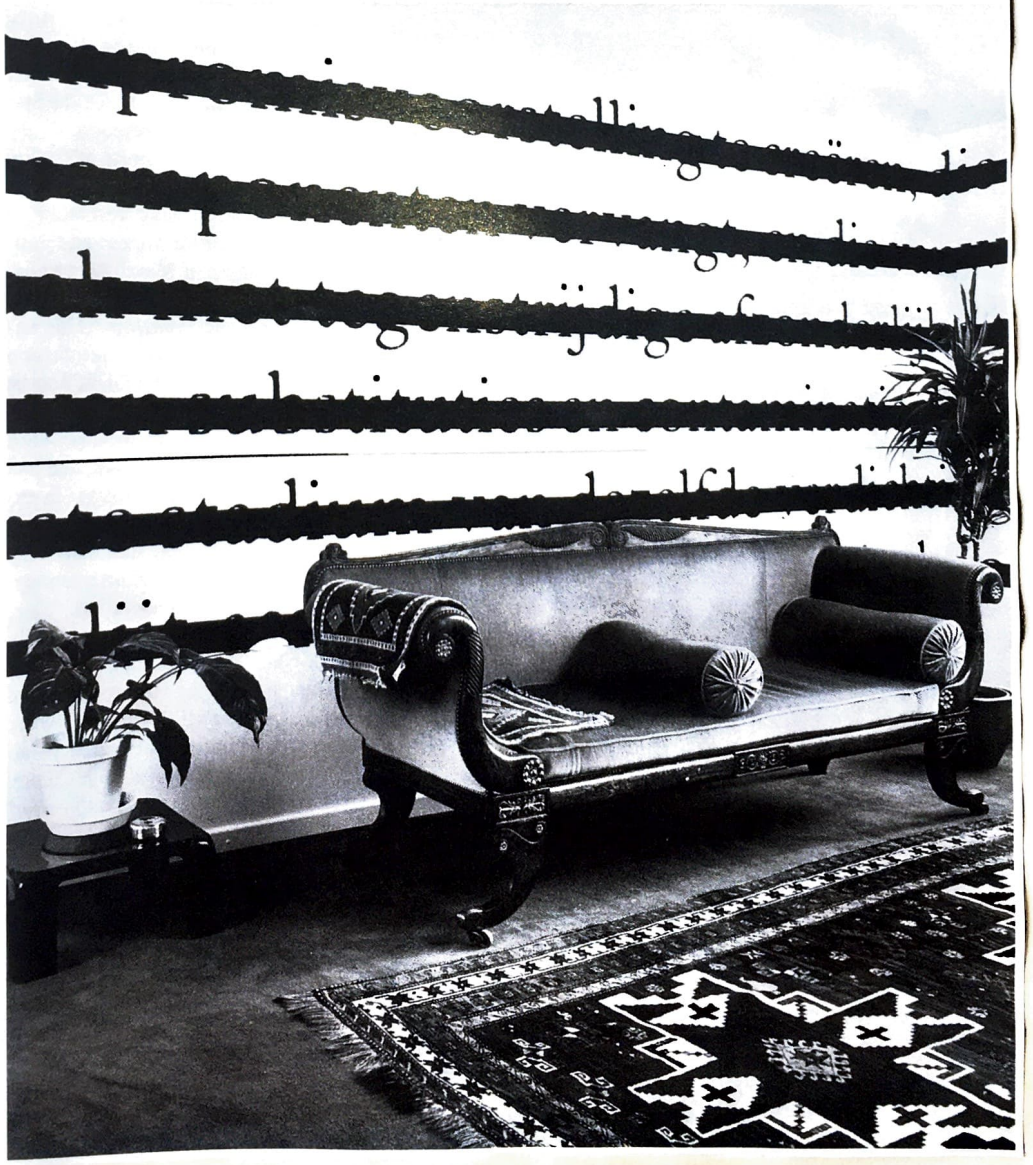
I am grateful to Amy Schichtel and Carol Schwartz for their research and ideas. They are not responsible for my use of them.

1. Theodor W. Adorno, in "Valéry Proust Museum," *Prisms*, trans. Samuel and Shierry Weber, Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 1983, p. 175, notes that "museum and mau-



soleum are connected by more than phonetic association. Museums are like the family sepulchres of works of art. They testify to the neutralization of culture. Art treasures are hoarded in them, and their market value leaves no room for the pleasure of looking at them."

2. Paul Gauguin, *The Writings of a Savage*, ed. Daniel Guérin, New York: Viking Press, 1977, p. 107.
3. Ibid., p. 32.
4. Adorno, *Aesthetic Theory*, 1970, London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1984, p. 17, writes: "Art's *promesse du bonheur*, then, has an even more emphatically critical meaning: it not only expresses the idea that current praxis denies happiness, but also carries the connotation that happiness is something beyond praxis."
5. Pierre Cabanne, *Dialogues with Marcel Duchamp*, trans. Ron Padgett, New York: Viking Press, 1971, p. 70.
6. Otto Rank, *Art and Artist: Creative Urge and Personality Development*, New York and London: W. W. Norton, 1989, pp. 43–47, for example, understands art as "the will-to-self-immortalization, which rises from the fear of life" and serves the wish for "collective immortality."
7. Harald Szeemann, "Cy Twombly: An Appreciation," *Cy Twombly: Paintings, Works on Paper, Sculpture*, Munich: Prestel Verlag, 1987, p. 9.
8. Ibid.
9. Quoted in Nicholas Jenkins, "Robert Storr: Switch-Hitter," *Artnews* 90 no. 2, February 1991, p. 63.
10. Leo Bersani, *The Freudian Body: Psychoanalysis and Art*, New York: Columbia University Press, 1986, pp. 26–27.
11. Robert Storr, *Philip Guston*, New York: Abbeville Press, 1986, p. 95, argues that the reason artists such as Guston become "consummate insiders" is because they were true to themselves, but he does not define what that means. What it seems to mean is that, like Elizabeth Murray, they refuse "to walk the walk or talk the talk of 'high style' vanguardism," which "cost [Murray] full recognition." Storr, "Shape Shifter," *Art in America* 77 no. 4, April 1989, p. 212. For Storr, "'high style' vanguardism" seems to be identified with esthetic pleasure, which he believes artists as diverse as Francesco Clemente, Jim Dine, R. J. Kitaj, and Pablo Picasso dead-end in. See Storr, "Realm of the Senses," *Art in America* 75 no. 11, November 1987, pp. 132–44, 194. I suggest that Storr is unable to appreciate esthetic pleasure not only because he sees no "action" in it, but because he cannot comprehend that art, whatever else it may be, is, as Friedrich Nietzsche writes, "essentially affirmation, blessing, deification of existence," felt as esthetic pleasure. Nietzsche, *The Will to Power*, New York: Vintage, 1968, p. 434.
12. David Ross, currently the director of the Whitney Museum of American Art, was the first curator of video art (at the Everson Museum, in Syracuse, New York). Esthetics are less an issue for him than the presumed "radicality" of the alternative medium. See Rene Becker, "Mr. Lucky," *Boston Magazine* 80 no. 6, June 1988, p. 209.

    Kirk Varnedoe, in *A Fine Disregard: What Makes Modern Art Modern*, New York: Harry N. Abrams, 1990, p. 9, describes the avant-garde artist in terms of the metaphor of the creator of the spirit of rugby, "who with a fine disregard for the rules of football as played in his time, first took the ball in his arms and ran with it." The key point is that the "fine disregard"—a term that suggests disdain—became objectified as the rule of a new game. The whole notion of avant-garde innovation as a "fine disregard" falsifies the anxiety and uncertainty—the desperate search for a new ground of art and self—implicit in it.

    Storr, quoted in Jenkins, p. 64.
13. Varnedoe's use, in *A Fine Disregard*, of Roland Barthes' notion of play—rather poorly developed by Barthes in view of D. W. Winnicott's conceptualization of it—supposedly represents a departure from the traditional formalist evolutionary approach of MoMA's curators. However, his approach tends to remain morphological, as in the 1983 "'Primitivism' in 20th Century Art" exhibition. As such, he is subject to the same criticism Meyer Schapiro made of Alfred M. Barr's account of the emergence of abstract art: "No connection is drawn between the art and the conditions of the moment. He excludes as irrelevant to its history the nature of the society in which it arose, except as an incidental obstructing or accelerating atmospheric factor. The history of modern art is presented as an internal, immanent process among the artists; abstract art arises because, as the author says, representational art has been exhausted." Or, as Varnedoe puts it, someone arbitrarily decided to break the rules—in, of course, a gentlemanly, formal way—of the existing art game. Varnedoe's mechanistic old rule/new rule theory can be criticized the same way Schapiro criticizes Barr's "theory of exhaustion and reaction [which] reduces history to the pattern of popular views on changes in fashion," the game of new looks. Schapiro, "Nature of Abstract Art," *Marxist Quarterly* 1 no. 1, January–March 1937, pp. 79–80.
14. The complete title of Documenta 7, 1982, organized by Fuchs, was "Documenta 7: In which our heroes after a long and strenuous voyage through sinister valleys and dark forests finally arrive in the English Garden, and at the gate of a splendid palace." One can hardly imagine an American curator conceiving an exhibition in such terms. In general, Fuchs believes that every exhibition must have "the lively, expressive quality of dialect." Quoted in Paul Groot, "The Spirit of Documenta 7: Rudi Fuchs Talks about the Forthcoming Exhibition," *Flash Art* 108, Summer 1982, p. 22.
15. Robert Smithson, "Frederick Law Olmstead and the Dialectical Landscape," *The Writings of Robert Smithson*, New York: at the University Press, 1979, p. 124. I believe that for Smithson the dialectical landscape was the alternative to the museum as, in his words, a "null structure," educating us, as Allan Kaprow says, "to a burlesque of fullness," an "aristocratic" sense of fullness that goes hand in hand with its "cosmetic" sense of life. Smithson, "What Is a Museum? A Dialogue between Allan Kaprow and Robert Smithson," *The Writings*, pp. 60, 64.
16. Adorno, "Valéry Proust Museum," p. 184.
17. Ibid.
18. In objectifying art as historically determined esthetic form, the museum ignores the subjective meaning of the "aesthetic...as the last endeavor to find art's psychological justification in itself," as Rank, p. 24, says.
19. Jean-Christophe Ammann, "Richard Artschwager," *Art of Our Time*: The Saatchi Collection, vol. 2, London: Lund Humphries, 1984, p. 9.
20. Jürgen Harten, "Documenta 5: At Kassel," *Studio International* no. 946, July–August 1972, p. 3.
21. Jan Hoet, speaking at "Discussions in Contemporary Culture: Politics of Images" panel, Dia Art Foundation, New York, 10–11 November 1990. In Michael Gibson and Jill Lloyd, "Opening Minds Is Everything: An Interview with Jan Hoet," *Art International* no. 10, Spring 1990, p. 45, Hoet states, "A museum isn't an isolated institution but a means of bringing art to the public."
22. Rudi Fuchs, quoted in Groot, pp. 22 and 23.
23. Szeemann, *Happenings and Fluxus*, Cologne: Kölnischer Kunstverein, 1970, n.p.

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LETTERS

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Losing Patients

TWO OF MY PATIENTS HAVE CANCELED their upcoming surgery because my name did not appear among those listed in "The Best Doctors in New York" [by Janice Hopkins Tanne, November 11]. I enjoy an excellent reputation and am a full professor at New York University Medical Center, and yet this article was powerful enough to disrupt the doctor-patient relationship. Physicians cannot be reviewed like restaurants and movies. Though the author suggests that "there is no reason for readers to look elsewhere if they are happy with their present medical treatment," the nature of her article engenders anxieties and doubts.

Name withheld
Manhattan

There's No Denying It

WEBSTER DEFINES *abnegation* AS "SELF-denial." Would you please tell John Simon to stop using his own word, *self-abnegation* ["Theater: Sons of Butchers," November 11]? It's annoying enough having to keep a dictionary at my side when I read him, but then to find out he's *wrong!*

Tom Dudzick
Queens

John Simon replies: Tom Dudzick is right. "Self-abnegation" is redundant. But if I hadn't made him keep a dictionary at his side, how would he have known it?

At Home on the Range

AFTER READING ERIC POOLEY'S ARTICLE "Kids With Guns" [August 5], I felt compelled to write. I am a white, Jewish, liberal woman who owns handguns and assault rifles. I have not killed anyone, and I hope I never have to. I do, however, enjoy shooting at authorized ranges, and I am a darn good shot. In order to purchase a gun, I had to make a giant leap of conscience. But after the TWA hijacking and the *Achille Lauro* disaster, I realized that there are people out there who will not hesitate for one nanosecond to take my life, so I must learn not to hesitate when my life or a loved one's life is at stake. If these kids had grown up in other parts of the country where everyone owns guns and many children are taught to shoot, they would not be so fascinated with them now. It seems as if guns have become the "in" thing to have among the young black youths precisely because they are such a novelty. Schools and neighborhood organizations should promote gun safety (the NRA has many educational tools available) so that if these kids are around guns, they will not kill someone the first time they pick one up. What ever happened to the Boy Scouts' motto, "Be Prepared"? What if you were the subject of a terrorist attack and a gun dropped at your feet. Would you know how to use it?

Name withheld
Westchester, N.Y.

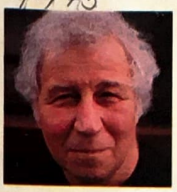
Trite and True

I THOROUGHLY ENJOYED KAY LARSON'S review of the recent MOMA exhibition "*Dis*locations" and "Wisdom and Compassion: The Sacred Art of Tibet" at IBM ["Art: The Human Condition," November 4]. It is rare that one is presented with such a concise summation of the intellectual bankruptcy of the current art world. In Larson's admiring view, the MOMA show represents the "flash-freezing of the human condition at this instant." No, it doesn't. What it represents is another pointless reiteration of the very weariest clichés of this pampered crowd: Vietnam, black as victim, the evils of Manifest Destiny, etc. Does any thinking person really believe such tepid platitudes? And, in reference to Larson's comments about the Tibet exhibit, what, exactly, is the difference between a theocracy with its prayer wheels and our hated "Bible thumpers"?

Peter Pettus
Manhattan

Letters for this department should be addressed to Letters to the Editor, New York *Magazine, 755 Second Avenue, New York, N.Y. 10017-5998. Please include a daytime phone number.*

ARTIST OF THE SOVIET WRECKAGE



YOU ENTERED "THE BRIDGE" along a narrow wooden walkway and proceeded halfway across the room. There you found a long text and several pairs of binoculars. The room was full of overturned chairs, and all along the walls, too dimly lighted to be legible, were paintings and paintings and paintings. On the floor were hundreds of tiny white men cut out of paper. The text explained that a tribunal had gathered to review works of modern art, that there had been a great explosion, that the members of the tribunal had fled and that after their departure these many little white men had appeared rushing in waves across the floor, too small to turn the chairs back or to bring the paintings into the light. This was the Soviet artist Ilya Kabakov's installation at the Museum of Modern Art's "Dislocations" exhibition in January.

There is a literal reading of the piece: the tribunal is the old Soviet official structure, the explosion is glasnost, the white men are the well-intentioned but impotent Russian people who cannot make their country function now. You, the viewer, looking through binoculars, are engaged in an act of surveillance, as the West has lately surveyed the helpless Russian people, as the K.G.B. used to survey them. But these matter-of-fact readings deprive the work of its richness and its complexity.

The paintings and other objects are intentionally obscured; you are tempted to stare through the binoculars forever, but you cannot quite see what has made up this installation. "The metaphysics of space and its contents are completely different in the U.S.S.R.," Kabakov explains. "In the West, objects are of great importance and have a kind of magic attached to them. In Russia, the object is of no interest at all — not because it's an idealistic society, but because everyone knows that things don't work in Russia, that they're broken, that if they're not broken today they will be broken tomorrow and that you can't do anything about it.

"All the meaning is in the context of the thing, the space in which the thing exists. When you walk into a space in the West, you see what's inside this space. And when you walk into a space in Russia, you see *what kind of space it is. When I* make an installation, the most important thing is to create the atmosphere, and the objects don't matter much."

This is an alien idea in the West; most critics, responding to the MOMA installation, commented more on the things in the installation than on the overall quality of it. They failed to recognize that the things were not even meaningfully worn, as in arte povera. In a Kabakov installation, they are as insignificant as the sheet of paper on which a poem is written.

Kabakov's newest work, currently on view at Ronald Feldman Fine Arts in Manhattan, picks up where the MOMA installation leaves off. This time, in a re-creation of a nonexistent Soviet museum, spotlights illuminate enormous paintings by another fictive artist, a Socialist *(Continued on page 74)*

Andrew Solomon is the author of "The Irony Tower: Soviet Artists in a Time of Glasnost."

For the Russian painter Ilya Kabakov, paying attention to details is to miss the picture.

BY ANDREW SOLOMON

"The Man Who Flew Into Space From His Apartment" is part of Ilya Kabakov's installation "Ten Characters." The imaginary inhabitant of this room has propelled himself to freedom with a slingshot harness.

ABOVE: D. JAMES DEE, COURTESY FELDMAN GALLERY. RIGHT: TIMOTHY GREENFIELD-SANDERS FOR THE NEW YORK TIMES

KABAKOV

(Continued from page 55)

Realist. His work is hung on museum walls that are painted in dark colors, wainscoated, with gilded moldings. There is water dripping from several "leaks" in the ceiling of the gallery, into buckets and glasses and pans placed as though by museum staff; the drips produce a celestial "water music." The spotlights are on the paintings, but this exhibition is not about them; it is about the failed bombast of bureaucratized Soviet esthetics and about the accidental poetry to be found in them. The paintings justify the space, but though witty and very accomplished, they are unto themselves, like the paintings in the MOMA exhibition, extravagantly unimportant.

So what is in one of Kabakov's rooms doesn't matter. The obscurity, the chaos, the confused scale, the foggy politics and the touches of magic and sentimentality — these are Russia. The details, amazing or terrible, are irrelevant. Kabakov has never documented a day in the Gulag or made a list of Stalinist abominations or told a story of censorship. Rather, he obliquely describes what it is like to live in a society in which these atrocities are never far away and in which the ideology behind them destroys altogether the dignity of daily life. And then he shows how to ignore or transcend events, as palpable as objects, how to see instead the quality of Soviet life, as diffuse as atmosphere. His work tells how terrible Soviet life is, but it also tells how to be human in the face of it, how imagination can save you, how you survive. Kabakov takes you by the hand and leads you from the oppressions of the world to the freedom within yourself.

IN THE LAST FOUR years, since Ilya Kabakov has lived in the West, his work has been acquired by the Museum of Modern Art, the Vienna Museum of Modern Art, the Ludwig Museum in Cologne, the Pompidou and many other important museums of contemporary art. It has been included in one international show after the next, and an outdoor construction called "The Toilet" was featured prominently in this year's Documenta in Kassel, Germany. He has been invited to exhibit at the Pushkin Museum in Moscow in the spring of 1994.

Kabakov has accepted professorships in Frankfurt and in Copenhagen; he has designed sets for his friend Alfred Schnitke's new work, "Life With an Idiot," at the Dutch National Opera. "It may seem sudden," says David A. Ross, director of the Whitney Museum of American Art, who was one of Kabakov's first champions, "but you have to understand that he had been working out of sight for decades and that his whole lifetime of work was then discovered at once. Finding him was like stumbling across Jasper Johns or Robert Rauschenberg in the full flush of their maturity."

In the late 1970's, Kabakov used to invite close friends to his studio and present his albums, seminovelistic compilations of images and texts on sheets of board about 21 inches by 14 inches and roughly 3½ inches thick when stacked. These works have illustrations in Kabakov's infinitely light illustrative style, operating in a tense dynamic with his often disjointed texts. A great deal of care went into the selection of the guests: only those who understood the encoded language of the artistic vanguard — the thousands of internal references of which personal metaphoric use could be made within artistic circles — were included.

Kabakov asked only 15 or 20 people at a time to these presentations; there were so few to whom he could show his work at all, and the discussion that the albums provoked was most comfortable in small groups. Kabakov's wife, Vika, presided on such evenings, serving tea when it was available. "I will never forget hearing Ilya read those albums for the first time," a younger Moscow artist said to me. "On that day, I began to understand how to be a human being."

Last winter, Ilya Kabakov read his albums for the first time since then. Robert Storr, a curator in the department of painting and sculpture at the Museum of Modern Art, likewise put a great deal of care into the selection of the guests: Nam June Paik and William Wegman came, as well as other important artists, collectors and critics of the sort with whom a major artist should have at least a nodding acquaintance.

Not all of these people knew that there was an encoded language of the Moscow vanguard. They gathered in elegant venues around Manhattan in groups of 15 to 20 to preserve some of the intimacy of "my chamber pieces," as Kabakov called them. There were drinks and there were hors d'oeuvres and there was a great deal of polite conversation. Kabakov's companion, Emilia Kanevsky, translated as he read. Though some of the guests understood the albums in part, many were bewildered: one famous painter, apparently unable to grasp the significance of Kabakov's deliberate appropriation of Socialist style, said casually: "The drawing here is pretty ordinary. I guess it's that secondrate Soviet training."

When Kabakov's installation "Ten Characters" opened at Ronald Feldman Fine Arts in New York just four years ago, he was known only to a small circle of Soviet experts. I remember picking my way through the overwhelming, chaotic heaps of material that made up that exhibition and wondering how anything could be quite so dingy and claustrophobic. But Kabakov's trademark humor and compassion were very much in evidence.

"Ten Characters" is about the terrible dehumanizing circumstances of Soviet life, but it speaks of them with warmth and charm, in the vocabulary of human redemption. Though it describes an experience that was alien to most of its viewers, it gives not so much the sociological thrill of seeing into another world as the empathetic pain of living there for a few minutes.

"Ten Characters" — the first major piece Kabakov did specifically for display in the West — is a re-creation of a Moscow communal apartment, where 10 people have each been given a single room, sharing hallway, bathroom and kitchen. The communal apartment was a commonplace in the old Soviet Union; after the Revolution, grand apartments were given to the proletariat, who were allotted one room each in which to house themselves and, as time went on, their families. Later, these rooms were endlessly reallocated. For Kabakov, this miserable setup — you have no choice about the neighbors with whom you must share facilities — has often done service as a metaphor for all the crowding, all the loss of choice, all the petty brutality of the Soviet system.

> His work tells how terrible Soviet life is, but it also tells how to be human in the face of it.

Each character in "Ten Characters" has been driven to a curious obsession by the congestion. In one room lives "The Man Who Never Threw Anything Away"; in another lives "The Untalented Artist"; in another, "The Man Who Flew Into Space From His Apartment"; in yet another, "The Man Who Flew Into His Picture." In the kitchen, an endless tape of arguing voices rises and falls in a steady cadence.

The glut of detail renders the absent characters with painful clarity; in each room are all the accessories for the chosen mania and a long text to describe its precise manifestations. An element of magic also runs through his work. "The Man Who Flew Into Space," for example, has built a harness and projected himself up to where the currents of freedom run above the world. His room has a great hole in the ceiling; you are left to wonder what delights he found in his strange orbits.

ALMOST EVERYthing Kabakov does makes some use of textual material. Though he is exhibited as a visual artist, he has also been reviewed as a poet and as a novelist. Kabakov's paintings are frequently simple white canvases with some small object and a sentence or two written in the Cyrillic script of a billboard. His albums include texts. His installations always mix written with visual material. You sometimes feel that his pieces are novels in which visual elements fill in for absent words. A painting may ask simply, "Whose teacup is this?" and an album leaf may say, "Galina Makarova is the wife of Rotov, tall one, who comes to us on New Year's Eve." At the literal level, this is obscure: no one called Galina or Rotov has been mentioned elsewhere in the album.

Kabakov explains that these fragments of conversation, as mundane as he can contrive, are full of meaning. Speaking in the language of metaphor and metaphysic in which he conducts much of his ordinary conversation, he says: "By the late 1950's, the Russian language had been destroyed. The language of the intelligentsia and the folk language and the language of professional culture had been amalgamated with the language of bureaucracy. You can't call this Russian: it isn't Russian. It's Soviet language, the language of half a culture, very disgusting but at the same time very fascinating. It's the language I use when I talk to myself. And it is the language we artists use among ourselves, and naturally it is the language my characters have to use.

"By the time I started to create art, Russian people from one end of the country to the other were speaking essentially this same language. And there was a sort of very intensive noise that existed everywhere: it was this language, and it was a noise completely different from that made by the variety of chatter in other languages that you hear in the countries of the West. Because no matter who was using this language or what he was talking about, the underlying theme was the hatred of everything that was going on in this life. Depression and fear ran through the words, as though they had taken the place of the lost grammar of classical Russian, as though they were part of the structure of the language. It was total. I found that you could use this language like a very thick and condensed cake, slicing it and turning it any way you wanted without having it fall apart or lose its meaning. It didn't matter whether what you wrote was short or long, intimate or banal: it was all the same. The hatred was almost visual."

Kabakov's grasp of that hatred, and his ability to convey it with the simplest

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artistic gestures, can be frightening. "Soviet activist art is very different from Western activist art," David Ross observes. "Soviet activism is a function of actually living in the context of an underground, in a state of constant psychological siege, and not of adopting a stance, as most Western activist artists do. So for Kabakov, the straightforward representation of everyday life becomes radical."

What is astonishing is that Kabakov is able to chronicle all the hatred of the Soviet life experience and at the same time to make work which is always at some level about love. His characters are desperate, but they are also beguiling; Kabakov's work has a quality of enormous generosity. "He is, in the original sense of the word, a true humanist," says Rob Storr, who put Kabakov in the MOMA exhibition. "This is high art. Ilya is a full-fledged, wide-ranging, terribly ambitious major artist who delivers the goods. He's the character who is made up of all his characters. His rooms make you acknowledge aspects of yourself you may never have noticed and then make you explore them and enjoy them. That's an uncommon unselfishness."

ILYA KABAKOV RADIATES both intelligence and kindness; he has an easy geniality and a manner of extreme modesty. When you quote to him some praising remark made by a younger Moscow artist, he evinces astonishment and shrugs it off at once. Kabakov offers you praise for the attributes you would have praised, insists that you have helped him to insights he could not previously have conceived and gives you in the most offhand way a sense not only of his virtues but also of your own. He is never critical of people he knows; you would think, to talk to him, that the international art world consisted only of people as gentlemanly as he.

"You cannot get to know Ilya," Moscow artists warned me when I first met him. "You can love him, but you cannot know him." A Moscow critic, Iosif Bahkshteyn, explains it like this: "Ilya has no soul. He doesn't act in the real world like the rest of us. Passions, emotions, jealousy, anger — they are just not there. He has a body — this you can see — and then he has a spirit, an astonishing, beautiful spirit, that seems to linger over the whole world. It is a joy to be with him. But in some way he is always in a different space than you are." An artist said, "His is the benevolence of a priest and not that of a brother."

Kabakov's description of his work fits with this image of disengagement. He dismisses the moral high ground that critics have claimed for him: "Because I am from a broken home in a broken city in a broken country, the idea of being responsible, of being an idealist, is only an idea for me. I cannot make it into a realistic approach to life. I see myself as a person with a broken spine lying in the wreckage after a plane crash. I feel terribly guilty and incomplete because I don't have the energy or the wish or the ability to build a new plane; but all I do is to describe the crash."

Kabakov has seen a lot of the crash. He was born in Dnepropetrovsk, in Ukraine, in 1933. His father was a metalworker at a factory producing bed parts; his mother, a bookkeeper. When World War II began, he was 7 years old; his father went off to fight, and he and his mother were evacuated, first to the Caucuses, then further east and finally to Samarkand, where his career was settled. "Freud is right," he says. "In the beginning of everything there is erotica. When I was 9, an older boy asked whether I wanted to see a naked woman. And I said, Why not? So after school, when it became dark, we crept into a building with paintings and drawings of naked women hanging everywhere. It was the Academy of Art of Leningrad, which had also been evacuated to Samarkand, and this was student work.

"All of a sudden, a dark figure appeared in the corridor. My friend ran, but I was not so quick — he left me alone, scared, very little, in a dark place. And this old woman came to me and in a terrible voice she said, What are you doing here? And I said, I'm looking at these paintings. And she asked, Do you make drawings yourself? And I said, Yes, I do, a lot. So I can say that at the beginning of art there are erotica, lies and fear. And she said, If you make drawings, come show me tomorrow, and if they're good, we'll accept you to the preparatory school of the academy. That evening, I made five drawings and signed each one in red. So the fourth thing that was there at the beginning was ambition. And the next day, they accepted me. The fact of the matter is that I didn't like drawing and I wasn't very good at it, but from that moment on it was my fate."

At the end of the war, Kabakov's father did not return to his family and Ilya and his mother were left alone. Ilya's mother decided to make her son's schooling her sole priority. There began a period during which she and Ilya were wanderers. He went where he needed for his education and she followed behind, to Za-

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KABAKOV

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gorsk and then to Moscow, where Kabakov studied at the Surikov Art Institute.

His mother was unable to get residence papers for these cities and had to live in hiding most of the time. "She slept always fully dressed in her clothes," Kabakov remembers, "so that if somebody should come and knock at the door, she could sit at the table and pretend she was just visiting. Because if the authorities found you staying in a city for which you didn't have papers, anything could happen to you. Of course, her arrangements never went smoothly. She was caught a few times; every time she had to find another hiding place. I looked around and saw that other people somehow managed to live in nice places and have apartments, or at least rooms, and to have families. I couldn't understand why my mother and I had such a terrible life and so many problems."

Kabakov presented every appearance of being a model student: clean, neat and punctual. But already in the academy, he had started to lead a sort of double life, showing respect for the system, getting from it what he could, but hating it and disavowing it in his heart. At the Surikov, he was assigned to the graphics faculty and specialized in illustration. Kabakov was financially desperate and started asking his teachers for work; he got his first commissions while still a student. He was to lead the official life of a book illustrator straight through until glasnost, illustrating, in the course of 30 years, more than 150 children's books.

"I learned everything like a monkey," Kabakov says, "without any feeling at all. And when I finished, I felt that I was not alive. So I decided to create a masterpiece, into which I could put all my ideas and everything I had ever felt and all the beauty I had seen. I believed that this work would make me real." He got a canvas five feet square and for two years he painted. "Then I got bored. And I understood that not only would I be unable to impress anyone else with my masterpiece, but that even for me it was rather disgusting. After that, I was free: I could find a path of my own, without struggling to be all at once a great artist."

So began the period that the younger generation in Moscow calls the golden age of unofficial art. Kabakov settled into a comfortable relationship with his friend Erik Bulatov, who has often been exhibited with him in the West; and they were close to Oleg Vassiliev and to others. In this context, artistic impulses flourished. "The whole time we expected to be arrested, for something terrible to happen," Kabakov says. "But to us, nothing terrible ever happened. We just drank tea in one another's kitchens, discussed and criticized one another's work and traveled together in the summers."

There was no question of showing publicly; the simple fact that they were creating their own art was, by official Soviet standards, transgressive. Their double lives remained secret. Later, in the mid-70's and early 80's, younger followers came and joined them. "We recognized at once these people, with free intellectual souls, crystal-clean in their idealism," Kabakov recalls. "And we welcomed them." With time, an entire language grew up, strongly influenced and shaped by Kabakov, the visual language of what is now called the Moscow Conceptualist movement. The work was always gnomic, in part to avoid the attentions of the K.G.B. But it was indirect beyond its rhetoric: the artists of the vanguard were too wise to propose new radical ideologies to challenge Communism. "Ilya showed us how to redeem human beings from the dehumanizing circumstances of life in this ideological society," one of his followers has explained. "What would have been the point of proposing another ideology in our country, which was ruined by ideology?"

Though Kabakov continued to lead the life of a good illustrator, never making efforts to publicize his work or his

beliefs, his name began to circulate and small works of his were smuggled out of the U.S.S.R. and exhibited abroad. In the 1970's, there was an emigration of figures from the vanguard, including the artists Komar and Melamid and the critics Margarita and Viktor Tupitsyn and Borys Groys. These people all spoke of Kabakov and contributed to his renown. By the mid-1980's, Dina Vierny had put together the first Kabakov exhibition in Paris and a Swiss curator with diplomatic connections had assembled another one in Bern.

"On that day," Kabakov says, "I invited all my friends to the forest and we tied a red ribbon between two trees. At exactly noon, when we knew the exhibition was opening in the Kunsthalle, we cut the ribbon and drank a bottle of Champagne. It was a very bittersweet moment, that this was happening but that I could never be there."

THE RELATION BEtween the artists of the vanguard and the West has always been complex, Kabakov's perhaps more than almost anyone else's. For many artists, actual travel to the West in the last five years — all the artists of Kabakov's circle have now been shown in the West and most have traveled broadly — has been a disappointment. Not for Kabakov: "In the Brezhnev days, my relation to the West was like the fantasy of a young person who has never had the experience of love, but who has read of love in books and imagines what it would be like. Later, there were real encounters with real people and real work from the West, but they were surrounded by unrealistic expectations. It was like an affair: when you meet the object of your affections only for a short time, you create something other than what she is.

"But now it is like marriage: I have continued this affair and I find that the reality of this deep love is even brighter than my fantasy. Of course, I know about the problems here. If we are going to continue this metaphor, it's like you talk to a mother about her daughter. The mother says to you, You are talking about this girl? She's dirty, she's slatternly, she's selfish! I know this girl! And you can say, Yes, maybe, but I love her."

The critic Margarita Tupitsyn says that "Ilya has now brought into international discourse the issues of his own country. When you live in the Soviet Union, you don't really know who you are; the fact that 20 people think that you're a genius is simply not enough for you to believe it, if the whole rest of the world is totally unaware of you. Ilya is enjoying his affirmation."

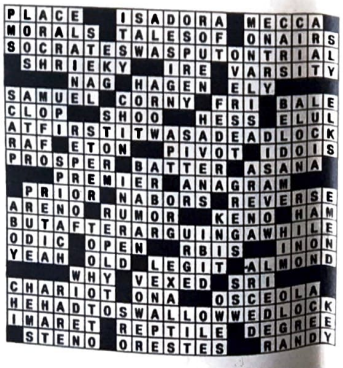
Kabakov returns to Moscow only very occasionally. He lived in Berlin for a year, then in Paris for a year and has finally settled in New York. He sees many old Russian friends. He occasionally meets with the famous artists to whom his own renown has led him — but he is without social ambition. He came to the West on his own and now shares his life with Emilia Kanevsky, a distant cousin who emigrated to this country in the 1970's, a charming and serious woman who helps to order his oceanic activity. Their lives are really not about the experience of any one country. They are in a different place every month. Kabakov is always teaching, installing, exhibiting; his way of life made him marginal to his own society, and he is comfortable to go on living in a world of his own devising.

While other artists from the old Soviet Union feel an obligation to stay in their country and see it through its transformations, Kabakov is content to have left. "I have had enough pain in these years to keep me busy for a long time," he says. "I am not such a hero."

David Ross of the Whitney wonders what effect absence from the motherland will have on the artist: "Does he remain Soviet? Or does he begin to be Americanized, to be an American artist? Will he engage with America, or will his work become more hermetic as he lives more and more in his own and his country's past?" Some critics have suggested that Kabakov's work will become derivative or repetitive if he keeps reworking old material; if he is a Soviet artist, they say, he needs to confront what is happening now in the old Soviet Union.

"Imagine that you have an old, enfeebled relation," Kabakov says, "whom you go to visit in a hospital. For a long time when you go, she complains about a pain in her shoulder. You are sympathetic and you sit by her side. If you come one day and she has started instead to complain about her tooth, it's not so important for you, whether it's the shoulder or the tooth. All that's important is that you come and you visit and you listen. The changes in my country now, which seem so dramatic — for the people it's still the same pain. I don't have to go there this week to know what it's like this week." And Kabakov smiles the particular half smile that he always uses to mitigate his discussions of pain. ■

ANSWERS TO PUZZLES OF SEPTEMBER 13, 1992



M(ARGARET) AND O(LAUS) MURIE: WAPITI WILDERNESS — It is not my purpose to attempt an enraptured recital of the charms of moonlight, the province of the poet and the lover. But Lady Moon will always color man's life and I would suggest a corner of the wilderness as her shrine.

ART VIEW/Michael Kimmelman

At Carnegie 1991, Sincerity Edges Out Irony

PITTSBURGH

FOR ONE OF HIS INSTALLATIONS here at the 51st Carnegie International, the French Conceptual artist Christian Boltanski has created a basement storeroom of shelves, a kind of mausoleum of Carnegies past. On the shelves are stacked hundreds of identical plain brown boxes, each bearing the name of an artist who has appeared in the Carnegie over the course of its 95-year history. Picasso, Pissarro, Vuillard and Pollock have their boxes, as do Van Dyck and Corot, who were for some reason included posthumously in early versions of the show. Mr. Boltanski himself has a box, along with the 42 other artists in the present incarnation of what has become a triennial event, the country's most prestigious survey of contemporary art.

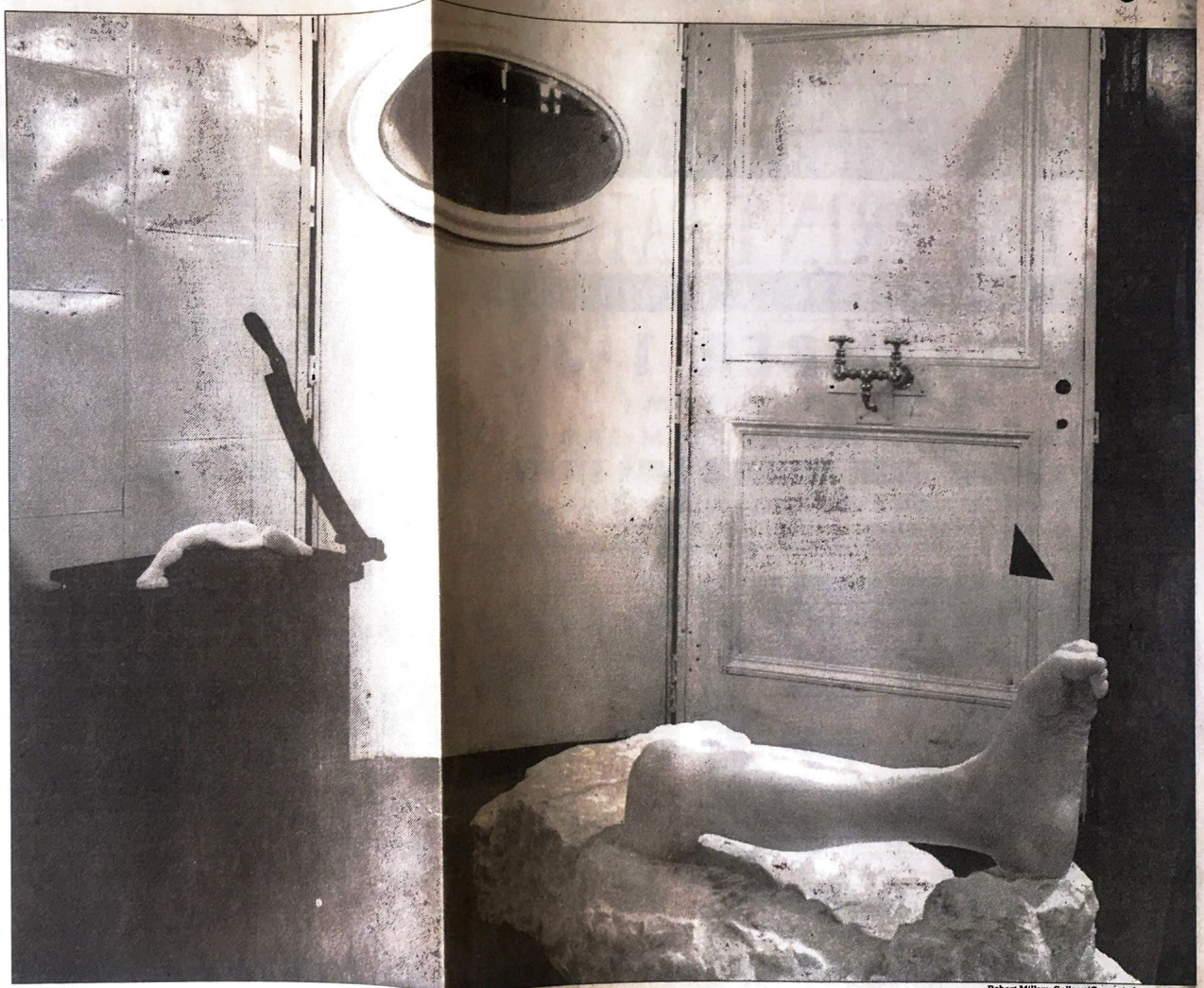
For every familiar name there are dozens of unfamiliar ones in Mr. Boltanski's wryly devastating installation. To the organizers of the exhibition, Lynne Cooke and Mark Francis, it must serve as a sobering reminder of the pitfalls of major art-world overviews like this one.

In keeping with the spirit of the decade, the country's most prestigious survey of contemporary art is cautious and chaste.

As if with this in mind, the 1991 Carnegie, which remains through Feb. 16, takes few chances. Sticking mostly to a list of proven commodities, the curators have put together an exhibition that often seems cautious. The works tend to be solid, thoughtful and unspectacular. There is a sincerity to many of them that is as much a sign of the 90's as irony was of the 80's. Some of the works are no more than recastings of what the same artists have done elsewhere (Ilya Kabakov and Bruce Nauman are two examples), and some are duds by important artists (like Richard Deacon and John Cage). Altogether the exhibition has a chaste quality summed up in the decision to award the Carnegie prize to the profoundly ascetic paintings of calendar dates by the Japanese-born Conceptualist On Kawara.

What most distinguishes the show is the curators' decision to encourage the participants to create installations beyond the temporary galleries of the Carnegie Museum of Art. They are also mixed in with the museum's permanent collection, in the adjoining public library and Museum of Natural History, at Duquesne University, at a downtown intersection and at an alternative space called the Mattress Factory.

At a time when the museum itself is becoming the subject of much art, and when the energies of many artists have turned to large-scale and site-specific installations, the decision to encourage such works gives the exhibition a timeliness and focus. The show makes clear the increasing attention among artists to the world around them, without succumbing to the dogmatically political and text-laden works that have become depressingly ubiquitous.



Robert Millery Gallery/Carnegie International

"Cell III," an installation by Louise Bourgeois at the 1991 Carnegie International in Pittsburgh—like chambers of physical and psychological despair

Most of the art, like Mr. Boltanski's installation, speaks in a low-key, cool voice that is rarely forceful enough to incite fevered reactions but that sometimes masks poignant undercurrents. It is the reverse of much of the melodramatic Neo-Expressionist painting that has been a staple of recent Carnegies.

The 1991 Carnegie strives for diversity, although it rustles up fewer than a dozen women, and nobody from Africa or South America, among other places. Of its 43 artists, 18 were born in the United States, 2 in Canada, 1 in China, 2 in the Soviet Union and 3 in Japan. The rest are divided among France, Belgium, Germany, Spain and Italy, with a larger than usual contingent from Britain, where the curators have spent much of their careers.

Every big international survey has its obligatory surprises — unknown, neglected or misunderstood artists — and this one includes a predictable number of unpredictable names, from Richard Avedon (who has put together a theatrically lighted installation of large-scale photographs of celebrants at the fall of the Berlin Wall) to the newcomer Boris Mikhailov (who hand-paints photo-

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At the Carnegie International, Sincerity Edges Out Irony

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graphs of everyday Soviet life). These are remarkable mostly for their unexpectedness.

The Carnegie has traditionally emphasized painting. The quality of the paintings in this exhibition may be chalked up partly to a malaise in the medium, although the malaise is not as severe as one might gather from this display. An exception is the work of Philip Taaffe, whose increasingly ravishing abstractions blend the European elements of his previous paintings with Near Eastern motifs.

Mr. Taaffe is not the only artist who deserves to be singled out. Exceptional efforts have come from a diverse group that includes Tatsuo Miyajima and Hiroshi Sugimoto (two of the most elegant installations), Richard Serra, Sophie Calle, Tony Cragg, Louise Bourgeois, Ann Hamilton, Mike Kelley and Allan McCollum.

Mr. McCollum offers one of the better excursions outside the neutral confines of the temporary galleries. He has fashioned a playful variation on his previous work: an installation near the dinosaur exhibit at the Museum of Natural History made of more than 700 casts of dinosaur bones. They are painted in the earthy colors of the American Southwest, where the bones were found, which are also the colors of the old paleontology displays to which Mr. McCollum pays oblique tribute.

■

Ms. Calle has insinuated herself into the Carnegie's permanent collection — as she has done in the Museum of Modern Art in New York for the current "Dislocations" show. Here in Pittsburgh she has discreetly and deftly placed a series of photographs of antique objects in the decorative arts galleries of the Carnegie museum. Accompanying the photographs are labels with the sort of elaborate and purportedly autobiographical stories that are a staple of her work. She has also created a separate installation with photographs of the galleries at the Isabella Stewart Gardner Museum in Boston and texts in which its visitors and employees recollect very differently the works stolen last year from those galleries.

Mr. Sugimoto's installation in a courtyard of the museum is as serene and pure as Ms. Calle's work is talkative and ironical. But it is just as mysterious. A series of photographs of oceans, barely more than abstractions in light and dark, hang in transparent cases along a wall and under the stream of a waterfall so that the shadows of trees fall against them and water cascades over them. Over time the photographs will fade, a process Mr. Sugimoto considers integral to the work. His mixture of natural and formal elements transforms the courtyard into a kind of Japanese rock garden.

■

Pure and rigorous in a completely different way is Mr. Serra's "Judith and Holofernes," consisting of two of his large black drawings on opposite walls of a room, one high up, one flush with the floor. What Mr. Serra has often done in metal sculptures to create an impression of stupendous tension and weight he now achieves by the sparest and simplest means.

Painting may be in the doldrums, but the malaise is not as severe as one might gather from this display.

Ms. Bourgeois's installation is a series of small circular cells formed by linked doors, some of them with empty or shattered windowpanes. They are like chambers of physical and psychological despair. In them are arranged tableaux that include a cot, perfume bottles, large wooden spheres and several of the sculptures that are Ms. Bourgeois's most arresting creations — a giant ear, a pair of clenched hands, a cramped foot and a figurine placed near the blade of a paper cutter.

There seems, on many fronts, to be a Surrealist revival. It is not just the disconnected body parts that figure in the works of such artists as Ms. Bourgeois, Mr. Nauman and Ms. Hamilton. Found, weathered and prosaic objects, like some of those in Ms. Bourgeois's installation, have also become so prevalent that they are common to dissimilar artists in this show like David Hammons, Reinhard Mucha, Ms. Bourgeois, Mr. Kabakov, Mr. Mikhailov and Mr. Kelley.

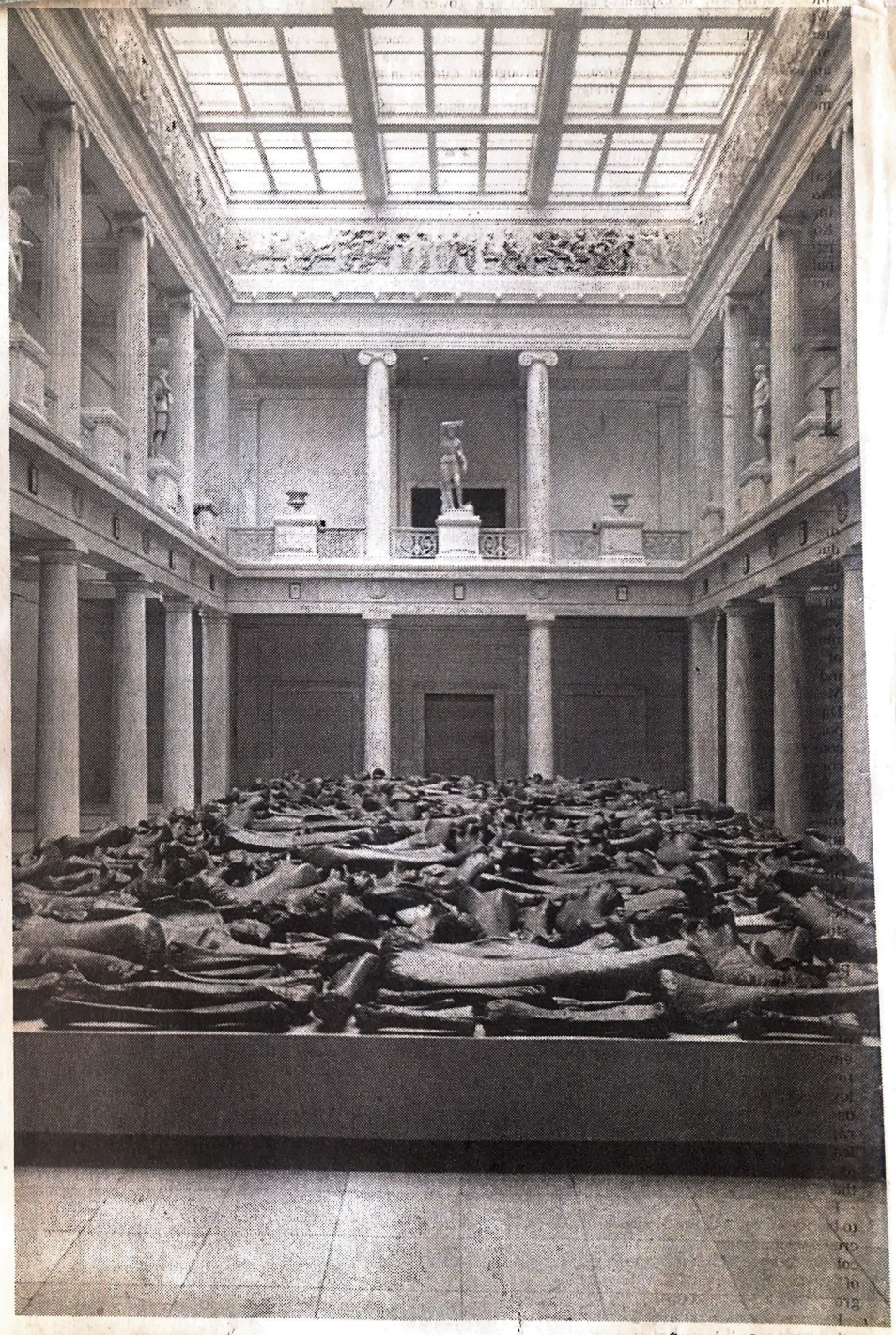
Mr. Kelley seems to be elaborating on what he presented at the Whitney Biennial last spring, when he displayed coffins for used dolls that have become the protagonists of his recent work. Here he arrays dozens of these dolls on cheap folding tables around a large room, on the walls of which hang black-and-white photographs, like archeological documents or autopsy records, of the dolls. The clinical, bare-bones aspect of the presentation is what sets off its empathetic charge.

■

One benefit of large surveys like this is to suggest links that might not otherwise be apparent. Mr. Kelley's and Ms. Bourgeois's works suddenly look not all that far apart. Connections emerge between the double-edged modernist architectural references in Dan Graham's heart-shaped glass installation and the double-edged modernist architectural references in Lothar Baumgarten's display of words ("clarity," "discipline," "module") across the facade of a science building at Duquesne.

There is a comparison to be made between the function of silence in Mr. Kabakov's construction of an abandoned Soviet orphanage — a metaphor for the whole of the Soviet Union — and in Mr. Miyajima's installation of an electronic row of constantly changing numbers, like a Barnett Newman zip, slicing across a darkened room and reflecting softly on the floor.

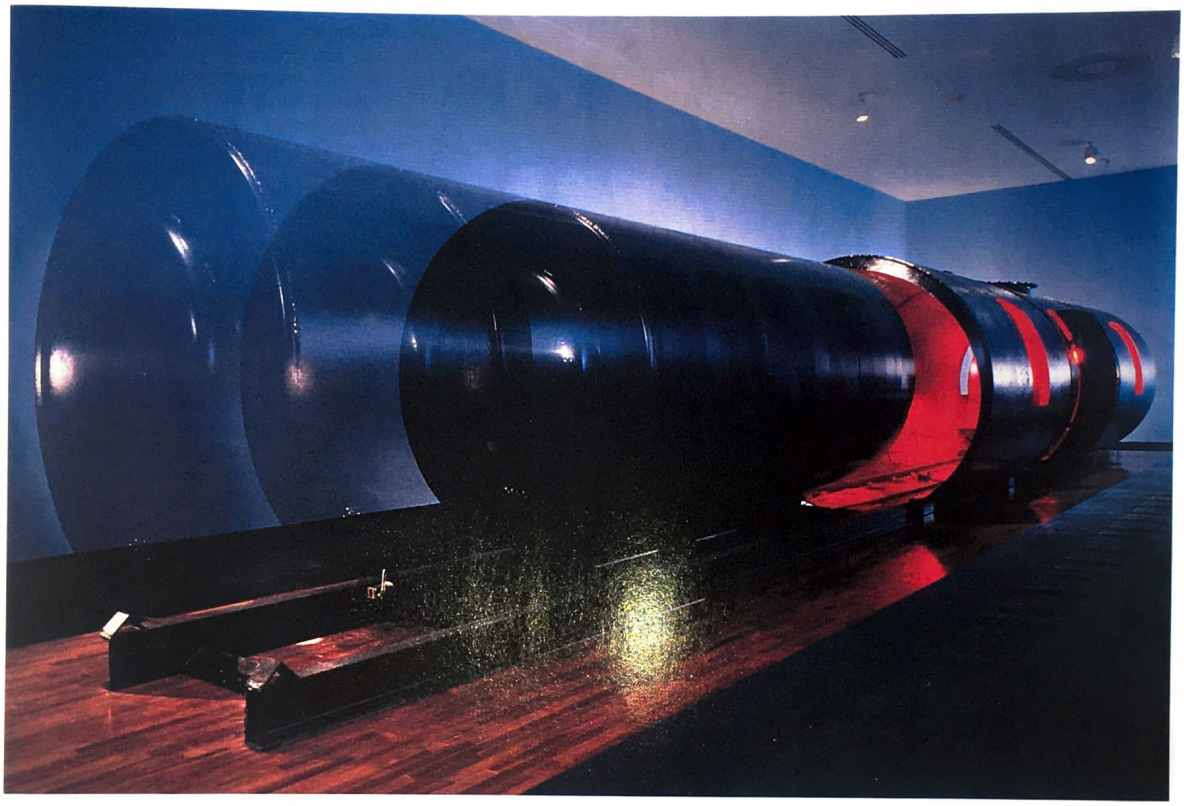
The show aims to make larger connections, too. It tries to connect contemporary art with the works in the rest of the Carnegie and also with the life of the city — nowhere more explicitly than with Maria Nordman's formal arrangement of trees planted at a downtown intersection. That the exhibition only fitfully achieves its goal may be the inevitable fate of a large-scale international survey. Mr. Boltanski's brown boxes are reminders of that fact. □



Carnegie International 1991

Allan McCollum's "Lost Objects," casts of dinosaur bones, installed near a real dinosaur exhibit

REVIEWS



Louise Bourgeois, *Twosome*, 1991, installation view. Museum of Modern Art.

NEW YORK

Dislocations

MUSEUM OF MODERN ART

The title of this exhibition of installations (which runs through the seventh of this month) is a play on the street slang word "dis," an abbreviated version of "disrespect." However, the show, which was organized by Robert Storr, MoMA's new curator of painting and sculpture, seems designed not so much to dishonor the venerable traditions for which the Modern stands as to update them with an injection of street-style energy.

The seven works are distributed throughout the museum. On the lower level one is offered visions of a contemporary hell. With fierce intensity Bruce Nauman confronts the viewer with small-screen and wall-size video images of an angry head whose insistent pleas for help become an almost incoherent chant. In a more poetic yet equally effective installation, Ilya Kabakov mixes dreary Soviet reality and escapist fantasy in a theatrical tableau that represents the mysterious interruption of a tenants' education meeting by an army of tiny white figures who are visible only through binoculars. And in what may be the strongest work in the show, Louise Bourgeois has created an enormous sex machine from a pair of huge steel drums, which slide in and out of each other with an implacable, fearsome rhythm.

On the second floor, French artist Sophie Calle presents the most direct challenge to museum orthodoxy. She has replaced several of the Modern's prized paintings (by such masters as de Chirico and Hopper) with texts composed of fragmentary recollections of these works gathered from museum employees who should be most familiar with them. The result is a demonstration of the frailty of memory and the uncertain status of the masterpiece, and is by turns charming, disheartening, and thought-provoking.

The three installations on the third floor are the most political and the most problematic. David Hammons tackles issues of colonialism, homelessness, and racism in a bunkerlike installation complete with sandbags and howitzers. These encircle a photo blow-up of an equestrian monument to the Westernizing zeal of Theodore Roosevelt, who seems to charge forth through a tangled forest of party streamers that dangle from balloons clinging to the ceiling. In contrast to this overly eclectic and ambitious display, Chris Burden's *Other Vietnam Memorial*, numerous placards listing the names of the Vietnam War's Vietnamese casualties, is too visually plain to do its subject justice. Finally, Adrian Piper has a stark white environment housing videos that make a rather tired point about the pervasiveness of racial prejudice among whites.

But the unevenness of some works should not obscure the exhibition's real achievements. The Modern rarely has been a showcase for the more untidy aspects of contemporary art. This show leaves one hungry for more. **—Eleanor Heartney**

Jim Dine

PACE DOWNTOWN

Two images dominated Jim Dine's recent show: the heart and the skull. One could say that the heart, as a symbol of life and love, implies something hopeful and optimistic, while the skull, as a memento mori, suggests a darker, more terminal

NATIONAL REVIEW
New York
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Dislocations at the Modern

JAMES GARDNER

ROLLER-COASTERS and funhouses do not fall within the ordinary jurisdiction of the art critic. But as regards "Dislocations," a show of seven installations at the Museum of Modern Art, either the critic talks about roller-coasters and funhouses, or he doesn't talk about "Dislocations."

Like roller-coasters, these installations were great fun. They had noise. They had movement. They had flashing lights and booming videos and simulated landscapes approaching virtual reality. Unlike roller-coasters, however, they were in deadly earnest. The catalogue, by Robert Storr, the new Curator of Painting and Sculpture, began somewhat inauspiciously with this sullenly existential query: "Where are we?" Even if Storr knows the answer to that one, you can be sure he has no intention of telling you. He wants you to question: it might do you some good, for a change. "There are plenty of reasons to wonder [where we are]," he continues. "And even more, perhaps, to ask why we don't wonder more often. . . . Most of the time we would just as soon pretend that we are sure of our surroundings, and, so, sure of ourselves and who we are. Rather that than pose the simple

Mr. Gardner writes frequently about art for NR *and* Art & Auction.

questions that might abruptly shatter the illusion of dependable normalcy."

Here, however, are three questions you weren't supposed to ask: "Why are we here at the exhibition? What, if anything, does all this mean? Is it my imagination, or are these essentially the same questions the art world has been asking, without answering, for the past generation?"

"Dislocations" is the first exhibition organized at the Modern by Robert Storr. He was taken on with one idea in mind: to rescue the Modern from the worst of all curses, curatorial conservatism. Under the czardom of the recently retired William Rubin, the museum had been the bastion of High Modernist Greats, served up in a formalist mode that had not substantially changed in fifty years. If the charismatic Kirk Varnedoe was called in to spiff up the Museum's approach to classic modernism, Storr, coming from SoHo, was to turn the Modern into a showcase of contemporary art. "Dislocations" is the result. Virtually in one go, MOMA has lurched out of the late Sixties and into the mid Eighties. The seven artists featured appear to have been chosen in as studiously democratic a spirit as you could want. There were three women: Adrian Piper (American), Sophie Calle (French), and Louise Bourgeois (Franco-American). Of the four men, David Hammon's work, like Miss Piper's, reflects his experience as a black American; Ilya Kabakov is a Russian émigré; and finally Bruce Nauman and Chris Burden are just white.

There is an almost willful variety in these works. Yet similarities do emerge. Though Chris Burden may be best known for his performance pieces from the Seventies, in which, among other things, he was shot in the arm with real bullets, electrocuted, and nailed to the back of a Volkswagen, he has latterly become one of our more prominent political artists. He is represented in "Dislocations" by *The Other Vietnam Memorial*, which amounts to a massive book rising from floor to ceiling, whose nine huge leaves of steel and copper are etched with the names of three million Vietnamese who died in the war. As in so much of Burden's art, there is an almost obsessive, morbid pertinacity to the tens of millions of tiny letters swarming across the metallic surface.

A similar compulsiveness inspires Adrian Piper's *What it's like / What it is*. The artist has constructed a large cubic room out of timber; along its immaculately clinical white walls are levels where you can sit. In the center, on a raised television monitor, the talking head of a black man growls over and over: "I'm not smelly. I'm not dirty. I'm not pushy." You've got to admire Miss Piper for unerringly pulling all the right levers: white guilt, black oppression, post-modern alienation (e.g., white walls), not to mention video-culture's totalitarian domination of thought, which of course is bad. In a similar vein, Bruce Nauman's *Anthro/Socio* occupies a darkened room illuminated only by a half-dozen monitors projecting the thick-set, shaved head of German performance artist Rinde Eckert. Because he is shouting with almost lunatic intensity, it takes time and close attention before you can make out what he is saying: "Feed me. Eat me. Help me. Hurt me." If these three works, different as they are, amount to a new movement, and if they are in the market for a catchy name like Cubism or Dadaism, may I suggest Autism?

Just in case you had hoped that the newly liberated Russians were about to flood our markets with sober masterpieces of high art, it will be chastening to consider Ilya Kabakov, who proves that the Slavs can be every bit as imbecilic as our boys. Situated in the basement of the Modern, *The Bridge* was a tribute to entropy and internal corruption. One passed through a narrow hallway, dimly lit by a single bulb coated with glutinous muck, into a darkened chamber. The wooden bridge that had been thrown across it quivered and shook with each footfall. Chairs and tables were strewn everywhere, with all the apparent premeditation of a bar brawl. According to a note by the artist, this house of horrors reconstructed a room in which dissident Soviet artists had planned a secret exhibition of vanguardist art, before it was ransacked by the authorities. One could not help wondering whether there were not some better use to which Kabokov could put his new-found freedom.

Like all fun-houses, "Dislocations" had its entertainment value, provided you didn't take the show as seriously as its artists or curator intended. And if seven dollars, the price of admission, seems steep for such entertainments, consider that it is not every amusement park that will also throw in, for no extra charge, about a hundred of the greatest masterpieces ever to proceed from the hand or the mind of man. □

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MoMA Mia, You Call This Art?

By Hilton Kramer

A Critic's View

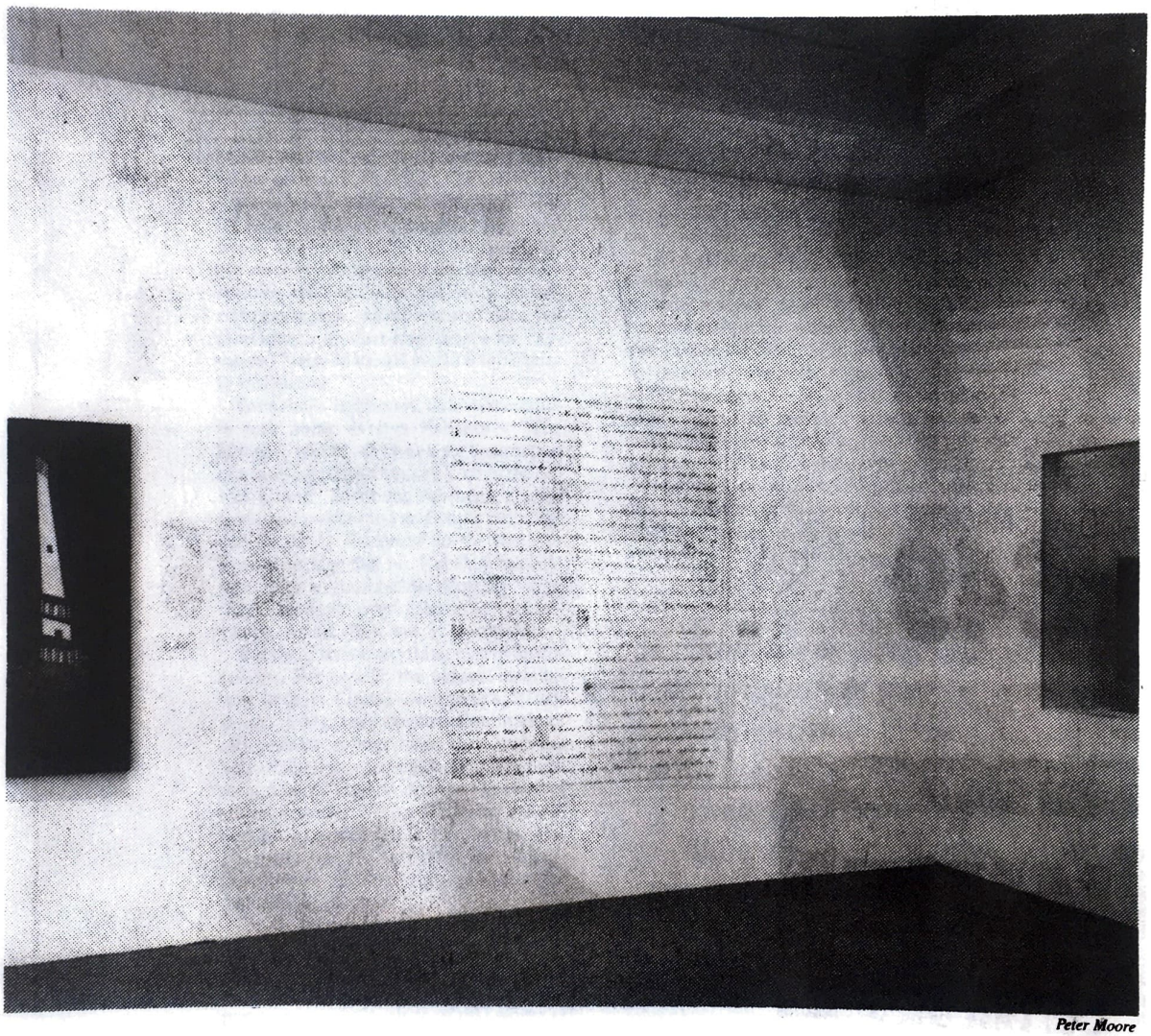
Every age probably gets the museum curators it deserves, and it was thus inevitable, I suppose, that in an age of rampant schlock in high places we would get someone like Robert Storr at the Museum of Modern Art. The contemporary art establishment had for years been clamoring for MoMA's capitulation to every new trend the market and the media had spawned, and it was clear that the folks with the power and the money would no longer settle for token gestures. They have large investments to protect, and nothing less than unconditional surrender was going to satisfy them.

The urgent need, therefore, was for the appointment of a curator of contemporary art at MoMA who could be counted upon to call every new sow's ear a silk purse and every new species of cabbage a rose. In that respect, certainly, Mr. Storr filled the bill to perfection. As a writer he has, after all, an unblemished record for performing this essential service with the requisite energy and enthusiasm, and for this reason he is much admired by the new generation of cabbage collectors and the dealers who specialize in the new varieties of sows' ears.

My own expectation had been that a man of Mr. Storr's credentials would be snapped up by the new regime at the Whitney Museum, but MoMA's need was apparently greater and they got to him first, or at least with the better offer. And so it now looks as if the 1990's are going to be devoted, at least as far as contemporary art is concerned, to what can only be called the Whitneyization of the Museum of Modern Art. It's an awful fate to contemplate, but the signs and portents are unmistakable.

The first strike in this direction is a miserable event—it can hardly be called an exhibition—that Mr. Storr has now staged at MoMA under the title of *Dislocations*. It consists of "installations" by seven artists —or perhaps one should simply say, seven installers—who appear to have been chosen on the basis of race, sex, age, ethnicity, etc., to meet Mr. Storr's standard of political correctness. *Dislocations* may also be the first event at MoMA to be governed by the politically correct notion of "lookism." Lookism, as connoisseurs of political correctness already know, is the political crime of acknowledging that some people

A Plague on Both Your Houses: the Whitneyized MoMA



Peter Moore

are better-looking than others. Mr. Storr has applied the ban on lookism by guaranteeing that all seven "installations" here would be equally devoid of visual appeal.

It is Mr. Storr's conviction, I gather, that these political tests are the only standards that are to be applied to the art of the 90's, and it is his further conviction that what is to be given priority in the art of the 90's is the ability of its creators to make us feel bad. In both respects, *Dislocations* may be said to be a rousing success. It is only as art that it fails to give us anything worth looking at.

In Bruce Nauman's video installation called "Anthro/Socio," for example, what we are given to look at is a large, darkened space in which a bald white man cries out for help on television monitors large and small. The sound of his not very intelligible voice is maintained at the kind of earsplitting volume that is obviously intended to cause pain. As art it is worthless, but as evidence of what now passes for "advanced" taste in the art world it is certainly instructive.

Even more lugubrious, though mercifully less noisy, is Ilya Kabakov's "The Bridge," which offers us a reconstruction of a housing project tenants' club in the Soviet Union. Furniture has been pushed aside and overturned and some paintings can be dimly discerned in the distance from the bridge that Mr. Kabakov has constructed as a symbol of his allegedly "mystical" triumph over miserable circumstance. As art, this, too, is worthless.

But then, so is everything else in *Dislocations*. For myself, the saddest installation here is Louise Bourgeois's "Twosome," a big, ugly construction made of old gasoline storage tanks that, with the help of red lights and machinery, has been turned into a vaguely ominous symbol of sexual disorder. Those of us who are old enough to remember a time when Ms. Bourgeois was still a serious artist can only lament her descent into this kind of fashionable claptrap.

Yet by far the worst of the installations here is unquestionably Sophie Calle's "Ghosts," for this really does represent something new at MoMA. Ms. Calle was permitted to put in place of real works of art from the galleries of the permanent collection—a painting by Seurat, for example—some stupid comments on these works by members of the MoMA staff. These are printed on the walls of the galleries together with some inept scrawls and dabs by Ms. Calle herself. On the basis of the comments that are quoted in this installation—my own favorite, so to speak, is the one that describes Seurat's "dots" as "anal" —I think it is obvious that all these staff members should be fired for mental incompetence. "Ghosts" is nothing but an atrocious act of intellectual vandalism, and from a museum administration that encourages such inane atrocities we can now expect only worse things to come.

As for *Dislocations* as a whole, most of it is only an up-to-date rehash of the kind of installation stuff that has been standard fare at the Whitney, the New Museum and other such purveyors of fashionable crap for a good many years now. The only really new note here is Ms. Calle's assault on the permanent collection, and that is indeed an ominous portent.

Meanwhile, down in Philadelphia the tireless Mr. Storr has also been busy, organizing a survey of the art of the 1980's. Pretentiously entitled *Devil on the Stairs*, this show at the Institute of Contemporary Art includes some of the names represented in *Dislocations*—Mr. Kabakov, for example, gives us another dismal room installation—plus a roundup of names that dominated the fashionable art of the 80's.

Here, too, political correctness is the principal theme, with a special installation devoted to names of artists and others who have died of AIDS, and a heavy emphasis on feminist art and what Mr. Storr dubs "Social Studies" and "History Lessons," the kind of art that is basically political in content and manner. All the usual suspects are present and accounted for—Jean Michel Basquiat, Keith Haring, Leon Golub, Jenny Holzer, Barbara Kruger, among many others—and all, you may be certain, selected on the basis of race, sex, age, ethnicity, etc.

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Mr. Storr presents this familiar picture of 80's art as a "project-in-progress" and acknowledges that he hasn't quite sorted out what he calls his "lingering thoughts regarding race, sexuality, the economy of signs, and the politics of artistic method,"

but what now counts as art for him is perfectly clear, and these two exhibitions are obviously a preview of coming attractions at MoMA and elsewhere. And so the

Above, Robert Storr, curator of contemporary art at the Museum of Modern Art, who is organizing *Devil on the Stairs: Looking Back at the 80's* at the Institute of Contemporary Art in Philadelphia; at left, Sophie Calle's "Ghosts," 1991, detail of an installation, and part of the *Dislocation* show staged by Mr. Storr at MoMA—"an atrocious act of intellectual vandalism."

Whitneyization of MoMA—and probably the Guggenheim, too, should it ever reopen its doors—is off to an energetic start.

The only question that remains unanswered is: When are we going to have a Salon des Refusés that gives us a look at the real art of our time? Now that the museums, with MoMA as the prize, have been taken over by political commissars like Mr. Storr, it is surely time for a rebellion in the name of art itself. But at the moment, alas, I don't see any sign of this happening. The money—including gobs of it from the National Endowment for the Arts, which has sponsored both *Dislocations* and *Devil on the Stairs*—is now all flowing in Mr. Storr's direction. This is going to be an even grimmer decade for the art world than the 80's was.

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Art

*Dis*modern

by Jed Perl

Going to the Museum of Modern Art is something that many of us have been doing for almost as long as we've been alive. When we first went there as kids or adolescents, we accepted MOMA as an all-encompassing, almost undifferentiated experience—a saturation in images, images that were presented in a sequence of boxy white galleries. We went there for the total experience of modern art; exploring those galleries was like wandering through the mind of modern art. At MOMA, Picasso and Matisse and the Surrealists were things that we took in along with photography and architectural models, and it was no sin that great art and good taste went hand in hand. That the Modern was in midtown, in the midst of the bustle of the business and shopping districts, was important, too. When we went through the doors of MOMA, it was as if the real world ended and the realer world of art began. And somehow the heightened experience of art came to be associated with the heightened experience that was the city itself. To walk out of the Museum of Modern Art at rush hour, onto the surging sidewalks of midtown, is still an awesome experience.

Things other than art went on at MOMA, too. There was the cafeteria for snacks and the sculpture garden for daydreaming, and when you got to the point when you were into boy-girl things, you could go and pick up or be picked up in that sculpture garden, something that's become a cliché, a Woody Allen subject, but really happens, nonetheless. In short, MOMA was a part of life, and as you developed you could go to MOMA and think all sorts of thoughts, including ones about what modern art was and wasn't. The Modern's beautiful, sometimes seminal publications were the beginning of many a library of books about modern art. And if you kept learning about art, you would finally realize that MOMA was only one version of modern art, only part of the story. MOMA introduced us to Picasso and Matisse, and if it had not done so we could never have gone on to decide that *their* Picasso and Matisse were not necessarily ours, that perhaps we liked a lot of what they had excluded. The Modern presented a Great Tradition, and every such tradition has its predispositions and prejudices. Sometimes the Modern even created a stir by reacting against its own predispositions, as when it exhibited Beaux-Arts architectural drawings as a sort of critique of the museum's original less-is-more philosophy.

Practically since the museum was founded at the end of the 1920s, artists have been complaining that MOMA wasn't modern enough, that it was refusing to see what modern art really was. Decades ago, the American Abstract Artists group picketed the museum, angry that Alfred H. Barr, Jr., the museum's guiding spirit, saw modernism as almost exclusively European. The Modern's predisposition toward painterliness and Paris at the expense of international Constructivism was part of what galled the

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"*Dis*locations" amounts to seven rejections, the frankest being Sophie Calle's installation, which is a sort of reversal of the "Artist's Choice" idea. Instead of bringing together works from the permanent collection in a new way, Calle calls our attention to a number of works that have been removed from the permanent collection. (The press publicity for the show hastens to assure us that these works are either in conservation or on loan, and will soon return.) Calle has replaced these modern icons with wall panels that consist of thumbnail sketches of the missing works and remarks that people on the museum staff have made about the originals. Visitors to the permanent collection come upon these wall exhibits and read them and laugh at the occasionally funny things the staffers have to say about, among others, a Seurat, a de Chirico, a Delvaux. One comment is from a staffer who once bought a postcard of the Seurat landscape to send to his or her father but never did, so that the Seurat always brings up in this person's mind a vague feeling of guilt. This is the kind of mild stuff of which Sophie Calle's installation is constructed. Yet "*Dis*locations" is not a mild show.

"*Dis*locations" takes up a hell of a lot of room at the Museum of Modern Art. It occupies all the basement exhibition space, a good deal of square-footage on the third floor, and spills through the galleries devoted to the permanent collection on the second floor. The artists gobble up space, or at least redecorate it. Adrian Piper uses lots of white formica. David Hammons uses lots of leaves and sandbags and confetti and balloons. Video and photography get into the act. Among the work included you'll find installations that talk, shriek, move, and even molt. You know that Storr and the artists are thinking big from the moment when you descend the escalator to the museum's basement galleries and hear a heavily amped male voice yelling "Feed me. Help me. Eat me. Hurt me." The voice comes from the mouth of a man whose bald head fills a number of video monitors and video wall projections that make up Bruce Nauman's *Anthro/Socio* installation. Nauman's piece is a gallery-devourer—it takes up almost as much space as it took last season to survey the lifework of the Russian Constructivist Liubov Popova. At "*Dis*locations," size counts. It's the artists'—and the curator's—way of telling us that the Modern has finally decided that contemporary art counts.

A writer close to Storr recently explained that the italics in the show's title are meant to "highlight a bit of African-American slang: 'Dis' meaning 'deliberate disrespect.' So a *dis*location would be any place of calculated affront to somebody's or something's dignity." Basically, the show is designed as an affront to the Museum of Modern Art's dignity—to the dignity of people like Varnedoe's predecessor, William Rubin, who dare to think that they have gathered together in one place something like the best of modern art. That huge dark video chamber of Nauman's isn't so much a free-standing statement as it is a dissing of things we've seen in these galleries before—of "Picasso and Braque: Pioneering Cubism," of "Paul Klee," of "Le Douanier Rousseau" and many more. Calle's installation in the permanent collection is a more literal version of dissing. I don't think that a little dissing is necessarily a bad thing; there have been days when I've found MOMA's view of modernism—even MOMA's view of Matisse and Braque—so stale, I could have done a little dissing myself. We've all grown up with the Museum of Modern Art, and at times we want and need to get mad at the museum. But it's natural that those who are witnessing the protests are going to ask the protesters what they can offer us in place of the dignity they're mocking. This is where the evasiveness of "*Dis*locations" comes into play.

Critics, pro and con, emphasize the content of "*Dis*locations." One writer observed that "the show comes at you from all sides, often with the tribulations of war, colonialism, racial prejudice, childhood pain, memory and simple human existence utmost on its mind." These are the business-as-usual

AAA, and this has turned out to be a lasting predisposition: it has had a profound impact on how the history of modern art has been written. One may also wonder how the history of modern art would look if MOMA had been more sympathetic to the representational strains in modern art in, say, 1920s Paris or 1950s New York. I frame these questions about modern art according to MOMA in terms of my own prejudices and predispositions; everybody has his own feelings about what MOMA has overemphasized or missed out on. There were always a lot of artists who found the Modern's exhibitions of good design a little—or even very—silly. Some have looked at the museum's forays into contemporary art—whether the "Information" show of 1970 or the "International Survey of Recent Painting and Sculpture" of 1984—and been horrified. Others have regretted, especially in recent years, that the museum hasn't been keeping up. Then again, as Kirk Varnedoe, the museum's Director of the Department of Painting and Sculpture, discovered when he organized "High & Low: Modern Art and Popular Culture" last year, one can try to be hip and get shot down by the hipsters. SoHo's reaction to that show was, "How dare MOMA tell *us* about popular culture!"

Robert Storr, who was named a curator in the Department of Painting and Sculpture at the Modern just over a year ago, is forty years old, an age that would suggest that the museum is for him, as it is for a lot of us, both paradigm and dinosaur. Storr, who has in recent years gained something of a reputation as a critic and a curator, is now in the position to shape our perceptions of this institution which has shaped us all. I would expect that Storr, who was brought to the museum to focus on contemporary art, is in general agreement with the way the history of modern art is presented at MOMA. In his writings he has often supported contemporary artists who see themselves as responding in one way or another to some generally agreed upon idea of the modern tradition—an idea of the modern tradition that is spelled out at the Museum of Modern Art.

But the first major exhibition that Storr has organized at MOMA, called "*Dis*locations," suggests that he believes that this modern tradition is not a prologue but a finished thing. [1] "*Dis*locations," which consists of seven installations by seven artists, isn't an exhibition that attempts to establish connections to MOMA modernism. The artists—they are Louise Bourgeois, Chris Burden, Sophie Calle, David Hammons, Ilya Kabakov, Bruce Nauman, and Adrian Piper—present their own values in conscious and even self-conscious opposition to MOMA modernism.

Even before Robert Storr's arrival at MOMA, it had been obvious that Kirk Varnedoe wanted to criticize the museum's grand-old-man role. Of the first three offerings in the "Artist's Choice" series, which brings artists into the museum to act as curators, only one, Ellsworth Kelly's 1990 "Fragmentation and the Single Form," has been an attempt to build on MOMA modernism. Scott Burton's 1989 show, "Burton on Brancusi," was a literal deconstruction: a number of Brancusis were separated from their bases. Earlier this year, Chuck Close stuffed so many images into one room for his show of portraits that it looked like the chock-a-block visuals of a cheapo auction house. Strangely, the Burton and Close shows were so much about imposing a personal vision on the Museum of Modern Art that they ended up by confirming the absoluteness of the Modern's viewpoint. There must be an alternative to deconstructing MOMA other than the sort of thing we got in the Kelly show, which was a rehash of MOMA formalism. But it seems that the artists whom MOMA looks to now accept MOMA modernism so absolutely that they can only absolutely accept it or absolutely reject it.

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1 "*Dis*locations" opened at the Museum of Modern Art, New York, on October 20 and is on view through January 7, 1992. A fully documented catalogue of the exhibition, with an essay by Robert Storr, will be published this month by MOMA ($16.95 paper).

doing is aestheticizing politics, and then using this aestheticized politics as a battering ram with which to gain access to the museum. With Storr in charge, the museum is lying down and playing dead for these artists.

Museums rarely have known what to do with contemporary art. William Rubin's several attempts to present Frank Stella as the heir to MOMA's traditions were farfetched, contrived, deeply academic. The Museum of Modern Art was invented, in some sense, as a retrospective adventure, and its finest moments have always been in that spirit. The many newer museums that have arisen in the Modern's long shadow are all attempts to deal with the problem of how the mission of the museum, which is essentially one of preservation, can be reconciled with a lively interest in the art of the present. There are things that will never be comfortable in a museum. Don Judd's work, for instance, which comes out of an installation sensibility, only looks effective when the artist has total control—as he does when he has a one-man show in a gallery. How art ends up in the museums is an imperfect process at best; but in spite of all the violence done in the name of making museums more contemporary, I would not say that they should ignore the art of the present. Every once in a while something important and contemporary gets into a museum, and those occasions, however infrequent, when the tradition connects with the present, must remain possibilities.

For all I know, Robert Storr will next present us with a MOMA show of paintings on canvas, of sculptures on pedestals. I would not put it past him to turn around and present himself as a defender of tradition. A painter I know remarked, on hearing about the plans for "*Dis*locations," "Oh, you mean to say that the Modern has a new curator of painting and sculpture and his first show isn't painting and isn't sculpture." Storr is a man who is clever enough to have taken that complaint into consideration. "*Dis*locations" is the essential dramatic opening career move; beyond this, I expect that Storr has all the bases covered. He likes to make contributions to symposia and magazines in defense of the artist's freedom of speech. (This is perfectly fine, and takes about as much courage as defending apple pie in Middle America.) He's also a formalist who is eager to explicate a contemporary concept of a late style, with examples gleaned from the work of Philip Guston and Willem de Kooning. Storr will probably have a long and successful career at the Museum of Modern Art. He couldn't have had a better start than "*Dis*locations," for here he has delivered to his director and his trustees the show they've longed for: an exhibition that at last makes MOMA a leader on the contemporary scene. Move over Whitney, the Modern has arrived. And when the Modern goes contemporary, it does so with an élan, a kind of money, an aura of independence that's way beyond the Whitney.

With the Modern coming down with what may be a chronic case of hipness, we can only thank our lucky stars that Alfred H. Barr, Jr., William Rubin, and the rest of the people who have made the museum what it is had such a rock-solid idea of what they were about. Their modernist orthodoxy is anything but the full story of modern art, and I for one do not think that they should ever be forgiven their acceptance of Pop Art, their glorification of the Abstract Expressionists, their trivializing and fashion-following. This museum, in spite of all its white rooms, has never been lily white. But whatever the complicated transactions that have gone on between the Modern and the wider art scene, the people who were in charge at MOMA for half a century managed to build a great orthodox institution: the Museum of Modern Art provides us with a way of making sense of art. We may rebel against the orthodoxy, but we can never forget it, because it is rooted in that extraordinary permanent collection that we go away from and come back to and measure ourselves and our knowledge against for as long as we care about modern art. I'd seen "*Dis*locations" on opening night, when the whole world was there. I went back late on a Monday

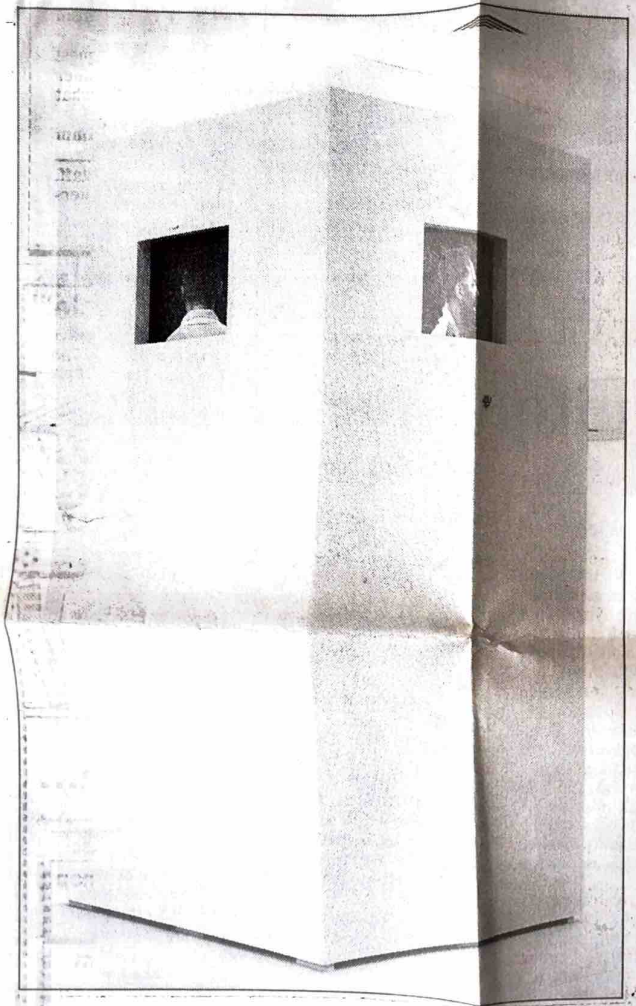
themes of late-1980s and early-1990s art, and the seven installations are conventional run-throughs of these themes, presented in the minimalist or happening styles that were first seen in the 1960s and 1970s and have now become new versions of retro style. (It should be noted that many of the artists included in this show are not young, and actually first came to prominence in the 1960s and 1970s. As for Louise Bourgeois, the beginnings of her career date back to the 1930s.) David Hammons's installation, with a photographic mock-up of an equestrian statue of Theodore Roosevelt surrounded by sandbags, a machine gun, and a lot of other stuff, is an Allan Kaprow retread; Adrian Piper's white room with a video of a black man saying, "I'm not sneaky, I'm not scary . . ." is politicized Minimalism, as is Chris Burden's *Other Vietnam Memorial*, a giant copper Rolodex engraved with Vietnamese names; Ilya Kabakov's wrecked meeting room is more Allan Kaprow stuff; and Louise Bourgeois's kinetic phallic gas tanks are more Sixties brutalism. I'm emphasizing style over content, because it's mostly the artists' stylistic choices that make an impression at "*Dis*locations." Going through the show, I didn't find myself thinking very much about sex or race or class. I find that the politics that dominates "*Dis*locations" is art-world politics—the politics of who will shape the Museum of Modern Art. Race, gender, imperialism are merely the ordinary topics of contemporary art, in this sense no more or less worthy than the ordinary topics of the art of a hundred years ago, which were, come to think of it, not that different: orientalism, motherhood, imperialism (seen then from the victor's point of view).

At the heart of "*Dis*locations" is an utterly weird phenomenon: the institution that's being dislocated is giving dignity to the dislocators. This is the most significant political transaction that is going on here; and to the pro-"*Dis*locations" crowd that says the exhibition is a triumph for progressive social politics, I say that the whole enterprise is cynical, that legitimate social issues are being used as a smoke screen for what is basically art-world politics. Kirk Varnedoe, who hired Storr, is a man who desperately wants to turn the Museum of Modern Art into the hot museum of contemporary art. He needs to do this, because contemporary art is where the money and the glamour are. So Robert Storr has brought in seven artists to dis the Museum of Modern Art. The Modern becomes hip. And in exchange the Modern bestows upon the artists the very dignity they are there to dis. And everybody's happy.

Installation art has always been about takeovers, about radical transformations. Claes Oldenburg's *Store*, Gordon Matta-Clark's split houses, Walter de Maria's *New York Earth Room*: these are about something dramatic that is done to an environment. I think that these gestures, even when they are amusing or provocative, are so broad as to defy sustained attention. Nonetheless, I think that installations can have the impact of diverting theatrical events, and as such add something to the sum of our experience. But when the image of the museum becomes the thing that is being taken over or transformed, we have to ask ourselves exactly what is being lost and what is being gained. Adrian Piper's video installation makes a legitimate point about black rage and white racism; yes, many people would look at the black man in this video and think, simply because he is black, that he's sneaky, he's scary . . . But Piper's point could be made as easily—and would reach more people—on a series of posters in the subway. Taking up an entire room at the Modern, Piper's installation isn't so much a statement against racism as a statement against the complex self-contained world that is the work of art—any work of art. Judged as art, the Piper—and all the rest of the stuff in this show—is, even if we give it the benefit of the doubt, just too slight and overblown to deserve this exposure. And the shock value that political art can sometimes have is diminished in the museum context. What the artists in "*Dis*locations" are really

afternoon, when the galleries weren't crowded at all. Some people had clearly come that Monday afternoon to see "*Dis*locations," but I think that far more people were there to see the permanent collection, to see the Picassos and Matisses and Mondrians and Klees. Chances are that in the coming years the Modern's permanent collection is going to look like a monument under siege. But who can doubt that this collection will remain, despite the assaults of Sophie Calle, Scott Burton, and whoever else, New York City's number one monument to modern art? And who can doubt that we will keep going there and drawing our own conclusions? It's a monument that can make the dislocators of this world look very, very small. Robert Storr may hold a distinguished position at the Museum of Modern Art, but even in its degenerated state the institution towers so high above him, it leaves him looking like a dust speck.

Disconcerting: New York Exhibit Mirrors Modern World's Out-of-whackness



Peter Moore

Adrian Piper's "What It's Like, What It Is, No. 3," (1991), part of the "Dislocations" exhibit at the Museum of Modern Art in New York.

By Robert W. Duffy
Cultural News Editor of the Post-Dispatch

9475

NEW YORK

ART HAS MANY MISSIONS and can do many things. It can make us happy or fill us with wonder or transport us to other times and other places. It can glorify myths or make them. But at the center of genuinely good and honest and enduring art there is a special power, the power to deepen our understanding of ourselves and our world.

"*Dis*locations" is an exhibition that makes manifest art's enriching power. Now at the Museum of Modern Art in New York, the show was organized by Robert Storr, who became a curator in the museum's department of painting and sculpture in 1990. His primary responsibility is for contemporary art. What Storr has done is bring together the work of seven very different artists whose work speaks in distinctly different ways about the human condition in the late 20th century.

It takes no great genius to observe that things are out of whack in the world, and to say that this show addresses this condition would minimize its impact. *Dis*locations does indeed speak to our individual and collective out-of-whackness, but in strange, original, deeply affecting and soul-rubbing ways. The name sets the stage; it establishes the notion of being lost or at least disoriented. The art carries the visitor on from there.

There are no rules about where to start looking; I began with Bruce Nauman's video piece, "Anthro/Socio." The images are repetitive and rather frightening, in a bullying sort of way. Large, bald, talking heads are projected on the gallery walls, or projected onto the viewers if they walk between the video projector and the wall.

The heads make demands, to be fed or hit or hurt or eaten; they proclaim "Sociology!" and "Anthropology!" Humanity, personified, projected by this hairless, anonymous creature, is shown in terms of basic, infantile needs and fears. "Anthro/Socio" is disquieting and deliberately annoying. Ilya Kabakov's next-door installation, "The Bridge," is haunting.

To say that this is a bleak and dreary place is to understate things. But the dreariness is essential to the verity of the piece, integral to its truth.

Kabakov is a Russian artist, born in 1933, and a survivor of a life lived in an atmosphere of repression. To look at this work, one walks on a bridge that snakes through the gallery, in which there is a reconstruction of a housing project tenants' club in Moscow.

To say that this is a bleak and dreary place is to understate things. But the dreariness is essential to the verity of the piece, integral to its truth. In it, the artist has created an environment that seems inhabited by souls of club members, that their spirits remain in this place of turned-over chairs and dismal lighting. The floor is littered with tiny white dolls that could suggest a massacre of innocents — or symbolize a new beginning.

Kabakov's piece comments specifically on pre-glasnost Soviet life. However — and that's a *big* however — it is a paradigm for emptiness and spiritual desolation, to which the Soviets certainly did not have exclusive rights.

Louise Bourgeois has pursued many visual paths in her career as a sculptor. For "*Dis*locations," she has created an infernal machine, a big, aggressive piston/cylinder-like piece that looks like a piece of equipment in the factory of damnation.

"Twosome" it is called, and it is designed to crudely mimic sexual activity. But with the noise and flashing of the kind of red lights police cars have, the message is more of violence, of rape, than of simple sex, not to mention love or tenderness. This is art that is tough and raw, and what it says is straightforward: Life is mechanical and mean, lived in a jarring and noisy world. It is not a happy thing to contemplate, but that is not what this show is about.

David Hammons traditionally has

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Art.

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created and installed his art outside, impermanently, in the jarring, noisy world that is greater New York City. He has been on purpose a stranger in that clean and tidy world that is The Museum. His work is made of just about any material or thing he comes upon in his urban wanderings and speaks of his cultures, the streets of urban America and the roots in Africa.

The specific subject of this room at the Modern has to do with a fictional plot to blow up a sculpture of Theodore Roosevelt in front of the Museum of Natural History in New York. But it is actually a metaphor for the evils of the very unsubtle Big Stick, which has been wielded on weak people, people of color, street people, religious and ethnic minorities and the poor throughout human history. Hammons' is a cluttered, messy, vibrant piece, genuinely inventive, totally original.

Adrian Piper's installation, which is also art about racism, is considerably more direct. She has created a room that is the visual opposite of Hammons' — it is pristinely white and uncluttered. Rows of bleachers surround a totem that houses four television sets. The image projected on all of them is of the same man, a black man, and as the piece is played out, viewers on all four sides of the totem see him face on, in left and right profiles and from the back.

He is letting you look at him as he tells you what he is not. I'm not dirty, he says; not stupid. And so on and on he goes, articulating misconceptions, speaking of prejudices. It is racism reduced to its bare and achingly human bones in an atmosphere of antiseptic minimalism. Nothing is there to distract from the central images and the indelible message.

Chris Burden made "The Other Vietnam Memorial" for "Dislocations." His monument differs from the official memorial not only in its form (it is a set of large copper panels) but also because it has on it Vietnamese names (not necessarily names of actual people). The work is an elegant reminder of the indigenous casualties of the war, but muted in its impact — especially in comparison to the other installations.

Dislocations: Works by Louise Bourgeois, Chris Burden, Sophie Calle, David Hammons, Ilya Kabakov, Bruce Nauman, Adrian Piper
Place: The Museum of Modern Art
Address: 11 West 53rd Street, New York City
Duration: Through Jan. 7
Hours: Friday-Tuesday, 11 a.m.-6 p.m.; Thursday, 11 a.m.-9 p.m.; closed Wednesday.

Sophie Calle took a tack in "*Dis*locations" that is, in a way, a literal interpretation of the concept. For her "installation," she asked museum staff members in a variety of jobs to report their impressions of works of art that were, for one reason or another, not on display in their usual places. These reminiscences or observations were lettered onto museum walls in the spaces usually occupied by the work of art. Their quality varied from interesting to nostalgic to labored to tiresome to keen.

There was no guide to finding these "works," however, so that the viewer was disoriented, challenged and rewarded not only by finding the Calle-inspired messages but also by being drawn into the process of looking. And as *Iagniappe*, some of this century's most towering artistic achievements are encountered as the search progresses.

From the time of Courbet on, the art of the West has been a search and process of discovery using forms and means that have been different and experimental. Rules have been broken and broken again.

This show — tough, demanding, the antithesis of pretty, sometimes anarchistic, never reassuring or smug — carries on the traditions of modernism admirably. As a whole, it is a strange and many-faceted looking glass, one that provides not a simple reflection when we look into it but a challenge to reflect and to think and perhaps to grow.

BURRELLE'S

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RADIO CLIPS

DATE December 19, 1991 ACCOUNT NUMBER 54/9475
TIME 9:30-10:00 AM
NETWORK In Touch Networks
PROGRAM Esquire

Richard Holman reporting:

From New York, this is In Touch Networks bringing you the December issue of Esquire magazine. Your reader is Richard Holman.

* * *

Holman: And continuing with Man at His Best, Art, this is by Phil Patton. Art In Your Face.

"Dealing with the art audience, artist David Hammons has said," quote, "'It's like going into a lion's den,'" end quote.

"But what if they make you into one of the lions? After years of obscurity, the forty-eight-year-old artist began to get noticed three years ago thanks to a group of Washington youths who objected with sledgehammers to his fourteen by sixteen foot billboard of Jesse Jackson.

"Hammons, who is neither, had painted Jesse as blonde and white, accompanied by the legend, 'How d'ya like me now?' When Hammons displayed the billboard later, he chose to exhibit the sledgehammers as well. To one of them he attached a Lucky Strike package.

"Hammons has since been lionized with a major retrospective: a Guggenheim Fellowship; a Rome Prize; a MacArthur Award and this fall, inclusion in The Museum of Modern Art's 'Dislocations' show continuing through January 7th. The man who once sold snowballs on the street beside homeless venders now offers pieces at the Jack Tilton Gallery in Manhattan for as much as fifty thousand dollars. But Hammons remains wary of the pride and of pride. He rarely gives interviews. He spends most of his time in Rome." Quote, "'Overexposure in America," he has said, "'will kill you,'" end quote."

* * *

(Holman continues reading the article which discusses Hammons's artwork.)

KAREN WILKIN

At the Galleries

Rumblings in the art world have it that "installation art" is the thing to watch: witness the top floor of the last Whitney Biennial and *Dislocations*, Robert Storr's debut as curator of contemporary art at the Museum of Modern Art. Yet if last fall was an accurate indicator, we should be paying more attention to painting than ever. Not all of last season's painting exhibitions were noteworthy or even any good at all, but it was clear that *painting* - as opposed to video, signage, or random scatterings of urban detritus – is still profoundly engaging the attention of serious artists and viewers. That's not a value judgement; it is simply a statement of fact.

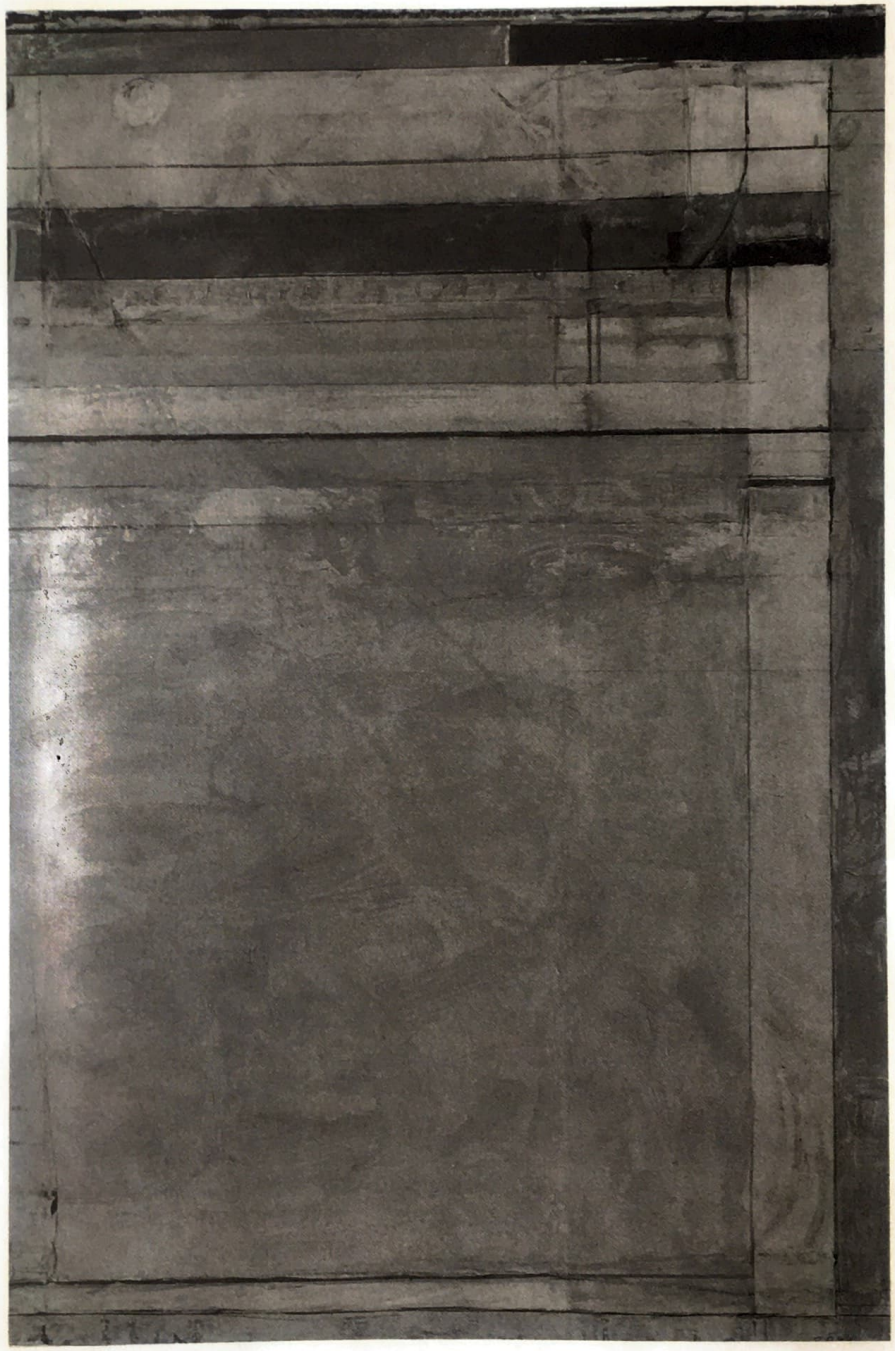
Two exhibitions by Richard Diebenkorn, a retrospective at London's Whitechapel Gallery and a show of recent works on paper at New York's Knoedler Gallery, in November, could serve as indicators of the phenomenon, both here and elsewhere. (The London show will travel to Madrid and Frankfurt in 1992.) In London, Diebenkorn was something of a revelation to both younger artists and those with longer memories. Everyone kept urging me to see the show, and they were right. I have vivid recollections of my first encounter with Diebenkorn's bold, rock-solid figures, when he, Elmer Bischoff, and David Park burst upon New York in the early sixties. Too often since then, we have seen only Diebenkorn's abstract paintings – his stripped-down geometric constructions, at once economical and very worked, of the seventies and eighties. The best of these are elegant, intelligent, and light-filled in a way that makes Diebenkorn's relation to California equivalent to Matisse's to Nice, but they can also be dry and repetitious to the point of being almost generic. Diebenkorn's drawing retrospective at MOMA a few years ago helped to remind us of his range and his inventiveness, but it was the abstract works on paper that seemed strongest to me, in that context. Had the potency of those early figure paintings been exaggerated by time? Not according to the Whitechapel show.

There, a remarkably fine selection of works allowed us to consider Diebenkorn's familiar recent paintings alongside of both his pivotal figurative canvases and his even earlier abstractions. The latter, from 1949 to

about 1954, were strangely anonymous and dated, more suggestive of disguised landscape than real formal exploration. In the mid-fifties, the long shadow of de Kooning appears to have fallen on Diebenkorn in Berkeley. The young painter began then to build his pictures of overlapping soft-edged planes, reminiscent of de Kooning's abstractions of the 1940s, and, at the same time, to allow himself more overt reference to actuality; perhaps de Kooning's own "reversion" to figuration, the Women of the 1950s, gave Diebenkorn permission to pursue his own inclinations. From 1955 on, Diebenkorn's pictures have more energy and personality than anything that preceded them, a fusion of vigorous "pure" painting and free but convincing illusionism. His seated figures, domestic interiors, and landscapes of the late fifties and early sixties still seem remarkably fresh, energetic, and audacious. Their generous images are built of robust, juicy brush strokes that effortlessly carve out distances or lay in limbs, furniture, trees, and domestic utensils, all with the same assurance. Diebenkorn's paintings of this period rationalize the looseness and brushiness of "wet into wet" Abstract Expressionism – de Kooning, as opposed to Pollock or Rothko – using the angst-ridden gestures of New York abstraction to describe a sun-dappled, idyllic world. Somehow, it works.

In contrast to these brash early works, the later pictures in the Whitechapel exhibition – the Ocean Park series, from the late sixties through 1985 – seemed slightly cautious, a little aestheticized. Their compositions are trued and faired, their color narrowed to a hazy beachfront palette of whitened blues, blued whites, and the occasional blast of ultramarine. They are solemn, frontal pictures; being in a room full of Ocean Park paintings is like standing in a complex of classical temples. The Whitechapel's excellent selection of the abstract works stressed their individuality and sensuality, so that Diebenkorn's paintings of the seventies and eighties never looked better to me, but at the same time, they seemed to lack the spiritedness, the rawboned *daring* of the earlier works. The same was true of the recent works on paper in the Knoedler exhibition, many of which seemed rather labored and overly fussed over. It's also true that, generally, they explored a wider territory than has been evident in the past few years, with a new looseness of structure, a new release from the implied vertical-horizontal grid of so many of the abstract pictures that seems to hark back to earlier strategies. These changes may result from Diebenkorn's recently having moved away from Ocean Park, or they may have been provoked by his reviewing his own past during the preparation of the retrospective.

What is clear is that Diebenkorn has explored the same, absolutely fundamental issue from the earliest works in the Whitechapel show to the most recent collage at Knoedler: how to reconcile a three-dimen-



Untitled #14 (1991) by Richard Diebenkorn. Crayon, pencil, acrylic, and pasted paper on paper. 37 and 1/2 x 25 and 1/4 inches. Courtesy of Knoedler & Company.

HEA-Erusk (1990) by Frances Barth. Acrylic on canvas. 64 x 66 inches. Courtesy of the artist.

sional world of deep space and strong contrast with the reality of thin color on a two-dimensional surface. That is, of course, as simple and as complex a notion of what painting is as anyone could formulate. (It kept Diebenkorn's hero, Matisse, fully occupied for his entire life as a painter.) John Elderfield's essay in the beautifully produced Whitechapel catalogue is a provocative discussion of this endlessly challenging concept. As he did in his splendid piece in the *Matisse in Morocco* catalogue, Elderfield sensitively probes the tension between the literal material from which art is made and the artist's perceptions. Diebenkorn's work appears to test the expressive possibilities of a mysterious zone somewhere between the stuff of art and intention, between the fact of paint and illusion, however veiled. The seriousness with which he has addressed this formidable task for the past thirty years can elicit only profound respect and admiration.

The challenges Diebenkorn addresses in his work are, I suspect, what Frances Barth means when she speaks of "the big questions." Certainly her exhibition at the Tenri Gallery in September and October would bear out this assumption. Barth's recent work grapples with seemingly contradictory conceptions of the canvas as inviolable expanse and as window into illusory space. In her best works, she warps and twists space, apparently as we look, seducing us with an elegant touch across the surface, and then leading us effortlessly into a fictive landscape. It's like having a limitless view spread at our feet and being able to fly out into it. I don't mean to suggest that there is anything tricky or facile about Barth's paintings, nor that there is anything literal about her imagery. Quite the opposite. Her references are acute but fleeting, like things seen in dreams. Barth's pictures are intelligent, thoughtful improvisations that seem to pit the history of Western illusionism against Western modernism, with a suggestion of Eastern space thrown in for good measure – not to mention a powerful sense of personal, if wordless, narrative. All of this is a very clumsy way of saying that they are extremely individual, sometimes puzzling pictures that reward our attention. Economical in color, with a plentiful use of white that somehow reads as space, modest in size, Barth's canvases are rich and satisfying.

A notably different notion of what painting can be, albeit from an artist of completely another generation, was offered by Philippe Daverio Gallery's "Mark Tobey in the 1950s," in October. Tobey's hermetic, inward-turning pictures are neither commentaries on the world nor on the conventions of painting itself, but private meditations. The selection at Daverio was outstanding – mostly small paradigmatic pictures from what are often regarded as Tobey's best years. In some, the celebrated "white writing" – his automatist scrollings of white line – coiled across the page, fraying off at the edges, like textiles crocheted out of light. It was

easy to see from these tightly focused works how much Tobey learned from the Eastern miniatures he admired.

Tobey occupies an odd place in the history of recent American art. Always difficult to classify – stubborn, mystic, independent – he was acclaimed in the fifties but lost some of his status, at least in New York, after he moved to Switzerland in 1960. (He spent the rest of his life there, until his death in 1976 at the age of eighty-five.) Yet for the past three decades, Tobey has remained an important figure in the Pacific Northwest, where he lived and taught for many years, and his European reputation has soared. His elegant, delicate, intimate pictures appealed to European sensibilities in ways that much American postwar painting did not. In this country, especially in New York, Tobey's fragile webs of drawn line were sometimes compared to Pollock's large-scale pours and suffered from the confrontation; on the West Coast, connections with Asian meditative art were more usual, while in Europe, it seemed obvious that Tobey's obsessive, intensely private works had more to do with the quasi-devotional explorations of, for instance, Paul Klee, than with most of his compatriots. Daverio Gallery is to be congratulated for reintroducing New York audiences to Tobey. (This is their second survey of his work.) It's useful to be reminded that American abstraction is not solely about heroic gestures.

This is not to deny the vitality of the heroic in American art. It still flourishes, as was made plain by Edvins Strautmanis's forthright new paintings at Stephen Rosenberg Gallery in October and November. It would be easy to dismiss the Latvian-born, Art Institute of Chicago-educated Strautmanis as the last Abstract Expressionist, if the undeniable intensity of feeling in his pictures didn't make them so convincing. Strautmanis's overscaled brushstrokes, sometimes insisting on the dimensions and proportions of the canvas, sometimes fighting against them, and his brooding color seem motivated by authentic emotional impulses. In the context of the nineties, Strautmanis's Silver Paintings, as his current series is known, become the abstract paintings that Gerhardt Richter's recent work parodies. Like Richter's, Strautmanis's canvases are rough-hewn, layered, full of sensually ploughed paint, and monumentally scaled. The difference is that Strautmanis's paintings are "straight" – the real thing, minus the modish irony, the detachment, and the cynicism. Strautmanis has been at it a long time, with unflagging seriousness and energy, and his new pictures, with their luminous darks and odd veilings of dragged color, are the strongest of his works that I've seen to date. It's easy to identify the artists he regards as his ancestors – de Kooning, Hofmann, maybe even Kline – but I suspect this is largely due to like conviction that a painting is a visible record of a state of mind. That the state of mind is a passionate one is what separates Strautmanis's assertive works

from much recent abstract painting.

And there is a surprising amount of ambitious abstract painting out there just now. (I didn't say "a surprising amount of *good* abstract painting," nor, alas, is it clear that the ambition is for the art itself.) Probably the most talked about shows last November were, in fact, two group exhibitions of recent abstract painting, "La Metafisica della Luce," at John Good Gallery and "Conceptual Abstraction," at Sidney Janis Gallery; many of the same artists – the new abstract painters to be reckoned with, we are told – were seen in both shows. They occupy the opposite end of the spectrum from Diebenkorn, Strautmanis, and the kind of faith in the raw power of painting that their work posits. Passion gives way to a "cool," or more properly, chilled-out abstraction: hip, sophisticated, detached and fully equipped with supporting theory, explication, texts – even, it appears, built-in critics. According to the artists' statements in the catalogue of the Janis show and the curiously incestuous autumn 1991 issue of the magazine *Tema Celeste* (Italian speakers take note: that's what American artists mean when they say "Teema Sell-Est"), their work is markedly different from other abstract art. *Tema Celeste*'s editor, for example, describes them as making paintings "totally devoid of recognizable images, while producing something that does not simply repeat, in a sterile manner, what has been done in earlier decades." How does it differ? Earlier American abstract painting was empty, arbitrary, hermetic, about its own history, shackled by rules – that it was dictated by Clement Greenberg is often implied; the new "post-historicist abstraction" is unprecedentedly free, inventive, and despite its refusal to admit overt emotion or signal choice, loaded with significance. How can we tell? Because the artists and the critics who support them (who are, incidentally, often one and the same) say so.

This is not the place for an analysis of the articles in the fall *Tema Celeste* or of the relationship of the magazine to the two shows, but someone has to point out that conflict of interest is rampant when the editor of a magazine who devotes a special issue to a "movement" defined largely by that magazine also selects a commercial gallery exhibition of the artists he espouses and then fills the issue with ads for the galleries that represent them. (This was how the John Good show was chosen, and rumors abound as to how the special issue was funded.) There is also the matter of artist-critics writing enthusiastically about each other – wives, husbands, and significant others included.

It says something about the state of art today that the work of these new abstract painters looks far better in reproduction than it does in reality. If all you saw was the magazine, you might be convinced. In the flesh, issues of scale and surface that are irrelevant in photographs fre-

quently pose serious problems in these pictures. Many of the paintings have a hard, slick feel that makes them look like life-sized reproductions of themselves. Randomness and anonymity prevail. You start wondering how a particular effect was achieved, rather than connecting with the picture itself. Text seems to count for a great deal, more perhaps than the experience of the actual object. A lot of heavy hitters – Arthur Danto, Leo Steinberg, Donald Kuspit – have contributed to the fall issue of *Tema Celeste*, seemingly in support of the artists in questions, although it is only fair to point out that they have written about general issues of what abstraction can mean in the nineties rather than specific endorsements. The most pretentious rhetoric, generally larded with modish allusions to Baudrillard and company, comes from the artists themselves and their in-house critics. If I am reading their singularly fuzzy and opaque prose correctly, the argument goes roughly like this: the randomness in their work is deliberate, a function of the unprecedented freedom post-historicism affords, provoked by the sensory and information overload of present-day, media-dominated, urban life. The content and appearance of these works also depends on a refusal to negate absence. (No kidding.) I kept thinking of that ancient *New Yorker* cartoon: "I'm disenchanted. He's disenchanted. We're all disenchanted."

There were some plausible paintings in the two exhibitions, some dreadful ones, some pretty good ones, and some peculiar inclusions. I wasn't certain what Sean Scully was doing in this company. His painting at John Good, a moody wall of blocky strokes, brushy texture and earthy color pulling energetically at deadpan basketweave structure, was one of the strongest works in the show and one of the most felt. It was obvious why one of Gerhardt Richter's slapdash abstractions was at John Good, as a sort of ur-text of "conceptual abstraction," but what was Per Kirkeby, an old-fashioned European-style painter doing there, apart from his connection with Josef Beuys? Come to think of it, much of the younger painters' work also looked rather old-fashioned; David Row's large, irregularly shaped abutments of rectangular canvases, with their gigantic "brushstroke" sweeps, clearly traced their ancestry to Frank Stella in the sixties, both in terms of composition and in their sour Day-Glo color, although their rough surfaces and economy of means owed more to Scully. Stella's acid palette and geometric imagery of the sixties and early seventies, as well as his icy detachment, haunted a good many of the works exhibited – Peter Halley's arrangements of hard-edged rectangles, for example. Some looked like reprises of that short-lived fad, pattern painting, while others achieved the desperate incoherence and self-conscious novelty of art school efforts. There were a few exceptions. At first acquaintance, Jonathan Lasker's pictures appeared to question the expressive possibilities of touch, playing thinly applied calligraphic scrawls

Titan (1990) by Edvins Strautmanis. Acrylic on canvas. 95 x 77 and 1/2 inches. Courtesy of Stephen Rosenberg Gallery.

Botanica (1991) by Manel Lledos. Acrylic on canvas. 54 x 35 inches. Courtesy of Galeria Joan Prats.

against denser strokes and broader swipes, but too often, he seemed to rely on a programmed set of "moves." The pictures got weaker with longer viewing. (Admittedly, I am also basing this impression on work seen elsewhere than at the two shows.)

In general, the work simply didn't support the claims made for it. As a group, these pictures are extraordinarily cold, technically facile, and opaque – the very qualities that their authors and their supporters attribute to the earlier abstraction that they reject. Leaving aside the considerable qualitative differences between the current painters and their predecessors, for the sake of argument only, it is clear that the much-vaunted distinction between the *Tema Celeste* group's work and other abstraction is purely ideological. But if you can't see it, is it there? It may be simpleminded of me, but I expect to see evidence of what art is about in the art itself, not to find out what I am looking at by reading a trendy magazine.

Although the exhibitions at Good and Janis and the special issue of *Tema Celeste* purported to bring us news of an international phenomenon, there is evidence that there's another side to the story. An October exhibition at Zurcher Gallery in Paris by Bruno Rousselot, a young French painter now resident in New York, explored a rarified kind of geometric abstraction at once familiar and, in Rousselot's hands, utterly individual. The present series rings changes on a "labyrinth" image, a jagged line that cuts across the canvas, angling back on itself but never touching the edges of the picture and never intercepting itself. At first, one assumes that the image remains constant from picture to picture, despite variations in size, proportion, and color, but in fact, the bold zig-zag line is as subject to radical alteration as any other element. Its width, the proportion of its angles, the way it traces its path all vary, now subtly, now dramatically, from painting to painting. Rousselot keeps confounding our expectations. He has consciously and deliberately restricted his means but that has only heightened his ability to invent. In his best works, the labyrinth line does not isolate itself as a figure on an uninflected ground but carves out areas of unstable space. In part, this is a function of drawing and shape, but it is even more dependent on color. Rousselot is a master of the unnameable: reds that become purples as you look, blacks that turn into greens or silver grays, grays that turn brown or blue before your eyes. It takes time for the eye to adjust to these infinitely subtle nuances, but once you tune into Rousselot's world of close-valued, mysterious hues, his pictures come fully to life, bespeaking a minimalist sensibility that barely conceals great sensuality.

Manel Lledos, a young Barcelona painter, showed recent work in October and November at Galeria Joan Prats, New York. Lledos, like Rousselot, is very much part of a tradition, in Lledos's case a kind of

simplified frontal "imagery" and an emphasis on materials and facture that seem very Catalan. His new paintings are roughly brushed, gridded structures whose cage-like images sometimes suggest architecture seen close up and other times imply ambiguous expanses. I liked Lledos's foursquare, direct canvases better than his more fluid, artful works on paper, but I enjoyed his evident pleasure in his materials in all of his work. How thin or how dense paint can be, the way it retains the memory of how it was put down, are as crucial to the structure of a Lledos painting as changes in tone or color. His large canvases are as much about how it feels to drag a brush full of paint from top to bottom of a band of color as they are about any kind of allusion, but they never degenerate into simple manipulation of material. And there's conviction in the paintings that is a welcome change from the worldy-wise cynicism of the new abstract painters at Sidney Janis. This is not Lledos's first show in New York, but it is certainly his best to date.

A tantalizing selection of work from Latin America was shown at Arnold Herstand Gallery in November. The works ranged from Carlos Alfonzo's vigorous, gloomy abstractions, reminiscent of his pictures in the recent Whitney Biennial, to Miguel Angel Rios's collaged constructions, where corrugated cardboard became the building unit for fantasy architecture. Some of the work seemed familiar – the sort of surrealizing narratives you can find almost anywhere that a European, rather than a North American, model dominates – but other paintings were truly surprising, with overtones of a strong vernacular tradition very different from our own. Sergio Vega's encaustic improvisation on a playing card image (or was it a tarot card?) was a fresh combination of lush surface and sleek, restrained image that became more assertive and provocative the longer one looked; the dense ground seemed about to devour the meandering figure. I am always abashed by how little I know about Latin American art. It probably has something to do with my speaking no Spanish, but it also has to do with the dearth of serious art from the region shown here. It's a peculiar phenomenon, given the visible and growing Hispanic presence in the United States. I can't say I was bowled over by everything I saw in the Herstand show, but it was all worth taking seriously – deeply felt, straightforward, and apparently committed. It made me curious about the context from which these artists emerged.

Painting may have dominated the fall season, but several sculpture shows were noteworthy. Anthony Caro showed recent table pieces, known as "Cascades," at André Emmerich Gallery in New York and at Annely Juda Gallery in London, as well as a group of large-scale works of the past few years at the Tate Gallery. In the Cascades, Caro reminded us once again of how he constantly reinvents himself by reexamining old

obsessions and considering them in new ways. The sculptures state freshly what it means for something to be on a table, a question that has preoccupied Caro for about a quarter century. The Cascades do not recline passively on horizontal surfaces but spring off of them, plunge over the edge, embrace them – rather like inventive dancers exploring changes in level and direction. Some of their "protagonists" were fragile and slender, while others were notably robust albeit no less agile. There was even an astonishing piece at Emmerich with the visual weight and density (and more or less the size) of a rolltop desk, the base an integral part of the sculpture itself, a massive steel block from which equally massive elements spilled. Caro forces us to think about such basic notions as *on*, *around*, *above*, *below*, *beside*, and makes them seem like entirely unprecedented concepts. His unfailing sense of scale, of nuances of density or delicacy, forces us, too, to consider his sculptures as actual objects, at once like and unlike other objects in the world, creating a lively tension between their visual pyrotechnics and their intense physicality.

Sculpture's relationship to the body is a recurring theme in Caro's recent work. Indeed, it was the subtext of his exhibition at the Tate. One of the sculptures in the show, *After Olympia*, was last seen here in the roof garden of the Metropolitan Museum. There it held up well to the staggering view of Central Park and its skyline, and well, too, to some gruesome companions, including a truly repulsive, swollen bronze Botero reminiscent of a Macy's Thanksgiving Day Parade balloon. At the Metropolitan, the urge was to back away from *After Olympia* and see it in its entirety, not the best view, as it turns out. The Tate installation forced us to walk beside the sculpture, setting up a dialogue between our bodies and the near-human size "modules" that are Caro's equivalents for the figure groups in the pediments of the temple at Olympia. The sculpture revealed itself incrementally, opening and closing, subtly altering as we moved along. It never looked better.

A more recent work in the show, *Night Movements*, departs from the same notion of incremental perception and depends similarly on cumulative experience. The sculpture consists of four large dark green units set in a row. At first, each seems self-contained, but they soon begin to reach out across the intervals that separate them, generating powerful force fields from one to another, until the spaces between each unit become as compelling as the sculptures themselves. In turn, the voids and hollows, the implied containments of each of the four units, with their swelling curves and scoops of massive steel, become increasingly important. *Night Movements* is a slow sculpture. It doesn't reveal itself quickly, but it gets better and more challenging the longer we stay with it.

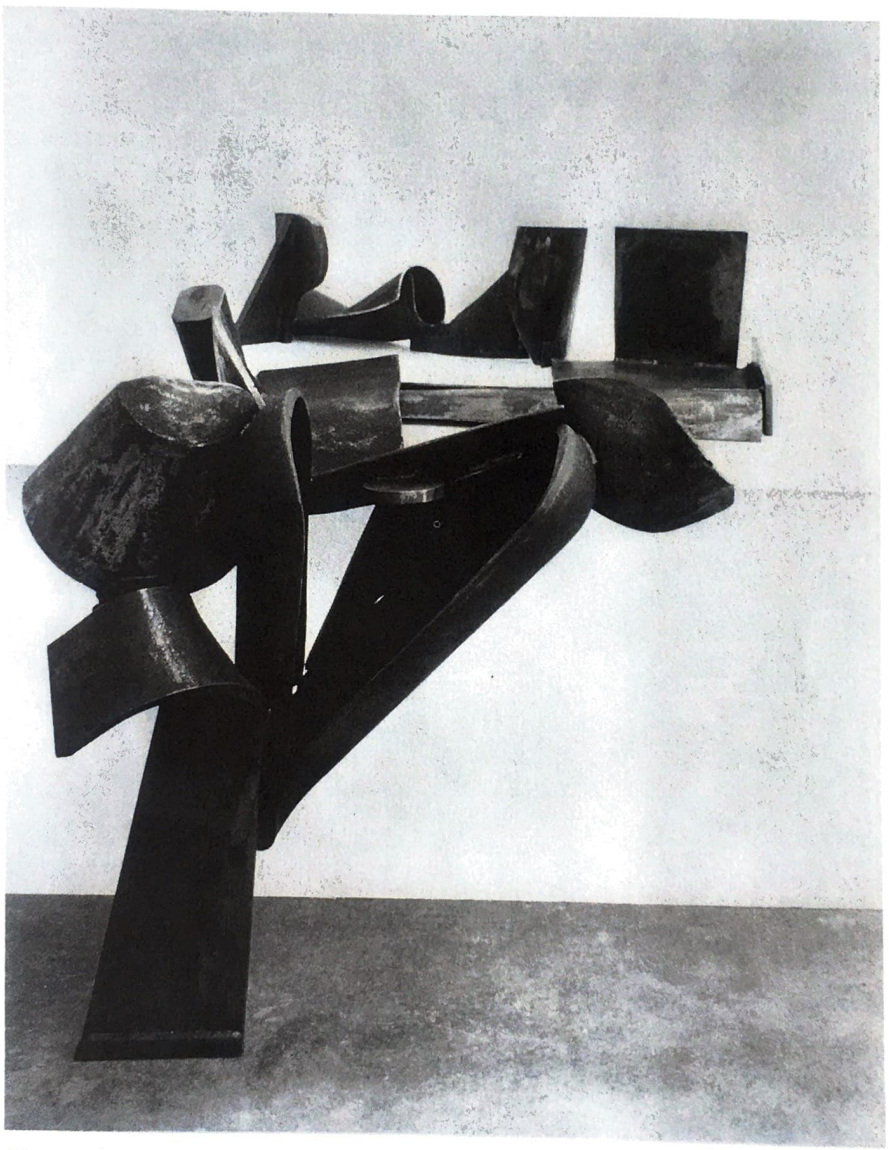
If *After Olympia* and *Night Movements* engage our kinetic memory, the

dramatic tower that was the centerpiece of Caro's installation at the Tate depends on literal physical participation. The monumental construction was conceived expressly to be entered, climbed through, penetrated, in order to be understood. The possibility of sculpture that addresses the entire body, not only the eye, has fascinated Caro for some time. In the past five or six years, he has constructed a climbing tower for children, a sculpture-boathouse, and a sculpture-village, begun in collaboration with the architect Frank Gehry in 1987, and still evolving as a series of independent sculptures. The Tate tower is simply the most recent manifestation of Caro's obsession. Reviewers kept saying that it turned adults into children, which is largely true. You scramble up narrow twisting stairs with treads that force you to pay attention to each step and risers that require some effort. You perch on a secret seat hidden from anyone else, peer down from a balcony, climb higher, duck through a door, reach a higher vantage point. It is like childhood play, but the walls of the passages and the stairs themselves, the entire construction, in fact, is made of steel, provoking a host of other, less playful associations.

I'm still not sure just how good the Tate tower is as a sculpture seen from the exterior, but moving through it is remarkable. Interestingly, having climbed through the tower makes you think about other sculpture in new ways. You mentally transport yourself into *Night Movements* or imagine what *After Olympia* feels like from inside the pediment. Caro has described his earliest figurative sculptures of thickset, earthbound figures as being "about what it is like to be inside the body." His tower sculpture puts a new spin on that notion.

It is typical of Caro to have constructed this behemoth in order to test an idea. (The piece was not fabricated from a maquette, but made like any other of his works: slowly, in the studio, with many alterations and adjustments during its evolution.) There's nothing theoretical about Caro's approach; a recurring motif in his statements since he began to make steel sculpture in 1960, has been the desire "to make sculpture real." The Tate tower makes it possible to rethink our relationship to Caro's brand of sculptural reality.

Intense physicality of another sort, in the form of unequivocal body parts as subject matter, was the basis of Mia Westerlund Roosen's recent sculptures, seen at Lennon-Weinberg Gallery in November. At first viewing, they were orthodox feminist works celebrating female genetalia, but they proved to be more inventive than that. In some sculptures, Roosen sheathes blunt forms with thin, soft-looking sheets of metal, creating a satisfying and slightly mysterious relationship of exterior to interior. Her earlier work, in fact, often made even more of this, on less specific, but no less evocative forms; their unseen interiors were extremely present in



Clear Sight (1989-90) by Anthony Caro. Steel waxed. 42 x 42 x 52 inches. Courtesy of André Emmerich Gallery, New York.

White Lies (1991) by Mia Westerlund Roosen. Plaster, pulp, and encaustic. 74 x 42 x 52 inches. Courtesy of Lennon, Weinberg, Inc.

the subtle bulges of their apparently fragile skins.

In the end, the most specific-seeming of the sculptures in Roosen's recent show turned out to be the most ambiguous and possibly, as a result, the most interesting. A large, thrust-up "saddle" form, bearing ruffly labia, its formal rigor transcended reference; it had, for example, visual barriers where voids might have been expected, which reasserted the "saddle" form and encouraged a wider range of associations. A larger piece, a row of overlapping repeated narrow-arched forms, was weakened by color that restricted interpretation. No matter how inclusive the progression of warped plates, those suggestive rosy pink edges kept bringing you back to female anatomy. Perhaps this is what Roosen wants. Part of my preference for her metal-skin sculptures, as opposed to those built up of waxy, resin-like material, is due to the way the metal *does* operate as a skin, disembodying the pieces and leaving room for other metaphors.

I wish Roosen would let go of symmetry somewhat – her sculptures almost always split bilaterally these days – but she is someone to watch with interest. I found her expression of feminist concerns more personal and unpredictable than Louise Bourgeois's recent commentaries on similar issues, seen at roughly the same time at Robert Miller Gallery. This time around, the kitschy, pale-pink marble babies' hands and feet of Bourgeois's previous offerings have been replaced by equally lifelike adult legs and feet, no less creepy and no less like the worst of Victoriana than the earlier manifestations. I suppose I just don't find Bourgeois's discovery of the likeness between pinkish marble and flesh all that enthralling, and I do know that the only *trompe l'oeil* sculpture that ever moved me was Bernini's. (And he did his own carving, by all reports.) Bourgeois showed, too, works based on her obligatory clusters of metaphorical breast and phallus forms, in pink precast and in glass, once again emphasizing technical feats to the point where feeling was overwhelmed. Bourgeois's imagery (at least in her free-standing works) now reads as a signature, a trademark, rather than as evidence of invention or self-discovery. It's all utterly predictable. The only question left is what new combination of materials Bourgeois will have her work manufactured in this season. I used to think she was better than that.

Gallery

BY SIMON DUMENCO

Body & Soul

Dawn Dedeaux's Urban Warrior Truths

The pessimism that I felt walking through **The Contemporary**'s current exhibition/installation, New Orleans-based artist **Dawn Dedeaux**'s *Soul Shadows: Urban Warrior Myths*, didn't have a lot to do with her subject matter: kids growing up under siege in urban war zones, kids growing up in prisons, kids trapped in self-perpetuating cycles of violence. As grim as all that sounds, the fact that Dedeaux collaborates with such kids makes her work as much about their self-definition and redefinition as it is about the daily horrors of their lives. The work, for all its gravity, also speaks of renewed promise and possibilities.

The pessimism that I felt was more for the very concept of the "museum," the public art space as we know it: creamy smooth white walls, hardwood floors, paintings and sculpture haloed by lights of celestial intensity. Permanent, pristine, monumental, timeless.

The Contemporary—formerly dubbed the Museum for Contemporary Arts—has been functioning nontraditionally since its birth in 1989, organizing occasional installations in defunct urban spaces such as former warehouses and bus stations. The success of its current exhibition—which is mounted, temporarily, on the second floor of a parking garage (after which the components of the installation will be disassembled, and the work as a whole will, in essence, no longer exist)—sounds another death knell for traditional museums. (The old gray ladies of art are no longer untouchable, it seems; institutions across the country, including the **Baltimore Museum of Art**, and even the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York City, have been forced to retrench thanks to budget cuts.) Dedeaux's work at The Contemporary is all about immediate reality, relevance, ephemerality—and has little do with objectification, art as product, or the consecration of aesthetics.

The installation is simple and comprehensible, if elaborately conceived and constructed. Once you enter the University of Baltimore's Biddle Street garage, you walk up the half-spiral car ramp and arrive at the raw and dirty second floor. The space is dimly lighted, and the poured concrete floor is stained with oil. But a huge assemblage commands the space. You stand at the mouth of a broad, V-shaped prefab corridor that's awash in fiery light. (Red and yellow fluorescent tubes lay along the ground on either side of the corridor, like glowing baseboards; in this installation, all the seams are intentionally evident, right down to the unpainted wallboards nailed and bolted to metal studs.) The walls of the corridor rise well above your head—they're maybe eight or nine feet tall—and along the walls are two levels of ghostly images of human figures that seem to be in motion. The exhibition pamphlet explains that they're images from a videotaped musical production staged by kids in the Orleans Parish prison, where Dedeaux involved the young inmates in her project. You don't need to read the pamphlet to understand that the "images of the 'Soul Shadows' are stacked two-up to suggest tormented souls imprisoned in holding cells."

If the prison metaphor doesn't immediately register, the presence of overhead surveillance cameras (which feed into monitors on display in a nearby video room) and motion detectors drives it home. As you move toward the narrow end of the corridor, you feel as if somebody is watching your every move. Another layer of sensation: walking through the corridor, you hear disembodied voices, murmurs, echoes, snippets of music (rap, gospel). You get the jarring feeling that there's an entire alternate world here, just beyond your reach—or, perhaps, that you are just beyond the reach of the "Soul Shadows," all these juvenile offenders neatly swept aside and locked out of sight.

The corridor leads to a circular room, what the pamphlet calls the Antechamber. Along the walls of the room are larger-than-life-size photo portraits of a young black male. Each of the portraits is a black-and-white silhouette, and the outer edges of the guy's body are outlined in great, broad, outwardly thrust brush strokes of gold paint. In one photomural, the guy has his arms outstretched like Christ on the cross. In another, an image placed at the center of the room, he's holding a dart board. While in a different setting—say, in a traditional gallery—the murals might come off as photographic paeans to a fictional pop cultural figure, here they absolutely don't. (The photos and their gilded negative spaces are actually quite beautiful—and the use of a still, posed, and outlined figure as outsized icon is more than slightly reminiscent of the work of British artists/contemporary museum mainstays Gilbert & George.)

Though this urban warrior seems strong and lithesome, he also seems tragically vulnerable—the dart board in the central image makes *him* seem like a target. (Curator **Lisa Corrin**'s pamphlet essay brings mythological dimension to the metaphor: "Here [the youth] is depicted as P'an-ku, Chinese god of fate and chaos, his target suggestive of the god's shield which typically bears the black and white, Yin-Yang symbol.") The effect is emotionally chilling, the atmosphere funereal. All of this is compounded when you read the exhibition pamphlet and learn that the Antechamber is subtitled "Tomb of Urban Warrior." (Incidentally, the guy's not dead. The pamphlet explains that he's a "former New Orleans youth gang leader who has continued to work with the artist.")

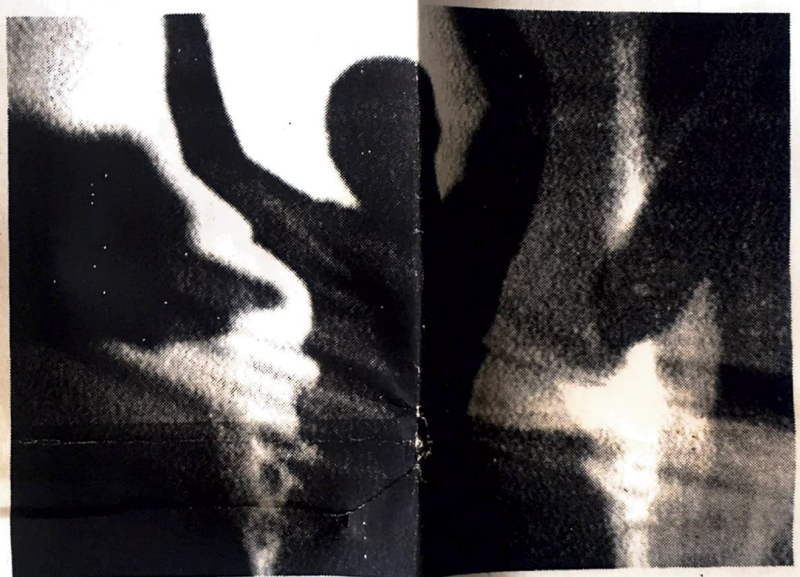


Image from Dawn Dedeaux' series, *Soul Shadows*

The installation is ringed by 10 video rooms, including the one mentioned above that holds the security monitors. The nine other rooms hold monitors that continuously play tapes of kids telling the stories of their lives. This is sort of a real-time documentation of urban life, an old-fashioned Studs Terkel-style witnessing brought into the video age. But the kids' stories aren't old-fashioned: they tell vividly of violent lives in bloody neighborhoods. (Some of the rooms have placards on their doors that warn of explicit language.)

Even when these kids are temporarily remote from criminal activity, metaphors of violence still seem to dominate their lives. One guy who's showing off some of his personal memorabilia allows the camera to pan over a color photo of his girlfriend and him. As we come to the bottom half of this run-of-the-mill snapshot of the smiling couple, we see that there's something between them: a handgun that he's pointing at her abdomen (remember, she too is smiling), quite casually. It's as if his gun is such an integral extension of his body, of his manhood—and by now feels so utterly familiar in his grasp—that it's quite natural for him to proudly display it in a posed photo to signify his dominance over his girlfriend.

But in the video rooms there is a progression away from violence and strife; the titles of the videotaped oral histories range from "Drive By Shooting" to "Job Opportunity." "The tone of the rooms," writes Corrin, "goes from anger and frustration to reflection and resolution." The installation overall is about recognizing and remodeling personal value systems, and that—even if it involves just a handful of kids—gives me great hope.

IN A SPACE ADJACENT TO Dedeaux's installation, The Contemporary also presents the *Woodbourne Workshop Artists' Projects*. Though the four installations in the room were created right here in Baltimore at the Woodbourne Center (a "multi-service treatment facility serving hundreds of severely troubled children and their families throughout Maryland"), they form a graceful continuum with Dedeaux's work.

In artist-in-residency programs at Woodbourne, each of the artists attempted to empower kids through creative expression. **Angela Franklin**, an enamel artist, worked at Woodbourne's Adolescent Diagnostic/Treatment facility to get kids to "communicate about their lives by placing items of particular concern to them in an enamelled memory box." (These are Franklin's words, quoted in the exhibition pamphlet.) The boxes work in this exhibition setting not only because they're accompanied by sometimes searing, always revealing personal notes, but also because they're creatively displayed.

Ardai Baharmast, a computer/media artist, helped kids create a "Whispering Wall," a room-spanning low wall that is covered on one side with color computer scans and laser-printed text; the subject matter of this "output"—excerpts of lyrics by rap stars, for instance—resulted from Baharmast's request that his students try to evoke "whatever gives them a sense of hope, discovery, and elation." Baharmast's media work is especially striking because it gives today's technophilic kids a means of sophisticated expression that they can quickly and confidently command. (The other side of the "Whispering Wall," which I won't elaborate on here, is a profoundly saddening installation using traditional materials like plaster and metal.)

Kibibi and Kauna Ajanku are dancers who "see expressive artistic training as the perfect way to unlock the impassable doors created by inner city life," according to their artists' statement. "Our project examines the spirit of an African tribal warrior from several different artistic perspectives." They did this by engaging kids in traditional African tribal dance choreographed to an enveloping African drumbeat (recorded on videotape for the installation). At the January 25 show opening, the Ajankus' performance with a couple dozen Woodbourne kids was a supremely successful crowd pleaser, and the Ajankus, who frequently addressed the crowd, came across as passionate, charismatic artists and teachers.

Katherine Kendall and **Sherwin Mark** are photographers and media artists whose installation "Today was a ok day" (created at the Woodbourne Day School) consists of two parts. First, an entrance structure. As Kendall and Mark explain in their joint artists' statement, "We built a structure out of wood at the entrance to the school. The entrance became alternatively a 'museum,' a 'sculpture,' or 'anything you want it to be.' While we built, we made photographs of each other and the parts we made. We also collected words

and sentences from diaries, assignments, and from listening to each other."

The entrance is a walk-through arch constructed of scrap wood nailed and glued together. Clearly a group effort, the arch seems like an overgrown Popsicle-stick sculpture, save for its decidedly un-naive recurring motif—wooden assemblages of guns.

The entrance leads into a darkened room, in which slides of photographs taken by all the kids in Mark and Kendall's class at Woodbourne Day School (along with images taken by the two artists themselves) are continuously projected on a wall. Over these images, another projector superimposes white type—selections from the "collected words and sentences" mentioned above—while background noise from the classroom (a cacophony of voices) comes out of speakers hidden in the dark of the installation.

The projected type is often a frank personal record of Kendall's and Mark's experiences at Woodbourne, as recorded in diary entries. On some days, the artists were evidently plagued with despair (some of the kids at Woodbourne—many of whom are victims of violence and psychological and physical abuse—have devastatingly sad stories to tell) and doubt about the effectiveness of the workshop, whether or not they were connecting with the kids, and so on. But the most valuable segments of the projected text consist of documentations of Mark and Kendall's quiet deliberation and gentle effort in encouraging the kids to actually *think* (perhaps for the first time in their lives) about their words and actions. Consider this text projection (a paraphrase, from notes I scribbled while the slide flashed on the wall):

Kid: If there's one thing I hate, it's a Jew.
Mark: Do you hate me?
Kid: No.
Mark: I'm a Jew.
Kid: Oh. I was just kidding.

I know three of these artist facilitators (Baharmast, Kendall, and Mark—I wrote about each of them, separately, in a *CP* feature story entitled "Picture Windows" last fall), and I'm thrilled to see their work brought to a larger audience along with the Ajankus' and Franklin's work (both of which I was pleased to see for the first time at The Contemporary). Each of these artists seems wholly committed to addressing the problems of our urban youth, not by creating pedantic "theme" works, but by integrating kids into the art-making process itself.

One final note about The Contemporary: by taking full advantage of its position as a transient museum that utilizes nontraditional sites for exhibitions, this young institution seems to be coming of age quickly. To me, a transient museum makes the most sense if it consistently presents transient (i.e., site-specific) works. For this reason, The Contemporary's previous installation, last summer's *Photo Manifesto: Contemporary Photography in the U.S.S.R.*, was only a limited success (and surely it was greatly overshadowed by the nearly concurrent and far superior *Changing Reality: Recent Soviet Photography* show at the Corcoran in D.C.). *Photo Manifesto*'s location at the former Greyhound Service Terminal at Park and Centre streets downtown meshed nicely with the low-rent aesthetic of the artists, who for the most part photographed the working and peasant classes. But the location, when you got right down to it, wasn't integral or necessary to the display. The work could have just as easily been presented in a traditional gallery or museum.

Not so with Dedeaux's and the Woodbourne artists' installations. If The Contemporary continues to hone its mission to present site-specific works, then it really can begin to consistently and effectively serve this community. Installation work, after all, is a growth market in the 90s. As critic, curator, and editor Barbara Rose noted last summer in the now defunct *Journal of Art*, "Installation and site-specific works [are finding] favor on both sides of the ocean, perhaps because it's cheaper to ship the artist than the art." It's useful to note that two of the most significant exhibitions in the U.S. in the past year both consisted of multiartist, site-specific installations: *Places With a Past* (which The Contemporary's directors probably found to be of particular interest, since it used plenty of seedy spaces, including several outdoor sites) in Charleston, South Carolina, a special exhibition that was part of the annual Spoleto Festival; and the Museum of Modern Art's *Dislocations* exhibit, which closed last month in New York.

Since The Contemporary favors truly seedy spaces, it generally doesn't even have the option of shipping in significant contemporary art for display (even if it could afford shipping and insurance costs), because few galleries or collectors would think to lend works to a "museum" that has little or no control over the temperature and humidity of its exhibition spaces.

While the Baltimore Museum of Art (BMA) continues to dish out big bucks every once in a while for a work by a blue-chip living artist in its ongoing effort to shore up its anemic (pathetic, really) contemporary collection, perhaps The Contemporary can step into the void and begin to fashion a truly vibrant and responsive contemporary museum for this city.

THAT DIG AT THE BMA ASIDE, I encourage you to visit its exhibition of work by **Jacob Lawrence**, *The Frederick Douglass and Harriet Tubman Series of Narrative Paintings*. The show has been up for a while now, but it was inaccessible to viewers for much of January, thanks to the BMA's half-month shutdown, mandated by city and state budget cuts.

Few kids of my generation (and probably few kids among the current generation now in primary schools) learned anything at all about Frederick Douglass and Harriet Tubman—both escaped slaves who became widely known antislavery activists in the mid-1800s, and both of whom are great American heroes. Lawrence's 61 paintings in the series (on loan from the Hampton University Museum in Hampton, Virginia, which organized this traveling exhibition) were created between 1938 and 1940, and they go a long way toward righting a historiographic wrong. This show also handily dispenses with some of the usual sort of distancing measures (of the sort I railed against in the second paragraph of this essay) that we're used to encountering in staid, respectable museums. The exhibition space here is intimate and warmly lighted, and the show itself is unapologetically informative—each painting is accompanied by an explanatory narrative (written by Lawrence, who saw the text as an inseparable part of this series) that tells of Douglass' and Tubman's lives and works.

GALLERY-EXHIBIT-OF-THE-month honors go to **Nye Gomez Gallery**, in Sharp-Leadenhall, for its current three-person show. **Gina Pierleoni**'s mostly black-and-white, charcoal-on-paper drawings are among the most compelling figurative works I've seen since Francesco Clemente's *Three Worlds* exhibition at the San Francisco Museum of Modern Art last spring (a traveling show that opened in Philadelphia in late 1990).

The comparison to Clemente is especially apt with Pierleoni's "Medicine Fall," a 22-by-22-inch dual portrait of a woman and a man, the woman very elaborately drawn (she even has a touch of red to her lips), and the man (just a man's face, actually) simply drawn with a very few spare, confident lines—precisely the sort of selective rendering that gives Clemente's pastel and watercolor works their peculiar *frisson*. By carefully choosing just what she wants to represent (as opposed to trying to create "complete" drawings, in which all the lines always head somewhere), Pierleoni imbues her subjects with a disembodied, floating quality that made me feel, as I viewed them, as if I were seeing flashes of faces in a dream state, rather than just staring at a bunch of sheets with charcoal marks on them.

Her color works (acrylics on paper, which are unframed and pinned directly to the gallery walls) are also quite strong. But in her acrylics, Pierleoni intentionally concentrates less on evocative figuration (her subjects here are sort of totemic stick figures with rounded features and well-defined faces), and instead cuts loose with vibrant (but not garish), multilayered color. In some places, you can see where Pierleoni has scraped and scratched at the topmost layer of pigment to lay bare an entirely different color just below. Here's an artist who likes to get her fingers in the paint.

In his artist's statement, Keith **McCormack** says, "The focal point for this group of drawings and paintings is bombing, percussion, impact and sound presented in a visual way." He succeeds by bringing tremendous textural diversity to his surfaces, so that when he draws a circle—all the works here incorporate circular forms, especially concentric circles—it doesn't just lay flat on his canvas or panel. The circles are gouged into the surface of the background pigment, or they're so thickly layered that they pop away from the canvas toward the viewer. (Even full-color reproduction wouldn't do justice to these works.)

In a few of these works, McCormack goes fully multimedia. "334 Superfortresses," which is the only work in this show to use explicit representation (it depicts 12 carefully rendered airplanes above a sea of overlapping concentric circles—the planes are dropping bombs, get it?—a gesture that doesn't quite work), employs Xerography in addition to charcoal and graphite. And several works have paper doilies (no kidding) embedded into their background pigments. The doilies in "Bombing the Catholic Women," a 60-by-28-inch canvas, make some amount of sense. But the doilies in "Bombing on Lace No. 1" and others—lovely as these works are to look at—amount to overkill. It's almost as if McCormack got caught up in the beauty of his own creation (and "Catholic Women" *is* a gorgeous piece) and decided to use the doilies a few too many times. Still, he deserves credit for having the courage to use such a frilly item in such serious, powerfully painted and drawn works.

Ultimately, though, McCormack doesn't need the gimmick of embedded three-dimensional objects; he's a strong enough painter that he can conjure honest-to-goodness art from mere canvas (or panel) and pigment. In fact, a couple of his works, particularly "Ringworm," reminded me of the sort of painterly finesse evident in Ross Bleckner's widely exhibited paintings; McCormack shares Bleckner's knack for creating the optical illusion of depth of field by application of pigments in a way that seems simultaneously vigorous and exquisitely mannered. (Interestingly, after drawing this parallel in my mind, I saw some of Bleckner's most recent work in a group show—up through February 29—at Perry Rubenstein Gallery in New York. To my surprise, Bleckner's taken to gouging—you guessed it—small circular forms into the surfaces of his paintings. Chalk it up to the Zeitgeist.) ■

Gina Pierleoni's and Keith McCormack's work will be on display at Nye Gomez (752-2080), 836 Leadenhall Street, through February 22. Jacob Lawrence's work is on display at the BMA (396-6310) through February 23. Soul Shadows ... and the Woodbourne Workshop Artists' Projects *are on display at the Contemporary (462-3515), which is temporarily at 1111 Cathedral Street, through February 23.*

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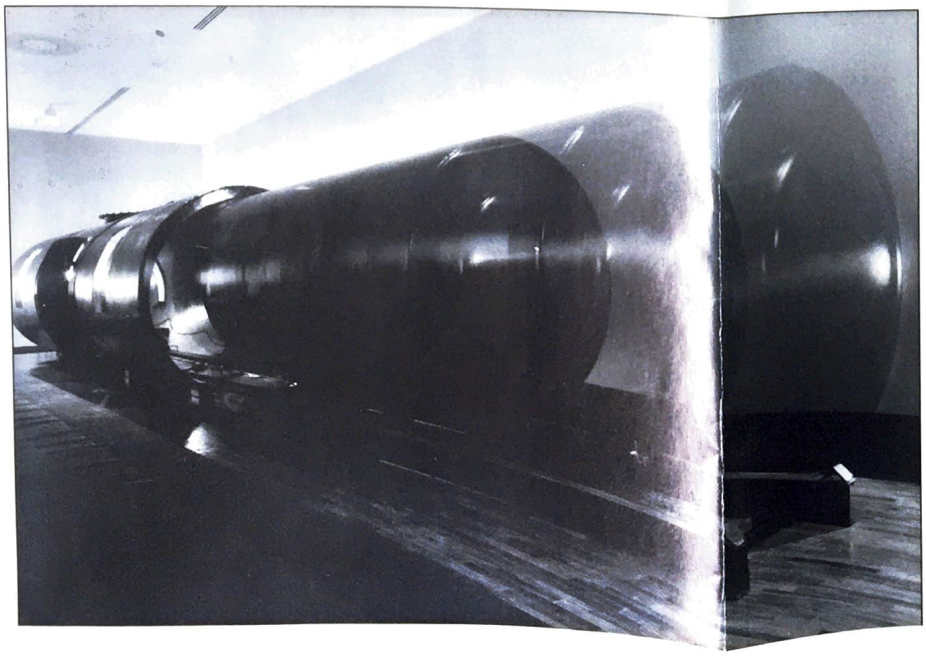
"Dislocations" 9415
Museum of Modern Art, New York

"Dislocations" was Robert Storr's first major exhibition as curator in the department of painting and sculpture at the Museum of Modern Art (MoMA). Representing a range of ages, backgrounds, styles and agendas, the artists—Louise Bourgeois, Chris Burden, Sophie Calle, David Hammons, Bruce Nauman, Ilya Kabakov and Adrian Piper—each designed an installation for this impressive show. Located not in one contiguous space but on three floors of the museum, the exhibition was intended to trigger a variety of artistic, social and psychological "dislocations."

The show's three most engaging pieces shared adjoining darkened spaces on the museum's lower level. For Nauman's *Anthro/Socio* (1991), bald performance artist Rinde Eckert appeared on three pairs of monitors and three projectors in a dim, cavernous gallery. Eckert's obsessive voice repeated in rounds, "anthropology feed me/eat me" and "sociology help me/hurt me," a solo choir conjuring the realms of nightmare, fear, pathology.

Escaping the barrage of "sound bites," one crossed a narrow walkway equipped with several pairs of binoculars for Ilya Kabakov's *The Bridge* (1991). Through the binoculars viewers could keep guard over the horde of minuscule white figures, scattered on the floor below, who seemed to represent an absurdist, imaginary threat to order. It was as if these Lilliputians might disrupt a critique of bourgeois tendencies in art, such as those suggested by the paintings propped against shabby, dark walls in this reconstruction of Kabakov's *Tenant's Club of Moscow's Housing Project No. 8* (1991).

Also in the darkened lower galleries was Louise Bourgeois's *Twosome* (1991), featuring a pair of large black oil tanks. One of the tanks had windows and a door through which red light glowed. The two tanks slid on tracks, one into the other, richly resonant of sexuality and childhood hideaways.



A trio of works with social agendas was clustered in MoMA's upper galleries. Strongest of these was *The Other Vietnam Memorial* (1991), Chris Burden's response to Maya Lin's Vietnam Veterans Memorial listing the more than 58,000 American dead. From a steel pole *The Other Vietnam Memorial* radiated movable copper sheets etched with three million names, an estimate of Vietnamese military personnel and civilians killed during the years of U.S. combat.

David Hammons reconstructed, through life-sized photographic views, an equestrian statue of Teddy Roosevelt, flanked by an Indian and an African-American. Despite the surrounding trappings of a parade, *Public Enemy* (1991) suggested a war zone where the adventurer-turned-president was the target.

In Adrian Piper's *What It's Like, What It Is No. 3* (1991) bright white bleachers surrounded a white column inset with video monitors. The monitors displayed the head of a black man who repeated, "I'm not sneaky. I'm not lazy. I'm not noisy. I'm not vulgar. I'm not crazy," etc. A response? A statement? A performance? Piper's and Hammons's pieces seemed too self-evident, too thin in their commentary, while Burden's work pointedly continued a dialogue about war.

Visitors had to scout second-floor galleries of MoMA's permanent collection to find Calle's *Ghosts* (1991). On walls that were empty because works had been removed for repair or loan, the artist asked staff members to recall their memories of the works and to record these in a sentence or two and a tiny drawing. In stark contrast to the political trio above and the more psychological one below, Calle's project focused on the shifts in viewers' perceptions and memories of art.

In the end, perhaps the "dislocations" theme worked best in simple ways, forcing the viewer to move around the museum's spaces, looking at seven new works not ordinarily seen in this treasure house of classical modernism. As far as questioning assumptions, genuinely disorienting the viewer in profound ways, one would have to say that "Dislocations" didn't reach quite that far. But if Storr's exhibition does mark a beginning, an opening up of an aged and established institution, then that is dislocation enough. —*Regina Cornwell*

TANGENT 9475

The Art of Dislocation

Daniella Dooling

Dislocations
Organized by Robert Storr, curator, Department of Painting and Sculpture. An exhibition featuring new installations by seven artists: Louise Bourgeois, Chris Burden, Sophie Calle, David Hammons, Ilya Kabakov, Bruce Nauman, and Adrian Piper. Museum of Modern Art, New York, October 20, 1991-January 7, 1992.

To the hard of hearing you shout, and for the almost-blind you draw large and startling figures.
—*Flannery O'Connor*

THE CONTEMPORARY artist is often an outsider—partly by choice, but largely because of being cast in that role by the rest of modern society. This position is often one of solitude, and it is a position both desired and despised. The seclusion of the artist is much like that necessary in the lives and work of the monk, shaman, and blacksmith; indeed, there are obvious similarities. These individuals, like the artist, require isolation in order to achieve a purified state of mind and spirit that will enable them to "create." Because of their ability to transform, they are also the members of the society that are most feared and venerated, and therefore must be separated from other people. As Mircea Eliade states in *The Forge and the Crucible*, "Metal workers, al-

David Hammons' Public Enemy

most everywhere, form groups apart; they are mysterious beings who must be isolated from the rest of the community."[1]

In practical ways, the artist may feel forced into isolation by a lack of financial support, intellectual camaraderie, and tolerance for difference. Yet, in another way, the artist may consciously seek the solitude needed for inner growth and the distancing that is often a part of the creative process. Whether he or she feels embittered and rejected by the community or revered and respected, one element remains true: the artist, and consequently the creative process and its subsequent outcome, maintain a position which is outside the rest of the society.

From this position of isolation, a natural and obvious distancing occurs between the artist and the community. How great or small this distance is depends upon the nature of the art that is produced and the ability of the society to respond to it. Closed in upon itself, the community is unable to see itself clearly, and it is the contemporary artist who attempts to criticize, challenge, and describe it. The current exhibition, "*Dis*locations," at the Museum of Modern Art, shows how the work of seven artists relates directly to the community to which they address their art. Each has created an installation that is specifically designed to challenge the accepted point of view of the audience—to create an unfamiliar circumstance that might generate a question about something taken for granted or something long forgotten. Each space is in some way disquieting, discomfiting, *dislocating*. The installations by Louise Bourgeois, Chris Burden, Sophie Calle, David Hammons, Ilya Kabakov, Bruce Nauman, and Adrian Piper open up a dialogue with the viewer that in some way enables their work to be accessible to the community to which they speak.

THE IDEA that contemporary art is in any way accessible or understandable may seem contradictory to the outer community that has challenged, threatened, and questioned its very validity throughout most of this century. As art moved away from accepted traditional styles with such revolutionary works as Pablo Picasso's *Les Demoiselles d'Avignon* of 1907, the concept of what art is, or should be, changed, and consequently, the art "product" changed. As we approach the twenty-first century, these changes have become so severe and differ so much from traditional art that, in fact, many of us might say that contemporary art is no longer art. Installation, video, and performance art are some of the new modes of expression in the last twenty-five years, and by their very nature, these forms are often not recognizable immediately as "art" by *either* the art community or the outer community. These methods often utilize the body as a medium—that of the artist, the viewer, or an anonymous figure. This kind of art often evokes a theatrical presence, and upon entering the installation the viewer unwittingly becomes a member of the cast and therefore an active participant in the work of art. As contemporary art has become more and more exclusive and demands are made for a highly specialized and educated audience, installation, video, and performance often offer much needed entryways through which the viewer can gain access to an otherwise inaccessible and specialized activity.

While today's viewer must be trained in both art history and contemporary art theory in order to fully understand the meaning of most contemporary painting or sculpture, installation work usually directly confronts, assaults, and demands a certain level of participation in a very visceral way from its audience. For instance, in Bruce Nauman's powerful work,

Anthro/Socio, we are immediately immersed in a disturbing, almost chilling, video installation as we enter the room. On each wall a large video image of a bald white man is projected. The same image appears on smaller television monitors stacked on top of each other, creating a mirror reflection with one head right-side-up and one head upside-down. The man chants the phrases: "Feed me/Eat me, Help me/Hurt me" and on some monitors, the word "anthropology" is added to the first phrase and "sociology" is added to the second phrase. While the effect of this chorus of repeated words is in many ways troubling and irritating, there is also a sense of a beautiful harmonizing reminiscent of Gregorian chant. As Roberta Smith said in her review of the exhibition, Nauman's work "can send one running from the room or force an inner confrontation with one's own conflicted desires to be independent but also protected."[2] In this very emotional and physical way, Nauman is able to get beyond the too often inaccessible dialogue that surrounds so much of contemporary art today.

It is interesting to note that although often excluding the very audience to which it is directed, most contemporary art is specifically about the outer community. Recent contemporary art has become much more content-oriented, and this content is derived from and reflects the society and culture. Content and meaning have become the most important aspects of the work of art, while aesthetic beauty has often become less important, if important at all. This lack of beauty in contemporary art and the differing concept of what is beautiful is another factor that has pushed the contemporary artist and the community even farther apart. The very definition of beauty becomes altered by the artist who is able to manipulate the content of the work of art through the use of unconventional materials.

David Hammons' aesthetic is formed by the objects and refuse he finds on the streets of Harlem. While these materials may be seen as waste or surplus, and ultimately as ugly or displeasing to most of us, Hammons can see their beauty, irony, and validity. In the past Hammons has utilized such varied waste products as human hair from the floors of barbershops, discarded liquor bottles found on the streets of Harlem, and elephant dung from the Brooklyn Zoo. This debris becomes illustrative of various aspects of the community that we do not wish to see, resulting in a further disparity between Hammons and ourselves. In another way, however, Hammons is able to manipulate these materials in a ritualistic way that is evocative of his African heritage and speaks directly about the members of the disenfranchised African-American community to a primarily white, privileged audience. By working within the culture of the street, Hammons establishes the city as his workplace. "I like doing stuff better on the street, because art becomes just one of the objects that's in the path of your everyday existence. It's what you move through, and it doesn't have superiority over anything else."[3]

In *Public Enemy*—the title itself perhaps referring to the controversial political rap band of the same name—Hammons literally attacks establishment art's racist imagery, which we are so accustomed to that we no longer see. The installation consists of a barricade of sandbags, machine guns, balloons, and autumn leaves around a four-sided photographic replica of an equestrian statue of Theodore Roosevelt, the original of which is located in front of the American Museum of Natural History. In this traditional sculpture, Roosevelt, seated

grandly atop a majestic horse, is flanked on either side by a sculpture, one of a Native American and the other of an African-American slave. Hammons takes the plywood replica of the statue and its racist connotations hostage by surrounding it in a military maneuver, albeit one with the playful irony of a political convention or birthday party. He creates a new point of view through which to experience the sculpture—he *dis*locates another work of art—enabling us to open our eyes and see the world anew.

Another artist, Adrian Piper, attacks racial stereotypes in an even more direct and serious way. Piper, a light-skinned black woman, has been a victim of racial preconceptions throughout her life and, in fact, in an effort to challenge these attitudes had a business card printed up that she handed to people when they made a racial slur in front of her:

> Dear Friend,
>
> I am black.
>
> I am sure you did not realize this when you made/laughed at/agreed with that racist remark. In the past I have attempted to alert white people to my racial identity in advance. Unfortunately, this invariably causes them to react to me as pushy, manipulative or socially inappropriate. Therefore, my policy is to assume that white people do not make these remarks, even when they believe there are no black people present, and to distribute this card when they do. I regret any discomfort my presence is causing you, just as I am sure you regret the discomfort your racism is causing me.
>
> Sincerely yours,
>
> Adrian Margaret Smith Piper[4]

Piper's installation, *What It's Like, What It Is*, consists of a glaring white room with bleacher seats lined along each wall. In the center of the room, a white pillar stands with a video monitor on each side. A black man's face looks out from the video saying over and over: "I'm not pushy. I'm not sneaky. I'm not lazy. I'm not noisy. I'm not stupid. . . ." Piper forces us to confront our stereotypes—in a room where our skin's very pores are visible in the harsh light.

Chris Burden, an artist infamous for an action in 1971, where he had himself shot in the arm in front of a gallery wall, has one of the most aesthetically pleasing works in "*Dis*locations." His installation, entitled *The Other Vietnam Memorial*, is made of enormous copperplates in a hanging file configuration. On each plate is etched the names of the Vietnamese people killed in the Vietnam war. The impact of numbers, three million in all, especially in comparison to the 57,939 American names listed on Maya Lin's Washington memorial, causes the viewer to reflect once again on a familiar topic from a totally unfamiliar and new location. We are forced to acknowledge the other side of the story, unwittingly seduced into the work of art by the warm glow of the copperplates.

Perhaps the most light-hearted artist in "*Dis*locations," Sophie Calle, interacts with her audience in a direct and tangible way. Calle asked certain museum workers to recall from memory several of the paintings that are temporarily out of the museum. Each museum staffer was asked to draw a small picture of the missing painting and also to describe it. This collaboration resulted in drawings and images that Calle used to create a decorative collage in the space that each painting once occupied. Her work is not with the rest of the "*Dis*locations" installations but is interspersed throughout the permanent collection; the viewer has to search for various parts of it throughout the regular works in the second-floor galleries.

Her installation also operates as a fun-filled guerilla tactical plan as it surprises and perplexes unsuspecting visitors to the museum proper who have come to walk through the permanent collection. Coming upon one

of Calle's pieces, these innocent viewers gaze with incomprehension at this seemingly out-of-context work of art. *Ghosts*, the title of the piece, is literally a faded and distant image of something that was once there, and it brings the theoretical dogma of painting off its pedestal and allows the viewer to think once again about the fundamental aspects of art—what it makes you think about, what it makes you feel, and what you remember when it's no longer there.

THE OTHER TWO artists included in the show, Ilya Kabakov and Louise Bourgeois, present installations that are interesting but perhaps less accessible to the general public. Kabakov, somewhat like Hammons, addresses a specific community—in this case the Soviet community. The installation represents the site of a gathering of underground artists which seems to have been interrupted by the police: there are overturned chairs and benches, crumpled pieces of paper, and finished canvases propped against the wall. The viewer must stand on a bridge and view miniature cut-outs of little white men through a pair of binoculars. This adds a dream-like dimension to the installation, but seems self-conscious in comparison to the expressionistic attitude of the rest of the piece. The viewer is not allowed to stray from the path formed by the bridge and feels further intimidated by a museum guard who hovers nearby to make certain that no one moves the carefully placed binoculars. *The Bridge*, the title of the piece, forces the viewer to remain at a specific location and thereby causes the work to become "spectator only" museum art.

Twosome, Louise Bourgeois' work, contrasts remarkably with the silence of its neighbor, *The Bridge*, by its flashing red lights and mechanical whirs and clicks. There are two horizontal oil tanks with small window-like holes which glow with a startling red light in a dimly lit room. As the viewer watches, one tank moves slowly away from the other along a track and then suddenly pulls itself back with a magnetic-like attraction. *Twosome*, although largely remaining allusive and ambiguous in its references, draws the viewer in by its nightmarish kinetic energy, like a toy train set gone mad. Its kinetic capability and emotional quality both engage and repel the viewer, but its message remains unclear.

Ours is a world that is difficult to understand, or to have a visual picture of, and contemporary art is one way we might begin to have a better understanding of it. It is, perhaps, one of the jobs of the artist to open the eyes of the public to the political, racial, and social issues facing our world—and to establish a different place from which to view these issues. However, because art has become so exclusive and specialized, we have often been unable to gain access to this insight. Perhaps this new work, in which intellectual coldness is put aside for a hands-on, visceral, playful, and confrontative style, will begin to break down the barrier between contemporary art and the public it portrays.

Daniella Dooling, sculptor and former editorial assistant of PARABOLA, *is currently teaching sculpture at Montana State University.*

NOTES

1. Mircea Eliade, *The Forge and the Crucible* (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1962), p. 89.
2. Roberta Smith, "At the Modern, Works Unafraid to Ignore Beauty," *The New York Times*, Oct. 18, 1991.
3. Robert Storr, "*Dis*locations" (New York: The Museum of Modern Art, 1991).
4. *Ibid.*

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RADIO CLIPS

DATE November 9, 1991
TIME 3:00-5:00 PM
NETWORK In Touch Networks
PROGRAM Village Voice

ACCOUNT NUMBER 54/9475

Cynthia Lopez reporting:

From New York, this is In Touch Networks bringing you the November 12th, 1991, issue of the Village Voice. Your readers today are . . .

Albert Silva reporting:

Albert Silva.

Lopez: . . . and Cynthia Lopez. Please be advised that some of the language and content of this program may not be acceptable to you. Use your discretion as to whether or not you wish to listen.

* * *

Lopez: "Louise Bourgeois," in the Arts Section. "Her powerful 'Piston Train' carries a surrealist repulsion and desire into the '90s at the Museum of Modern Art. Here her granite needle, cupped marble slabs, alabaster hearts, rubber teeth and latex lips lend strength and fragility--taking psychosexual logic and material illogic somewhere else. It's hard to believe she's about to turn eighty. That's through November 16th at the Robert Miller at 41 East 57th Street."

GREENSBORO NEWS & RECORD

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BURRELLE'S

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Museum filled with 'discomforting' images

9475

NEW YORK — An alien invasion of installations by seven artists, titled "Dislocations," has taken over separate galleries on three levels of the Museum of Modern Art.

Balloons and huge, menacing machines; artifacts in motion, or dramatically planted as in a stage set; video messages and spoken words pleading a case. These and other disparate elements have been brought into play to create works that aim to surprise and discomfit visitors to the museum.

The artists who have created these site-specific installations are Louise Bourgeois, Chris Burden, Sophie Calle, David Hammons, Ilya Kabakov, Bruce Nauman and Adrian Piper.

Opera companies get grant

WASHINGTON — A series of community outreach grants have been awarded by Opera America to help opera companies pitch their music toward "under-served audiences" in a series of cities.

Recipients of the grants are; the Cleveland Opera, the Houston Grand Opera, the Los Angeles Music Center Opera, the Minnesota Opera, the Pennsylvania Opera Theater and the Washington Opera.

Arts Briefs

Art exhibit in Richmond

RICHMOND, Va. — One of the strongest collections of American painting in the nation is going out on tour while its parent museum, the Cincinnati Art Museum, is closed for renovation.

"Masterpieces of American Painting from the Cincinnati Art Museum" is opening its tour at the Virginia Museum of Fine Arts. It's a cavalcade of famous names, with works by artists such as Albert Bierstadt, Mary Cassatt, Frederic Church, John Singer Sargent and James McNeill Whistler, among others.

The show consists of about 46 works in all, ranging from the mid-18th to the mid-20th centuries. It's particularly rich in works from 1860 to 1920, the period when Cincinnati flourished as an active regional art center.

The show is at the Richmond museum Nov. 19-Jan. 5, 1992. It will then be shown at the Minneapolis Institute of Arts Feb. 3-March 15, 1992, and at the Phoenix Art Museum, April 11-May 31, 1992.

The Cincinnati Museum is also sending a major exhibition of its European paintings, "Mantegna to Matisse," to the Kimbell Art Museum, Fort Worth, Texas, Nov. 23-Feb. 9, 1992.

NEWSDAY
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REVIEWS

An Artful Assault on the Establishment

9475

***DIS*LOCATIONS.** Seven socially engaged artists challenge establishment verities, including the Museum of Modern Art, at the Modern, 11 W. 53rd St., through Jan. 7. (212) 708-9400.

By Amei Wallach
STAFF WRITER

FOR DECADES, the Museum of Modern Art has served as a haven of haute-taste calm, shielding all who enter from Harlem nights, napalm nightmares and even the ancient homeless woman who has been camping in a succession of cardboard boxes just outside the Modern's door.

With "*Dis*locations," its big fall show, the Modern has invited in the noisy, noxious, anxiety-provoking outside world. Seven artists — three of them women, two of them black, all of them actively engaged in undermining cherished beliefs — have been given license to do what they wanted on three of the Modern's floors.

The result is a raucous, demanding — dislocating — exhibition that may send some viewers fleeing into the Monet "Waterlily" gallery for R&R. Denizens of Downtown may be familiar with the work of Bruce Nauman, Ilya Kabakov, Louise Bourgeois, Sophie Calle, David Hammons, Chris Burden and Adrian Piper. Bourgeois was the first woman artist the Modern ever honored with a retrospective, nearly a decade ago. But much of this work, created specifically for this context, reads as a refreshingly welcome declaration of war on what the museum stands for.

Not all of it. The Modern is, after all, the prime example of what the critic Brian O'Doherty once called a "White Cube," and Robert Storr, the curator of "*Dis*locations" defines as an "uncluttered shrine for art's contemplation." The one eventuality the 41-year-old Storr could not have foreseen for his debut Modern exhibition was how the institution itself would alter the artists' intent. Both Burden and Piper chose to clothe their explosive messages in a far more formal, minimal container than has been the habit of either one.

Burden actually blunts the impact of an action so brazen it required a special dispensation from the board of trustees: He printed names representing the more than 3 million Vietnamese who died in the Vietnam War on floor-to-ceiling, steel-framed panels of copper, which can be turned like cards on the ultimate Rolodex. But the exquisiteness of execution bleeds the piece of meaning. Precisely because of their number, the names are too small, the surface too smooth for anyone to feel them out with their fingers, to weep and remember, to bring the war home as did the 57,939 names on Maya Lin's Vietnam Memorial, to which this one makes both respectful and ironic reference.

Piper's flawless white-on-white room lined with white bleachers on white floor, fails to inflame in her usual manner, because, like the best of minimalism, it soaks up so much ambient meaning from its surroundings. Piper's subject for some time has been the way white prejudice, particularly liberal white stereotyping, cripples both blacks and whites.

Her confrontational situations are choreographed to give her usually all-white gallery audiences maximum discomfort and, as a result, maximum insight. In this case, in the all-white column in the center of the room, a black man on a video screen faces front, back, left and right and refutes a litany of stereotypes: "I'm not horny. I'm not scary. I'm not crazy. I'm not servile. I'm not stupid."

His delivery is as stolid, his anger as palpable as Clarence Thomas' was last week. Since the emotions the piece is meant to arouse were endlessly experienced by most of us all last weekend in front of our own television sets, it just takes that much more effort not to leave the room.

Leave it to David Hammons, though, to make magic of the realities of the real world — and also of the "*Dis*locations" exhibition. The whole thing didn't actually take fire until Hammons had completed his piece at 5 a.m. the day of the opening, taking advantage of missteps and delays by the museum staff to improvise and jive up to the last moment.

Hammons, who recycles the detritus of the Lower East Side and Harlem streets into metaphors for the black experience, has recyled last summer's Soviet coup into a celebration of the cultural coup that makes possible his appearance at the Modern.

It's not Lenin's statue that's being toppled at the Modern; it's the rather racist statue of Theodore Roosevelt on a charger flanked by noble savages on foot — one Native American and one African — on the steps of the Museum of Natural History. The "statue" consists of huge black-and-white photographs pasted to a column, complete with black-and-white trees echoing the trees to be seen through the window in the Modern's sculpture garden. Dynamite is taped to the "statue"; sandbags surround it, along with wonderfully aromatic fallen leaves. On the sandbags are lifesize machine guns pointing at the statue, also toy cannons and helicopters, and a toy helicopter flies overhead. The police barriers are protecting the attack on the "statue," just as the Modern is officially sanctioning these attacks on its orthodoxies. Beyond the barricades — and within it — are party streamers and balloons for viewers to walk through. The walls are tenement green, despite the name "Roosevelt Gallery" printed upon them.

What's most subversive about all this is that viewers are going to drag leaves and confetti into the other galleries when they walk in, thus collaborating in Hammons' sly infiltration.

The Frenchwoman Sophie Calle, who is equally sly, also has been successful in her guerrilla incursions on the galleries. She has replaced favorite paintings by Magritte, Modigliani, Seurat and Hopper with hilarious text recording the opinions and memories of people who pass them every day.

Down in the basement, Louise Bourgeois plays marvelously wicked games with childhood terrors of birth, death and copulation. She has rescued phallic-shaped gasoline storage tanks from the side of a road, painted them black, lined them in red (as in womb, as in hell, as in danger) complete with flashing red light. And she has mechanized them so that one slides ponderously in and out of the other, threatening to crush whomever might be cowering in that far-from-protective womb.

Next door, Soviet artist Ilya Kabakov has painted hallway and large room drab Moscow brown and green, lined the walls with a retrospective of his own paintings, piled old chairs and benches in one side of the room, bridged the whole thing for us to cross and focused the tiny bit of light and also some handy binoculars on cockroach-sized white figures. A text on a bulletin board tells us the story that Kabakov has staged here: the tiny white horde has disrupted an official meeting in March, 1984, held to warn about the horrors of nonconformist art

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An Artful Assault

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like his. The white figures are lost souls, survivors of catastrophe. In rich contradiction, they symbolize the Soviet tragedy and also prefigure the current upheavals, which for Kabakov still could end in another failed utopia. Kabakov fears big, absolute statements, so everything here is either hard to see or tiny, which may blunt the initial impact but enriches the meaning.

It is Bruce Nauman who plays the bully and fairly steals the show. The sounds from his installation echo in both the Bourgeois and the Kabakov rooms. They are the repetitive sounds of a Gregorian chant from hell. They issue from the face of a man projected on the walls and on video screens. His head has been shaved the better to emphasize his infantilism. "Feed Me/Eat Me," yells/chants the face. "Help Me/Hurt Me." As the homeless on the street yell it. As bosses and workers silently yell it. Husbands and wives. Me and you. Horrible, endless, primal, everyday contradictory demands.

There's no escape. You exit the museum singing Nauman's song. The world seems slightly different after all this provocation, just as the exhibition intended it should. Now that it has begun, cacophonous as it is, you can only hope the museum will not again stop the music. / ■

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GOINGS ON ABOUT TOWN

angelo. . . . ¶ "Resplendence of the Spanish Monarchy" is a display of sixteenth-century Flemish tapestries, along with German and Italian armor. Through Jan. 5. . . . ¶ A small show of twenty-nine nineteenth-century European photographs, by such artists as Le Gray, Baldus, and Nadar. Through Dec. 1. . . . ¶ "The Lotus Transcendent" is a display of about two hundred small sculptures from Thailand, Cambodia, Nepal, and Sri Lanka. (Open Tuesdays through Sundays, 9:30 to 5:15, and Friday and Saturday evenings until 8:45.)

Museum of Modern Art, 11 W. 53rd St.—"Pleasures and Terrors of Domestic Comfort" explores the contemporary photographer's supposed preoccupation with the life of the home in more than a hundred and fifty works by Nan Goldin, William Eggleston, Cindy Sherman, Tina Barney, and others. Through Dec. 31. . . . ¶ "*Dis*locations." Through Jan. 7. . . . ¶ A compact, crisply displayed, quite brilliant installation of masks and helmets—all twentieth-century, most Western—used for sports, medicine, and the exploration of sea and space. Preserving the life of the wearer is the overt function of each of these objects, and ungodly fear is the emotion each seems to express. A must for fashion amateurs and anthropologists alike, this show is a devastating affirmation of our primal nature, and, as such, perhaps the ultimate coda to the museum's own controversial "Primitivism" show of some years back. Through Nov. 19. . . . ¶ An exhibition of drawings, photographs, scale models, and a video presentation related to projects by Tadao Ando, one of Japan's leading architects, who designed this show himself. It's a beautiful but rather chilly mix of two well-known modern Japanese specialties: high-tech corporate production values, and exquisitely rendered, dauntingly pristine structures for life, work, and the spirit—all somehow seen in the abstract. Through Dec. 31. . . . ¶ The annual "New Photography" series presents recent work by Eberhard *Grames, Sheron Rupp, and Stephen A. Scheer.* Through Jan. 7. . . . ¶ A small show of videotapes made with inexpensive video equipment by such artists as William Wegman, Linda Montano, George Kuchar, and Sadie Benning. Through Nov. 10. (Open daily, except Wednesdays, 11 to 6, and Thursday evenings until 9.)

Guggenheim Museum, Fifth Ave. at 89th St.—The museum is closed for renovation until early 1992.

Whitney Museum of American Art, Madison Ave. at 75th St.—Unlike most artists who have died of AIDS, Scott Burton, it seems, had enough time to make mature work. This show of the last works he designed, which were fabricated after his death, indicates that this master of functional sculpture was headed in a curious and unanticipated direction. In the post-minimal seventies, Burton cleverly implied a human presence in his exquisite, modernistic sculptures in the form of chairs and tables. These last furniture sculptures are literally figurative: a pair of cherry "Guardian Cabinets" with mirror-like bronze heads, a Chac-Moolesque granite "Bench Goddess," and a stainless-steel "Slave Table" in the form of a crawling man. The sphinxian arrangement of the sculptures here recalls the artist's performance works, and is rich with both childlike fantasy and sadistic suggestion. Through Dec. 8. . . . ¶ "You Connect the Dots. . . ," an oddly academic video installation by Bill Beirne. Through Nov. 10. . . . ¶ "American Life in American Art." Second floor through Nov. 10; third floor through Jan. 5. (Open Tuesdays, 1 to 8; Wednesdays through Saturdays, 11 to 5; Sundays, 11 to 6.)

Whitney Museum Branches—"Immaterial Objects." The Whitney's permanent collection is particularly strong in the non-traditional works that in many ways defined the aesthetic upheaval of the late sixties and seventies. But owing at least in part to their scale, these important benchmarks are rarely on view. At first it might seem unwieldy to have an exhibition spread out over three locations, but this in fact turns out to be one of this excellent show's strengths. Each venue captures a different perspective. At the Equitable Center (through Dec. 28) are, mostly,

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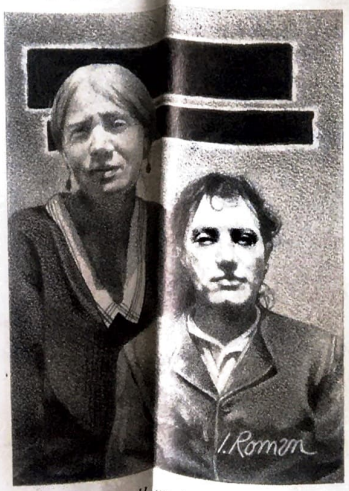
3	4	5	6			

pieces which are self-contained, calm, and ordered—Mel Bochner's circle of pebbles, a charming conceptual play on literalness and representation, James Turrell's enigmatic light projection, Carl Andre's copper-plate path, Dan Flavin's grid of neon-light tubes, Richard Serra's emphatic black drawing, and even, in a curious way, Eva Hesse's tangle of knotted rope and Richard Tuttle's wrinkled canvas octagon. The installation at Federal Reserve Plaza (through Nov. 16) is, by contrast, alive and animated, and verges, even when ordered, on chaos. Here we find Dennis Oppenheim's mannequin comically lecturing on the systematic murder of the sixties avant-garde; Bruce Nauman's pile of burlap, which is about as concise a protest against formalism as has yet been raised; Barry Le Va's anti-illusionistic scatterings of felt and broken glass; Ree Morton's mixed-media "Signs of Love," a bold feministic parody of sentimentality in art; and Jonathan Borofsky's crowd of running men painted on a wall. In this company, even Robert Irwin's illuminated disk becomes energy unleashed. At Philip Morris (through Nov. 16), Mary Lucier's video installation "Ohio at Giverny" is the best use of this dreary space we have ever seen. (**Whitney Museum at Equitable Center,** Seventh Ave. at 52nd St. Open Tuesdays through Fridays, 11 to 5, and Thursday evenings until 7:30; Saturdays, noon to 5. . . . **Whitney Museum Downtown,** 33 Maiden Lane. Open Mondays through Fridays, 11 to 6. . . . **Whitney Museum at Philip Morris,** Park Ave. at 42nd St. Open Mondays through Saturdays, 11 to 6, and Thursday evenings until 7:30.)

Brooklyn Museum, Eastern Parkway—"Sigmar Polke." In overcompensating for its belated recognition of this major German artist's importance, the American market has come dangerously close to overhyping Polke. This mid-career retrospective, however, despite some big problems—the absence of films, for one—comes as a pleasant surprise. It begins in the mid-sixties, with works that clearly stood in the shadow of contemporaneous American art and were well aware of the fact, often resulting in an essentially good-natured parody of minimal and Conceptual art, which is nevertheless underscored by a certain resignation to their hegemony. There is a bewildering and unexplained ten-year gap, right in the middle of the artist's career (essentially spanning the seventies)—no small hole in a show that covers less than three decades. When the exhibition does resume, with early-eighties work, the trickster in Polke returns with a vengeance, teasing with one hand while stroking with the other. From this period come the finest paintings of Polke's career, including the symphonic "Paganini" and the haunting "The Camp"—the latter portraying, by means of two rows of barbed wire with blackness in between, both the concentration camps and the division of Germany. The so-called "mood" paintings of 1982, whose colors shift to reflect changes in the weather, are rich with painterly pathos. And the most recent paintings, from 1988, are quite simply awesome. Through Jan. 5. . . . ¶ "Objects of Myth and Memory." A fascinating exhibition of two hundred and fifty of the nine thousand objects purchased at the beginning of the century by Stewart Culin, the curator responsible for the museum's fine Native American, Asian, and African collections. These objects have not been on view since the thirties. Some of them are exquisite: a group of extraordinary Mimbres stone figures; a charming Zuni fetish in the form of a bear; a number of haunting kachina dolls. But this is more a study of the systematic collection of artifacts and Culin's ethnographic drive than of the cultures themselves, and the works are accompanied by detailed texts about the purchase of many of the objects. What are most engaging are not the treasures, of which there are a number, but the objects of daily life: games, clothes, pots, baskets, belt buckles, rattles, and hats. Through Dec. 29. . . . ¶ A companion show of contemporary Native American works, including ceramics, elk-horn carvings, and Pomo baskets. Through Jan. 27. . . . ¶ A thirty-foot-long platform of forged-iron sculptures is the fifteenth installment in Alain Kirili's "Commandment" series. Through Jan. 5. . . . ¶ "Quattrocento," a small exhibition of a few dozen early-Renaissance panel paintings from Italy. (Open Wednesdays through Sundays, 10 to 5.)



Vanessa Bell and Duncan Grant

American Museum of Natural History, Central Park W. at 79th St.—"Chiefly Feasts: The Enduring Kwakiutl Potlatch" presents elaborately decorated dishes and bowls, masks, and other objects used in the British Columbian tribe's lavish rituals of hospitality and wealth. . . . ¶ In a "living exhibit," four Tibetan monks will demonstrate over the course of five weeks their ancient craft of doll-making. This involves clay modelling, painting, appliqué, and tailoring, and about twenty elaborate dolls will be made. Through Nov. 8. . . . ¶ A show of photographs by Heinrich Harrer, taken in Tibet during the last few years before the Chinese invasion, in 1951. Through Nov. 8. (Open daily, 10 to 5:45, and Friday and Saturday evenings until 8:45.)

Asia Society, Park Ave. at 70th St.—A show of sixty ukiyo-e prints and books that explores the relationship between the works, the artists, and censorship in Tokugawa Japan (1615-1868). Through Jan. 5. (Open Tuesdays through Saturdays, 11 to 6, and Friday evenings until 8; Sundays, noon to 5.)

China Institute, 125 E. 65th St.—"Early Chinese Ceramics from New York State Museums" includes forty-eight earthenware, porcelain, and stoneware objects from around 3500 B.C. to the latter half of the thirteenth century. Through Dec. 14. (Open Mondays through Saturdays, 10 to 5.)

Japan Society, 333 E. 47th St.—Sixty-eight early ukiyo-e prints and paintings. Through Nov. 24. (Open daily, except Mondays, 11 to 5.)

Morgan Library, 29 E. 36th St.—The library has reopened with greatly improved interior spaces. The Morgan House (at 37th and Madison) has been purchased and a glass-enclosed garden court constructed to connect the two buildings. The permanent collection is now given three new gallery spaces and is shown off in "Masterpieces of the Morgan Library." Through Jan. 5. (Open Tuesdays through Saturdays, 10:30 to 5; Sundays, 1 to 5.)

National Academy of Design, Fifth Ave. at 89th St.—The French children's-book character Babar the Elephant travels to New York in the form of more than a hundred drawings and watercolors by Jean de Brunhoff, the character's creator, and his son Laurent, who has continued the stories. Through Nov. 3. (Open Tuesdays, noon to 8, with no admis-

New York, January 3, 1992

Dear Sirs:

Thank you for your assistance in preparation of my writing about "Dislocations". Enclosed is a copy of my article which was published in the Cultural Review section of the Polish American Daily News/*Nowy Dziennik* on December 26, 1991.

I look forward to working with you again.

Sincerely,

Marek Bartelik

MAREK BARTELIK

Nowojorska kronika kulturalna

SZTUKI plastyczne

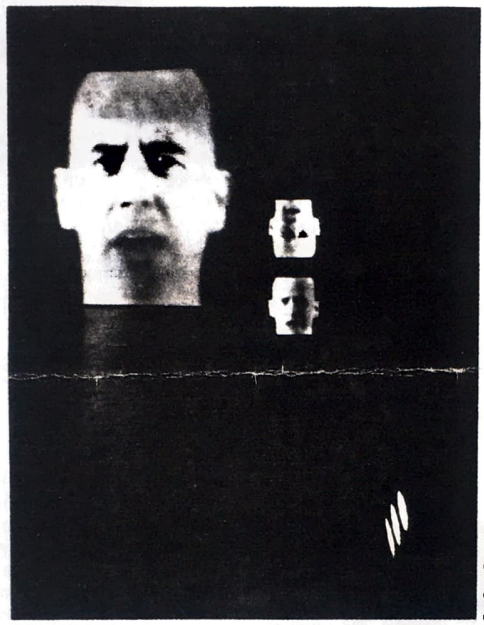
Coraz częściej mówi się o zastoju w dzisiejszej sztuce amerykańskiej i o konieczności wydostania się z niego jak najszybciej.

Znudziły się już bowiem, jeszcze do niedawna nadające ton tutejszej sztuce, prowokacje "przywłaszczających" sobie wszystko co się da artystów; tym bardziej, że namnożyło ich się zdecydowanie za wielu jak na powielanie od lat kilku tych samych pomysłów. Pornograficzna aranżacja Jeffa Koonsa w Sonnabend Gallery, o której pisałem w ostatniej kronice, to jeszcze jedna desperacka próba przedłużenia czasów, kiedy niejednokrotnie zamiast wartości artystycznej dzieła sztuki liczyło się, jak dobrze można je sprzedać; kiedy arogancję brano za przejaw oryginalności.

Postmodernizm uznano za martwy, robiąc to z równym pośpiechem, jak kiedyś ogłoszono jego narodziny. W pustym miejscu nie pojawił się zaś jeszcze żaden nowy kierunek. Niepowodzeniem skończyły się próby zastąpienia go którymś ze starszych prądów ozdobionym przedrostkiem neo- albo post-. W nowojorskich galeriach widać więc nie spotykaną od dawna różnorodność stylów, a także sporo wystaw prezentujących dawniejszą sztukę. Zauważyć również można dużą liczbę wystaw twórców spoza USA. Ostatnio, na przykład, w kilku galeriach otwarto pokazy malarstwa argentyńskiego. Argentyńczycy, podobnie jak szczególnie widoczni dzisiaj Niemcy, dysponują bowiem pieniędzmi na wynajęcie galerii, wydanie katalogu, zorganizowanie wytwornego wernisażu, a nawet ściągnięcie z odległych zakątków świata zainteresowanych ich sztuką kolekcjonerów; mają pieniądze, których coraz częściej brakuje Amerykanom.

Dosyć paradoksalnie jednak, stagnacja w amerykańskiej sztuce przyczyniła się do wzrostu popularności malarstwa i rzeźby operujących tradycyjnymi środkami wyrazu i charakteryzujących się rzetelnym warsztatem artystycznym, zarówno w sztuce figuratywnej jak i abstrakcyjnej.

Bierze się to, oczywiście, z faktu, że wiele galerii przestawia się na prezentowanie twórczości, która się podoba i którą łatwiej sprzedać. Obok jednak zalewu taniej komercji, pojawia się też sztuka ambitna. Po latach eksperymentów z widzem — raz odwracania się od niego, raz kuszenia go tanią rozrywką — artyści amerykańscy wydają się coraz bardziej odczuwać potrzebę nawiązania z nim inteligentnego dialogu na zasadzie partnerstwa. Mówienia w bezpośredni sposób o sprawach istotnych, bez odwoływania się do tanich sztuczek i efekciarskich pomysłów. I bez pogoni za wszelką cenę za wymyśleniem czegoś nowego.



Bruce Nauman — *Anthro/Socio* — fragment instalacji wideo, 1991.

Fot. Basel Francois

Nawiązanie dialogu z widzem jest jednym z głównych celów wystawy zatytułowanej "Dislocations", czynnej obecnie w Museum of Modern Art, w której udział bierze siedmiu twórców o międzynarodowej sławie: Louise Bourgeois, Chris Burden, Sophie Calle, David Hammons, Ilia Kabakow, Bruce Nauman i Adrian Pipper. We wstępie do katalogu wystawy jej komisarz, Robert Storr, podkreślił, że artyści ci nie zostali wybrani, aby reprezentować określone tendencje, pokolenia, czy ugrupowania, ale wyłącznie jako wybitne indywidualności artystyczne. Ideę wystawy zarysował natomiast w następujący sposób: "Gdzie jesteśmy? Wiele jest dzisiaj powodów do zadania sobie tego pytania i prawdopodobnie jeszcze więcej, żeby zastanowić się, dlaczego nie zadajemy go sobie dużo częściej. Punktów odniesienia, w stosunku do których siebie określamy, jest bardzo wiele i łatwo wśród nich się zgubić. Najczęściej więc próbujemy udawać, że jesteśmy pewni naszego miejsca, pewni siebie i tego, kim jesteśmy. I nie zadajemy sobie pytań, które mogą zniszczyć stworzoną przez nas iluzję normalności. Decyzja wstąpienia na nieznane tereny oznacza bowiem zgodzenie się na możliwość, może nawet nieuchronność, zgubienia drogi. (...) Sztuka jest w stanie stworzyć poczucie ładu, ale może również spowodować dezorientację; w obu wypadkach oferuje ona jednak szanse rozszerzenia horyzontów poznania. Dzieło sztuki może przenieść nas poza obręb znanego, poza siebie, aby popatrzeć z zewnątrz na miejsce, z którego wyszliśmy i na ograniczenia naszej tożsamości. (...) Dyslokacje są świadomymi przesunięciami miejsc i punktów widzenia, które artyście i widzowi dają możliwość wspólnego dotarcia do nowych obszarów poznania, ale też popatrzenia na nowo na te przestrzenie, których istnienie brali oni za oczywiste".

W Museum of Modern Art pokazanych jest siedem dużych rozmiarów instalacji stworzonych specjalnie z myślą o tej wystawie. Bruce Nauman prezentuje instalację wideo zatytułowaną *Anthro/Socio*. W pustym pomieszczeniu umieszczone są projektory i telewizory pokazujące artystę wykrzykującego: *"Help Me/ Hurt Me, Feed Me/ Eat Me!"*. Rytmicznie powtarzany, zwielokrotniony krzyk, to — jak mówi twórca — wołanie o pomoc będące przyznaniem się do słabości i oddaniem siły w ręce innych.

Dla Rosjanina Ilii Kabakowa polityczny aspekt życia w Związku Sowieckim stał się tkanką, z której buduje on nowy kosmos. W pracy *The Bridge* artysta zrekonstruował wnętrze świetlicy jednego z moskiewskich komitetów blokowych i wypełnił je miniaturowymi sylwetkami przybyszów z innej planety. Dramaturgia bezszelestnie zmąconego spokoju kojarzy się z tą, jaką osiągnął Bułhakow w słynnej powieści *Mistrz i Małgorzata*.

Finezyjna instalacja Kabakowa stanowi silny kontrast dla pracy Louise Bourgeois *Twosome* — dwóch gigantycznych ruchomych cystern pomalowanych na czarno i umieszczonych na szynach. *Twosome* można wielorako interpretować, jednak najsilniej kojarzy się ona ze śmiercionośnym działem, które wprawdzie wygląda archaicznie, ale przecież ciągle budzi trwogę.

Wojna, jej skutki, są natomiast jednoznacznie potraktowane w pracy Chrisa Mardena *Other Vietnam Memorial*. Jest to pomnik wystawiony trzem milionom poległych Wietnamczyków. Pomnik, a właściwie jego naturalnej wielkości zdjęcia pojawiają się również w instalacji Davida Hammonsa. Widnieje na nim biały mężczyzna siedzący na koniu prowadzonym przez Murzyna i Indianina. Dookoła ustawione są policyjne zapory drogowe i pozawieszane kolorowe balony. Ostry komentarz społeczny zawiera wyraźne odniesienia do rasizmu.

Problem rasizmu poruszany jest również przez Adrian Pipper w instalacji *What Is Like, What It Is, No. 3*. W pomalowanym na biało amfiteatrze artystka umieściła kolumnę z czterema monitorami, z których czarnoskóry mężczyzna zaprzecza stereotypom rasistowskim: *"I'm not pushy. I'm not sneaky. I'm not lazy. I'm not vulgar. I'm not rowdy. I'm not horny. I'm not evil"* itd.

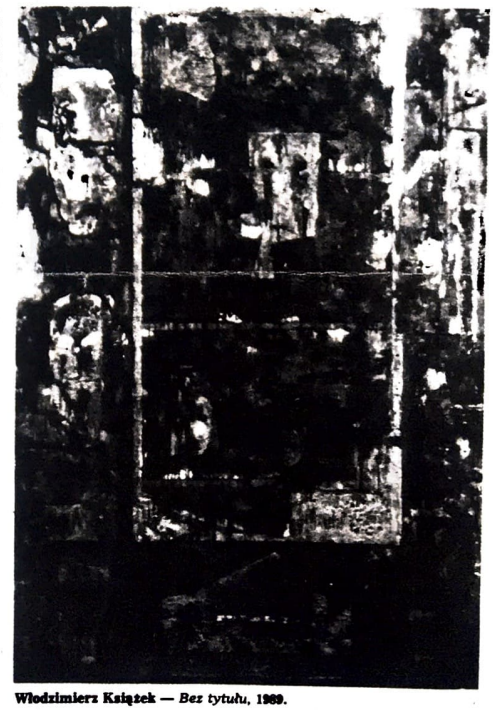
Obok tych głębokich, a jednocześnie mocnych wizualnie prac, nijako wypada instalacja *Ghost* francuskiej artystki Sophie Calle. Usunięcie przez Calle ze stałej kolekcji muzeum kilku dobrze znanych obrazów i zastąpienie ich wymalowanymi na ścianie kompozycjami z małymi szkicami i tekstem mówiącym o tym, co znajduje się na nieobecnym obrazie, jest jedynie przykładem na to, jak nudny i niewiele mówiący może być przerost treści nad formą.

"Dislocations" — siedem różnych wypowiedzi i tyleż odrębnych wrażliwości, to fascynujący wielogłos na temat współczesności ukazanej z przesuniętej perspektywy, bez kamuflażu i bez niepotrzebnych uproszczeń. Artyści jawią się jako uczestnicy tego, co dzieje się wokół nich — a nie jedynie jako bierni obserwatorzy. Uczestnikiem wreszcie, a nie obserwatorem tego, co dzieje się we współczesnej sztuce, zaczyna być nowojorskie Museum of Modern Art, które tą wystawą zrobiło odstępstwo od praktykowanego od lat pokazywania "sprawdzonej" sztuki, aby na gorąco uchwycić najnowsze poszukiwania twórcze. Pokaz czynny jest do 7 stycznia 1992 roku.

*

Obok malarstwa Włodzimierza Książka, pokazywanego do 4 stycznia 1992 r. w John Gibson Gallery, łatwo przejść nie zwróciwszy na nie uwagi. Na pierwszy rzut oka, malowane *impasto* w złamanej gamie kolorów, duże obrazy artysty wywołują skojarzenia z

(dokończenie na str. 15)



Włodzimierz Książek — *Bez tytułu*, 1989.

Nowojorska kronika

(dokończenie ze str. 7)

fragmentami chropowatych, starych ścian, a więc z motywem powtarzanym w malarstwie od lat i już mocno wyeksploatowanym. Jeżeli więc kurczowo będziemy nakładać na nie odniesienia do znanej rzeczywistości i zatrzymamy się na etapie porównywania ich do tego, co już w sztuce zostało pokazane, najprawdopodobniej nie znajdziemy tam nic interesującego.

Sztuka Książka funkcjonuje bowiem w innym przedziale wartości. Artysta nie próbuje nią prowokować ani oszałamiać jej bogactwem. W zamian przemawia głosem lekko wyciszonym, wymagając od widza skupienia i czasu. Malarstwu temu trzeba przyglądać się uważnie i przez dłuższą chw. ;. W odróżnieniu od wielu współczesnych artystów, Książek nie buduje swojej sztuki na zasadzie skrajności. Nie wyrzeka się jednak kontrastów, umieszcza je tylko na granicy, gdzie różnice między nimi są już prawie zatarte. W jego twórczości z pozoru zastygłe kształty tchną nadal życiem, światło sączy się przez szczeliny; przeciwstawione sobie kolory zderzają się ze sobą, aby układać się w harmonijną całość.

Ciekawy jest też sposób, w jaki artysta dąży do syntezy abstrakcji i sztuki przedstawiającej. Twórczość ta nie zrewolucjonizuje sztuki, ale jest jednym z ciekawszych przejawów rzetelnego i mądrego malarstwa stworzonego przez artystę o silnej indywidualności, który sytuuje się poza zmieniającymi się modami w sztuce i kaprysami publiczności poszukującej coraz to nowych wrażeń.

Galeria Johna Gibsona mieści się przy 568 Broadway w SoHo. Kuratorem wystawy Włodzimierza Książka jest Anna Baumritter.

Marek Bartelik

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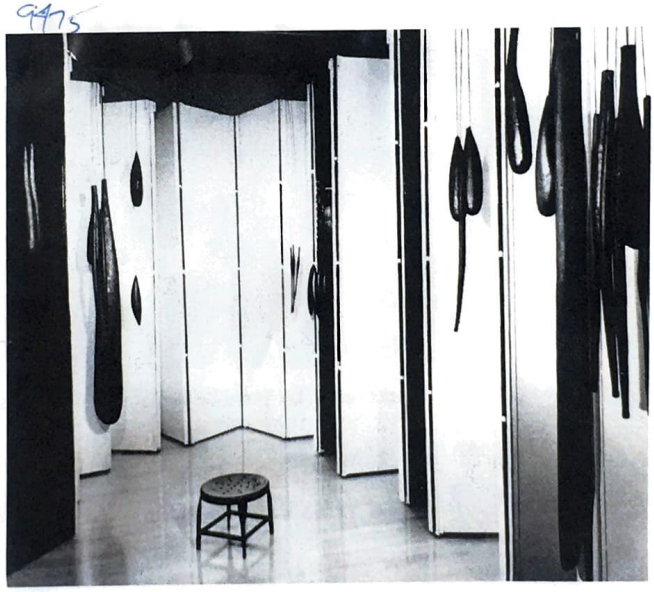


Louise Bourgois, *Articulated Lair*, 1986, painted steel and rubber, 132" H, from "Dislocations", at The Museum of Modern Art, through January 7, 1992. Photo courtesy Robert Miller Gallery, New York.

L'expression brutale de la douleur

Maurice Tourigny
Correspondant du Devoir à New York

LE TITRE de l'exposition en cours au Musée d'Art moderne jusqu'au 7 janvier 1992 éveille l'imagination du spectateur : *Dislocations*. Ce mot qualifie à merveille les sept installations montées spécialement pour l'occasion par sept des plus réputés artistes de l'art contemporain.

Dislocations, comme on dit se disloquer une épaule; déplacer violemment des pièces unies; démonter les éléments d'un tout; poser — en un mauvais lieu, arranger à l'encontre d'un ordre connu.

Voilà les zones qu'explorent les créateurs invités par le MOMA : Louise Bourgeois, Chris Burden, Sophie Calle, David Hammons, Il y a Kabakov, Bruce Nauman et Adrian Piper.

Les oeuvres sont dispersées ici et là dans le musée (Dislocations); le spectateur se munira donc d'une carte pour trouver les oeuvres.

Sophie Calle nous transforme en explorateur puisque son installation s'éparpille au deuxième étage du musée. Elle profite du prêt d'un de Chirico, d'un Magritte, d'un Seurat, d'un Modigliani, d'un Hopper pour les remplacer par un texte décrivant et évoquant le tableau. Au fil de la collection, plutôt qu'un espace vide avec l'habituelle mention « tableau prêté temporairement » Calle imprime des phrases sur le mur ponctuées de petits croquis faits par les employés du musée se remémorant l'oeuvre absente. Pas bête !

Souvent amusants, les textes de Calle, jusqu'ici mieux connue comme photographe, nous parle de l'impact de l'art dans nos vies, elle force le spectateur à un exercice de recréation des oeuvres manquantes, à un jeu de mémoire et d'images ; elle pose la question du rôle de l'art.

La délicatesse du travail de Sophie Calle ne trouve pas d'échos chez certains de ses collègues. Quelques-uns des artistes choisis optent pour la gifle, la franche confrontation et même l'expression brutale de la douleur.

Adrian Piper monte une pièce forte, directe et dérangeante. *What it's like ; what it is, No. 3* est un petit amphithéâtre cubique au centre duquel une colonne couronnée de quatre écrans vidéo lance une dénonciation du racisme. Un homme noir apparait de profil ou de face sur chaque écran et récite une lente litanie d'épithètes quotidiennement utilisées pour décrire la population noire américaine. Chaque adjectif est précédé de la phrase *I am not*.... La salle est d'une blancheur aveuglante et sa surface lustrée réverbère la lumière. Au sommet des derniers gradins, une rangée de miroirs renvoie les images multiples de prisonnier de la colonne blanche et des spectateurs assis comme dans des arènes assistant à la défense d'un inculpé.

L'installation de Piper est glaciale de propreté, de brillant. Les proportions exactes, l'éclairage immaculé, la monochromie aseptisante font du lieu un témoignage d'inconfort et d'intolérance, un univers trop blanc, trop ciré, dans lequel un innocent essaie de renverser un discours séculaire. L'artiste signe ici une oeuvre remarquable; il faudra suivre le chemin qu'elle se dessine.

Bruce Nauman n'est pas un nouveau venu dans l'art américain; depuis les années 60 ses néons et ses installations de toutes sortes lui ont valu l'attention du public et de la presse. L'oeuvre qu'il présente dans *Dislocations* se range parmi ses productions les plus accomplies.

Feed me, Eat me — Help me, Hurt me déroute le spectateur et l'agresse. Dans une galerie sombre, trois écrans grand format et six petits téléviseurs révèlent une tête d'homme tantôt à l'endroit, tantôt à l'envers. Neuf pistes sonores diffusent à intervalles réguliers mais décalés les uns des autres les cris / chants du personnage. D'abord masse sonore uniforme, l'appel à l'aide de cet homme devient peu à peu audible; le texte prend lentement des significations différentes plaçant le personnage dans des rôles opposés : agresseur / agressé, victime / passive ou volontaire.

Plus on marche dans cet environnement sonore difficile mieux on saisit la richesse des huit mots du titre de l'oeuvre. Nauman continue d'explorer les rôles et la vulnérabilité dans un système d'oppositions efficace et intelligent.

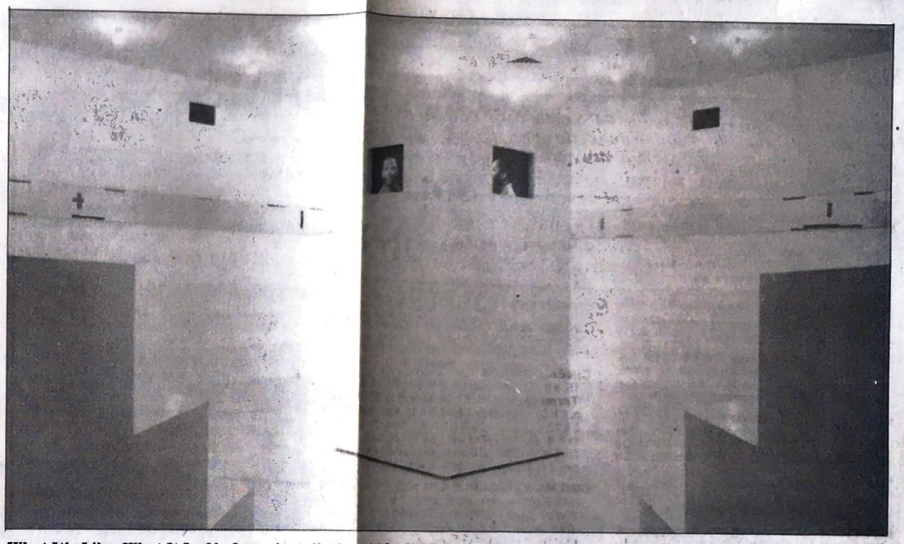
Louise Bourgeois offre deux cylindres mécanisés qui s'emboitent puis se séparent à rythme réglé. L'artiste fait certainement allusion à la sexualité, à la naissance, à la retenue et au relâchement. Les thèmes de Bourgeois sont nets : elle n'en finit pas de remuer l'organique pour bâtir une oeuvre variée et riche.

Chris Burden donne sa version du monument à la guerre du Vietnam. Sur de hautes plaques de bronze, il grave les noms de centaines de milliers de victimes vietnamiennes de cette guerre folle. Chaque plaque est montée d'un cadre relié à un pieux central qui permet aux spectateurs de tourner les plaques comme les pages des livres des bienfaiteurs dans les théâtres de New York. Ironie et dénonciation, ici aussi. Mais l'idée de Burden laisse peu de place à l'imagination du public et le projet dépasse peut-être l'exécution.

Le Russe Ilya Kabakov présente *Le pont* : une reconstruction d'une salle de rencontre des locataires d'un immeuble à loyers modiques. La pièce a subi une fouille, tout y est sans dessus dessous y compris les tableaux décrochés par les fouilleurs. Sur une passerelle qui traverse le décor, le public peut observer les détails du capharnaum avec des longues vues qui font apparaitre au sol des dizaines de personnages miniatures.

Enfin David Hammons recrée une scène extérieure dans une galerie du musée. Un monument à la gloire des conquérants du continent, des oppresseurs des Indiens et des Noirs, entouré de sacs des sables et de fusils comme en tant de guerre, dans une pièce remplie de ballons et de serpentins, encore investie de l'atmosphère d'une fête. Installation éloquente et surchargée qui passe son message de façon nette.

L'exposition a été conçue et montée par le conservateur Robert Storr et demeure l'un des faits saillants de la saison.



***What It's Like, What It Is, No 3*, une installation vidéo d'Adrian Piper.**

ART

Lost In Space

By Cindy Cordes

*Dis*locations, the new major exhibition at the Modern, is about questioning where and what we think we are. As the title implies, the collection of new installations by seven artists physically confronts and intellectually challenges us to question what we perceive as normal. The artists have constructed territories of tense, uncomfortable and unfamiliar environments. Reference points that were once familiar are now uprooted. The result estranges the viewer from what was once familiar and reliable.

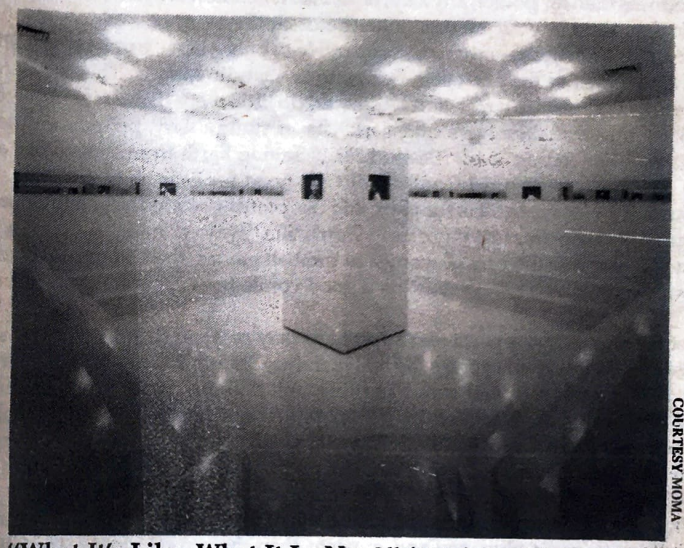
The seven artists come from diverse backgrounds and have different aesthetic approaches. However, they are united in disrupting perceptions of normalcy and making people uncomfortable. Making people uncomfortable is a triumph, because it temporarily removes them from their cloistered, comfortable niche in life.

Bruce Nauman's "Anthro/Socio" moans at you and demands of you in the dark through a bald white man projected onto the walls of the installation and from TV sets scattered throughout the room. He chants loudly and repeatedly, "Hurt me. Feed me. Help me. Eat me." Issues of nurturing, giving and abuse take on a new dimension here. Perhaps Nauman is suggesting that when one cries out for help, one becomes vulnerable and powerless to the one providing the help. The politics of nurturing are actually quite manipulative and power-infested. This dismaying and bleak conclusion is hardly comforting or affirmative—most of us seek help in others. Nauman has turned the tables on us.

Adrian Piper calls into question perceptions of difference in her installation, "What It's Like, What It Is No.3." In a hollowed out cube designed like an amphitheatre, the rows designed for seating people face a solid rectangular structure in the middle of the floor. At the top of the structure are TV sets facing four directions, featuring a black man rotating ninety degrees as he recites a litany of denials: "I'm not sneaky. I'm not horny. I'm not lazy. I'm not shiftless. I'm not stupid. I'm not smelly. I'm not evil." His image is reflected in mirrors that line the entire top of the room.

Museum-goers are invited to take a seat in the very white, very pristine structure while they watch and listen to the man in the middle. They are audience to as well as judges of the black man denying the stereotypes that are often attributed to his "type." Inundated from every direction with the face of the man and subject to his articulate, adamant denials, the viewer is confronted with the effects of racism on a single individual. The rigidity and starkness of the environment also accentuate the individual members of the audience. You are conspicuously aware of others around you and of yourself. It is not an easygoing atmosphere. It's confrontational and unambiguous.

Chris Burden's "The Other Vietnam Memorial" does not impose a reaction in the same manner that Piper's work does, but instead projects an ominous presence. He has created a 15-foot-tall looseleaf book constructed of steel and etched copper. Upon it are inscribed the names of the approximately three million North and South Vietnamese people, military and civilian, who died during the Vietnam War. We are not the only country who grieved and still grieves over the loss of our own. Burden demonstrates point blank that there is much that we must still consider and reconsider about Vietnam and about war.



COURTESY MOMA

"What It's Like, What It Is, No. 3" (1991) by Adrian Piper

The other installations, by artists Louise Bourgeois, Sophie Calle, David Hammons and Ilya Kabakor, tread on the same feeling and reality of displacement and re-evaluation; however, they do not shake and rattle as powerfully as the other three. Nonetheless, the exhibition is definitely a must-see for everyone.

***Dis*locations — Museum of Modern Art**
Through Jan. 7

NEWS JOURNAL

WILMINGTON, DE
DAILY 120,653

THURSDAY
NOV 21 1991

Show displays a tamer sort of impressionism

ART

Gary Mullinax

The Delaware Antiques Show will offer a special treat this weekend when it exhibits a collection of American impressionist paintings to go with the furniture, jewelry, watches and toys.

The late-19th-century paintings are pretty. They are by important artists. But they will not unsettle you. They will look like works you'd find over the mantels of patrician homes.

Many beloved artists — Monet, van Gogh, Eakins — shocked the establishment when they started. It usually takes time for the public to embrace a new style. But the American impressionists clicked from the beginning.

Many beloved artists — Monet, van Gogh, Eakins — shocked the establishment when they started.

"I don't think they were that shocking," said William H. Gerdts, a professor at the graduate school of the City University of New York and an authority on American impressionism.

He will lecture on the subject at 5 p.m. Friday at the Du Pont Country Club, where the event ($25) will be held.

Americans had seen a fair amount of French impressionism by the time their countrymen got around to painting in that style, and they had become comfortable with its formal qualities. But they were less happy with the subject matter of many French impressionists. Too many painted "low" subjects: regular folks — maybe even, good grief, lower-class folks — doing regular things.

American artists, Gerdts said by telephone from New York, "were careful not to paint subjects that had been lambasted. They tended to paint landscapes; if they were figure paintings they were of upper-class, elegant people. When Childe Hassam returned from Europe and painted cities, they were sparkling and dynamic with little sign of poverty."

Weren't they, well, catering to the audience instead of following a personal vision? Of course, Gerdts said. "Tell me a painter who hasn't tried to please the clientele. It's a business."

Some American impressionists, including Hassam, John Henry Twachtman and Robert Reid — all represented in this show — were members of The Ten.

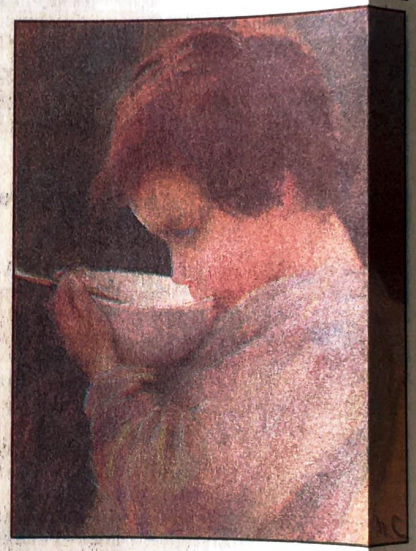
These artists walked out on the more conservative Society of American Artists in 1898 and exhibited on their own.

An avant-garde move? Sort of. "For a few years they may have been the most radical artists," Gerdts said. "But they weren't very radical. The end of the 1890s was not a radical time."

The impressionists were replaced on the cutting edge by The Eight, with their gritty urban subjects. The Eight include Robert Henri and Ernest Lawson, who have early works in this show.

The paintings are from private collections and haven't been seen publicly. Gerdts said such works became popular with collectors around 1960. "With the end of abstract expressionism, collectors looked toward a more representational art form. And they had been increasingly interested in French impressionist work to the point where good work was not available or very expensive."

The antiques show (Friday through Sunday) requires dealers to have work evaluated for authenticity. Admission costs $10; tickets to events connected with the show cost various amounts. Call 428-0620 for more information.



Mary Cassatt's "Child Drinking Milk From a Bowl" is part of the Delaware Antiques Show, which is showing impressionist paintings.

More to see

The new show at the University of

See ART — E2

6	Cheers
7	Murder, She Wrote
8	CBS Sunday Movie
9	Monday Night Football
10	Unsolved Mysteries

Art: Indian featherwork

FROM PAGE E1 BB

Pennsylvania's **Museum of Archaeology and Anthropology** should tickle your fancy. "The Gift of Birds: Featherwork of Native South American Peoples" offers a look at brightly colored headdresses, stuffed birds and human figures in dioramas showing the rituals of Indian life.

The show contains more than 330 items, but is smaller than you might think because many of the items are small. Some information about the displays still is going up; as things now stand, we aren't told enough about what we're seeing. Call (215) 898-4000.

David Graham's amusing color photos are seen in "Only in America: Some Unexpected Scenery" at the University of Pennsylvania's **Institute of Contemporary Art**. Graham likes to find weird things by the roadside: restaurants in the shape of a milk bottle, teapot or giant burger (the shrubbery is the lettuce); a Shriner in a tiny red car; a gas station with a giant red cowboy hat on top and a bathroom in the shape of a boot.

The photographs say much about America's zeal for extravagant gestures — especially when it sells a product. (215) 898-7108.

In "Dislocations," New York's **Museum of Modern Art** is presenting seven installations designed to alter habitual perceptions. One of the most striking is Bruce Nauman's room filled with video images of a man loudly chanting, "Feed me! Eat me! Help me! Hurt me!" He simultaneously annoys us and suggests need.

Also: Adrian Piper's video monitors of a black man saying over and over, "I'm not sneaky ... I'm not lazy ... I'm not noisy," forcing embarrassed guilt over conventional prejudices, and Chris Burden's "The Other Vietnam Memorial" — thousands of Vietnamese names etched repeatedly on large copper "pages," adding up to about 3 million names. More than 3 million Vietnamese died in the war. Call (212) 708-9400.

The **Philadelphia Museum of Art** has acquired a major painting, "Without Ceres and Bacchus, Venus Would Freeze," by Dutch artist Hendrick Goltzius. Museum director Anne d'Harnoncourt calls the mannerist work the most important old master painting for the museum in 20 years. The museum is displaying this and related works. Call (215) 763-8100.

Gary Mullinax is a staff writer.

The Houston Post
HOUSTON, TEXAS
D. 328,671
TX-295

NOV 25 1991
BURRELLE'S

Museum of Modern Art mounts surprising, discomfiting exhibit

ASSOCIATED PRESS

NEW YORK — An alien invasion of installations by seven artists, titled "Dislocations," has taken over space in separate galleries on three levels of the Museum of Modern Art.

Balloons and huge, menacing machines; artifacts in motion, or dramatically planted as in a stage set; video messages and spoken words pleading a case. These and other disparate elements have been brought into play to create works that aim to surprise and discomfit visitors wandering through the museum.

The artists who have created these site-specific installations are Louise Bourgeois, Chris Burden, Sophie Calle, David Hammons, Ilya Kabakov, Bruce Nauman and Adrian Piper.

Bruce Nauman's *Anthro-Socio* and Adrian Piper's very different *What It's Like, What It Is* both use video images of a man repeating requests for help and understanding directly at the viewer, each from multiple screens in an otherwise stark gallery.

The Russian conceptualist Kabakov's room, *Bridge*, invites visitors to pass through a mysteriously abandoned meeting hall via a wooden walkway — observing "unofficial" art on the walls, overturned seating and an invasion of tiny white figures on the floor.

Heavy black iron cyclinders — scaled to a supertanker's boiler room — mechanically clank back and forth in Bourgeois' *Twosome*; in another gallery, balloons from past celebrations float above a photo simulation of a heroic statue now surrounded by sandbags in Hammons' *Public Enemy*. Burden's *The Other Vietnam War Memorial* offers austere copper panels engraved with 3 million names of Vietnamese casualties.

"Dislocations" remains on show through Jan. 7, 1992.

"EL PAIS" Madrid

BABELIA, 28 DE DICIEMBRE DE 1991

El arte sociopolítico

Creadores de todo el mundo presentan en Nueva York sus obras más críticas y comprometidas

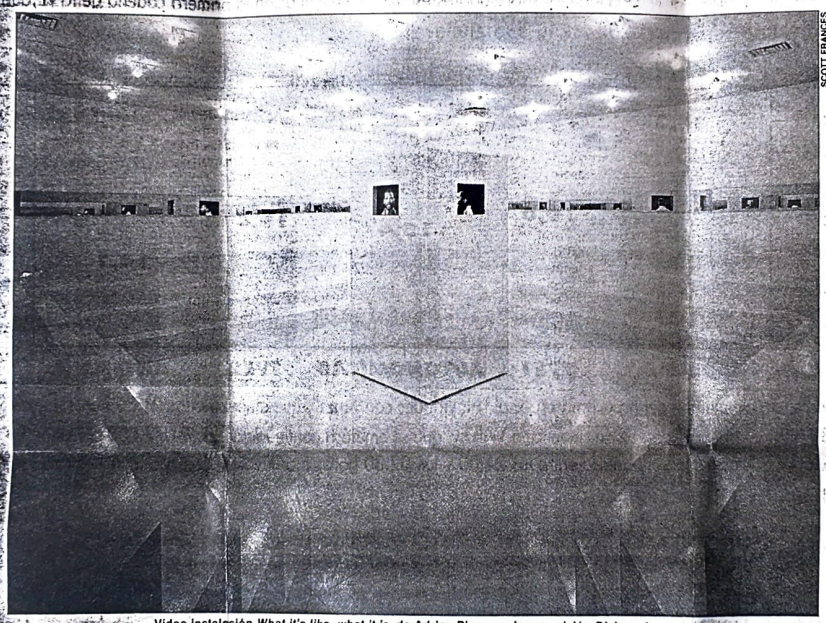
MIREIA SENTÍS

En los ambientes artísticos de Nueva York se esperaba con curiosidad la primera exposición montada por Robert Storr, el más reciente *curator* del departamento de pintura y escultura del MOMA y coordinador del programa de proyectos del museo. Justo un año después de su incorporación al museo, Storr —crítico, profesor y artista, colaborador en las mejores revistas especializadas y con numerosos libros y ensayos publicados— presenta *Dislocations (Dislocaciones)*. Storr ha encargado una instalación para esta precisa exposición a siete artistas cuyas trayectorias han seguido un claro discurso sociopolítico, sin caer en modas o modos pasajeros. Escogiendo a artistas cuya *corrección política* data de varias décadas, Storr frena las especulaciones sobre si su selección cae demasiado de lleno en un momento en que el arte comprometido está bien visto.

La pieza de Ilya Kabakov es una de esas escenas evocativas por las cuales es conocido este artista nacido en 1933 en una humilde familia rusa. Su niñez y adolescencia fueron marcadas por la Segunda Guerra Mundial y por la época más dura del estalinismo y posestalinismo. *Bridge (Puente)*, la obra de esta exposición, reproduce un desordenado espacio donde se tenía que presentar arte no oficial. La reunión fracasa a causa de la llegada de unos pequeños personajes blancos construidos en papel y que el público mira a través de prismáticos desde el puente que atraviesa esta escenografía caótica que no deja dudas sobre el sobresalto de los que se preparaban a intercambiar los productos artísticos imaginados al margen de consignas políticas.

La francesa Sophie Calle sustituye pinturas ausentes temporalmente de la colección permanente del museo, por textos y dibujos que reproducen lo que diez empleados del museo recuerdan de la tela. *Ghosts (Fantasmas)*, el nombre de la instalación, pone de relieve que el placer o interés del arte trasciende la mera contemplación de una pieza; intelectualiza una sensación física. El intimismo de Calle es su faceta más sobresaliente. En 1981, en Venecia, se buscó un empleo de asistente en un hotel. Durante todo un mes fotografió los objetos más íntimos utilizados por los ocupantes de las habitaciones que limpiaba.

Durante más de medio siglo, la americanofrancesa Louise Bourgeois ha dado forma a su memoria. A lo largo de su carrera ha pintado, dibujado, hecho *collages* y esculpido en yeso, madera, mármol, resina y látex. Su pieza del MOMA, *Twosome (Pareja, dos en uno)* es una escultura hecha a partir de objetos existentes: dos enormes barriles de petróleo a los que añade muy exiguas aperturas. La impresión de estar ante una casa de juguete se esfuma al darse uno cuenta de que una vez en el interior, iluminado de rojo como un alto horno, no es fácil salir. El aparente juego se ha convertido en una amenaza donde no están exentas lecturas político-sexuales.



SCOTT FRANCES

Video instalación *What it's like, what it is*, de Adrian Piper, en la exposición *Dislocaciones*.

Ideas viejas, dinero nuevo

M. S.

A pesar de su impacto estético y su mensaje directo, en la mayoría de los trabajos expuestos en el MOMA se echa a faltar mayor sincronización entre las ideas radicales que expresan y la solución formal que han escogido para hacerlo. Es decir, no existe cierta contradicción en expresar con el dinero utilizado en los ochenta, ideas que en los setenta se comunicaban con gran economía de medios? Si como parece se vuelve al interés por un arte que cuestiona ideales políticos, formas de vida, prejuicios de varias índoles, la ecología, la demografía, la salud pública y la pobreza, no parece idóneo hacerlo con la grandilocuencia que caracterizó una década cuyos valores se inflaron y esfumaron en una décima de siglo.

Las instalaciones repartidas por todo el museo obligan al espectador a tomar cierta parte activa, ya que no todas son de fácil ubicación. El término *dislocaciones*, explica el museo, manifiesta en este caso la existencia de un cambio, tanto de localización como de punto de vista con relación a lo que cabría esperar. *Dislocaciones* —continúa la aclaración— nos induce a cuestionar algunos de los hechos pertenecientes a la memoria colectiva que guían nuestro pensamiento. Un título que requiera explicación no parece muy idóneo para unas piezas cuya fuerza reside, en gran parte, en la claridad de su intención y en su lectura directa. En todo caso, la exposición traspone el tradicional objeto artístico para hacer de él algo estimulante, provocador y, finalmente, cercano a la vida misma. Guerra, racismo, memoria o dolor son temas que se encuentran en portada de los diarios.

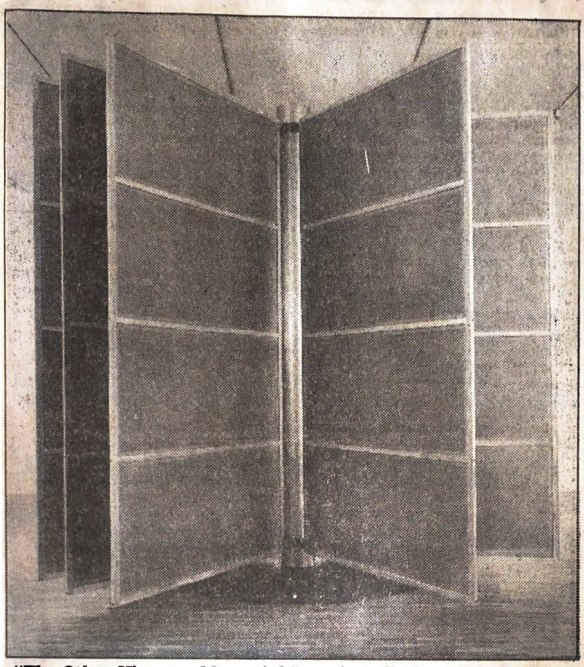
El norteamericano Chris Burden fue, en la década de los setenta, un artista más literal que metafórico. En sus actuaciones utilizaba su propio cuerpo como campo experimental: en *Shoot (Dispara)* Burden se hizo disparar una bala en un brazo. La pieza que ha realizado para *Dislocations, The Other Vietnam Memorial (El otro monumento a los caídos del Vietnam)*, es una considerable escultura a modo de 12 hojas de cobre gigantes que giran sobre un carrusel y que están grabadas por ambos lados con tres millones de nombres: los de los soldados vietnamitas fallecidos. Su escultura es la respuesta al monumento oficial de Washington de Maya Lin, en donde están escritos los nombres de los 57.939 muertos americanos.

Bruce Nauman lleva 20 años haciendo preguntas retóricas sin contestarlas, dejando así un espacio vacío que debe rellenar el propio espectador. En *Antho / Socio*, la videoinstalación creada para esta exposición, de varios monitores instalados en una habitación vacía, con la imagen de la cabeza rapada de un hombre blanco, surgen gritos de auxilio que van repitiéndose como una letanía: ¡aliméntame! ¡ayúdame! ¡cómeme! ¡dáñame!, mientras el espectador se siente invadido por sentimientos contradictorios.

David Hammons ha trabajado durante casi 20 años por las calles de Nueva York creando obras perecederas improvisadas en parques públicos y solares vacíos que sirven al artista para reflejar sus raíces culturales: la realidad urbana y su ascendencia afroamericana. *Public enemy (Enemigo público)*, su aportación a *Dislocations*, reproduce fotográficamente y casi a tamaño natural, una escultura pública ecuestre de Theodore Roosevelt, flanqueado por un negro y un indio que aguantan el caballo. Todo evoca el ambiente de las convenciones políticas y de las elecciones, celebraciones que ensalzan a unos cuantos y dejan sumidos en la marginación a unas gentes omnipresentes en la historia de Estados Unidos.

Adrian Piper, una negra de tez muy clara, presencia a menudo comentarios racistas de gentes que la creen blanca. Su instalación *What it's like, what it is (Como es, lo que es)* está compuesta por una columna cuadrada blanca. En cada panel hay un monitor en donde la cabeza de un hombre negro visto cada vez de un costado diferente, niega todos los estereotipos que se adjudican a los de su raza: "No soy perezoso; no soy chillón; no soy sucio; no soy servil; no huelo mal; no doy miedo".

ART



"The Other Vietnam Memorial," one installation piece at the Museum of Modern Art, reflects the many Vietnamese deaths.

Philadelphia Inquirer
PHILADELPHIA, PA.
SUN. 978,300
PA-4750

DEC 1 1991

BURRELLE'S

Entering their worlds, we confront our own

By Edward J. Sozanski 9475
Inquirer Art Critic

NEW YORK — Good installation art is like theater without actors. Like the theater, it has the power to transport us into a different frame of reference. When we engage installation pieces, we become unwitting performers in silent, ambiguous dramas, in which artist and spectator assume equal responsibility for articulating a theme.

Installation, in which artists create multi-object environments that can involve a number of art media, has become the most forceful and insistent social and political voice within contemporary art. Unlike painting, a solitary activity, installation can fluctuate easily between the private world of the studio and the public one of the street.

The current vitality and relevance of installation art is confirmed by its prominence in this year's Carnegie International in Pittsburgh and by an exhibition at the Museum of Modern Art called "Dislocations" organized by MoMA curator Robert Storr. Storr also organized "Devil on the Stairs," the survey of art in the '80s on exhibit at the Institute of Contemporary Art in Philadelphia.

Storr's examination of installation art is more focused and elaborate in its particulars than anything going on in Pittsburgh. He seeks to demonstrate that this kind of art can both persuade us to perceive familiar phenomena in new ways and that it can neutralize the anxiety in strange or discomfiting situations.

For those who have forgotten, this is what art is supposed to do; it's perhaps a measure of how attenuated high art has become, or how corrupted into entertainment, that we have to be reminded why we are looking at it.

In any case, Storr has chosen the cast for "Dislocations" wisely, and in so doing shows us how effective installation art can be as a sociopolitical instrument. Not all the pieces tackle political or social themes, but the show's general tenor is one of advocacy rather than one of perceptual refinement.

"Dislocations," which runs through Jan. 7, involves seven artists — Louise Bourgeois, Chris Burden, Sophie Calle, David Hammons, Ilya Kabakov, Bruce Nauman and Adrian Piper — each represented by one piece.

In many shows, installations fail because they lack either enough space to generate a milieu or are created in spaces that aren't effectively isolated from distractions. "Dislocations" succeeds in part because the artists have been given generous working space, but mainly because they pushed themselves to create the consciousness-altering theatricality that makes installation art effective.

The artists also pose questions about contemporary life that have been ignored, suppressed or answered evasively. For instance, Burden's overtly political piece, *The Other Vietnam Memorial*, doesn't try to establish a presence as an environment, and in that sense it's more of an object than an installation. But it does demonstrate very pointedly how an artist can invert reality to force a reassessment of accepted truth.

Memorial asks a simple question: We know how many Americans died in Vietnam, but do we ever think of the concomitant toll of Vietnamese victims, military and civilian, north and south? Probably not.

Memorial forces us to realize that American intervention resulted in an estimated three million Vietnamese deaths. Burden materializes those deaths in the form of a giant "book of the dead" — three million Vietnamese names inscribed in tiny letters on copper plaques mounted

(See ART on 5-E) p.

ART

Installation art: Spectators enter an artist's world

ART, from 1-E

on a vertical axis. (He used 4,000 common Vietnamese names and repeated them over and over.)

Burden says he isn't challenging the morality of the American intervention, only asking that we acknowledge the mirror image of America's Vietnam memorial — this string of anonymous bodies.

Two other pieces, both by black artists, address racial stereotypes and the black experience. Piper's piece seeks to refute stereotypes and thus stimulate an attitude of societal inclusion, as opposed to exclusion. Hammons, known for working on the street rather than in museums, here takes aim at a symbol of white domination over minority cultures.

Piper's environment is a stark white, brilliantly lit, minimalist amphitheater, with tiered benches around the sides. In the center of this square room stands a tall box with four television monitors mounted in the top, one facing each wall.

A black man appears on each of the monitors, reciting a denial of common racial stereotypes — "I'm not sneaky, I'm not lazy, I'm not scary," and so on. Periodically the man turns so he faces a different wall (the four screens show him, respectively, in right and left profile, from the front, and from the rear).

Piper has built in two levels of discomfort: The recognition that we do, or might, subscribe to these stereotypes, and the disorienting ambience of the white cube in which we're seated. She isn't just decrying racism, however; she's arguing that universal standards of humanity should supplant exclusionary ones.

In *Public Enemy*, Hammons has constructed one of the show's more evocative environments. The piece is centered on a four-sided photomural of an equestrian statue; balloons and confetti suggest the aftermath of a parade.

The atmosphere is one of siege rather than celebration, however. The statue is surrounded by a wall of sandbags, and machine guns positioned outside the wall point inward. Several sticks of dynamite have been planted under the statue's pedestal.

Why aggression?

The reason for this aggressive stance seems obvious; an American Indian and a black man walk beside the mounted white warrior, as if symbolizing the status of minority cultures within American society. The memorial is a cliche that Hammons vehemently throws back at the colonialist mentality that created it, yet the gesture is softened by the balloons and colored streamers, which inject a note of melancholy.

Kabakov's recent installations examine the phenomenon of emptiness, particularly the residual human presence in places that once bustled with activity. His MoMA piece, *The Bridge*, depicts a fictitious interior, suddenly and mysteriously abandoned, left in disarray and semi-darkness.

His themes come from Russian society; here the setting is supposed to be a tenants' club in a Moscow housing project, which visitors can inspect, but not enter, by traversing a wooden walkway that crosses from one side to the other.

The Bridge is a mysterious environment; tiny white human silhouettes stand on the floor amid overturned chairs and benches. We're told that a lecture about dissident Soviet art was supposed to be given here; we don't know why the lecture was canceled and the room abandoned.

We find instead a conjunction of art (paintings standing against the walls) and mystery (the tiny white figures) that stands as an elaborate metaphor for the legitimacy of nonrational experience.

Absence also obsesses French artist Sophie Calle. Her piece, *Ghosts*, investigates the correlation between what we see and what we think we have seen. Insinuated into the permanent collection on the second floor, *Ghosts* is a collection of empty spaces filled up with irregular fragments of memory.

Calle asked a number of MoMA staff members to recall what they could of five paintings that had been removed from the galleries for various reasons, and to supplement their accounts with sketches. Compiling their responses as surrogates, she transcribed them in the spaces where the paintings usually hang.

Again reality is inverted; instead of the familiar art object, we perceive its imprecise imprint on collective memory, transposed from images to words. These impressions are casual and often vague and nonjudgmental, as if the passers-by weren't certain of what they had seen or why the paintings were significant — hardly comforting thoughts for a museum director.

An endurance test

Installations often include performance aspects; Nauman's *Anthro/Socio* is a video piece of such aural and visual intensity as to constitute an endurance test (fortunately, Kabakov's sepulchral "housing project" offers proximate refuge).

Three video projectors and six television sets fill a darkened gallery with the image of a man chanting a nonsensical mantra — "feed me, eat me, anthropology/help me, hurt me, sociology." The tapes aren't synchronized, so the operatic chanter sounds more like a chorus whose members are keeping their own time.

The monumental scale of the projections (only the man's head appears on the screen), the darkened room and the cacophony constitute a psychological attack, and yet the chant is contradictory — pleading and masochistic. While the raw image is powerful, the "chanting head" appears to be trapped and powerless within the video frame, which makes *Anthro/Socio* a potent encapsulation of the ambiguity inherent in modern existence.

Ambiguity also energizes *Twosome*, by Bourgeois, but it's visual rather than visceral. Assembled from two large, cylindrical gasoline tanks, *Twosome* resembles a giant automobile shock absorber that someone has converted into a bizarre domicile by cutting windows into its side and installing a flashing red light inside.

Some domicile — the "piston" half of this contraption majestically and continually slides in and out of its cylinder, creating an obvious sexual metaphor but also suggesting alternation between shelter and a place of confinement.

The title implies that *Twosome* represents a domestic environment that's simultaneously nurturing and threatening, a chord of common experience that even the most jaded viewer should be able to recognize.

If you go

The Museum of Modern Art, at 11 W. 53d St. in Manhattan, is presenting "*Dislocations*" through Jan. 7. Admission is $7. The museum is open from 11 a.m. to 9 p.m. Thursdays and from 11 a.m. to 6 p.m. Fridays through Tuesdays. It is closed Wednesdays. Information: 212-708-9400.

San Jose Mercury-News
SAN JOSE, CAL.
SUN. 330,791
CA-771

DEC 15 1991
BURRELLE'S

Gifts

FANTASY

Georges Seurat's 'Circus,' 1890-'91, is part of an endangered species: a block-buster show

FANTASY Art

Trip the art fantastic in the museums of New York

By Dorothy Burkhart
Mercury News Art Writer

9475

SO YOU'VE got an art-obsessed person on your Christmas list, but so far haven't come up with something special to help him or her realize a fantasy?

Why not try the magic of an art weekend in Manhattan, complete with luxury hotel and wonderful dining?

There's still time, for example, to take in what may be the last of the dazzlers, the big Georges Seurat show at the Metropolitan Museum, before it closes Jan. 12. While there, also check out "Stuart Davis, American Painter," through Feb. 16. Then drop in at the Frick Collection to see the sweetly perfumed and erotically charged Boucchers and Fragonards.

And if you hanker after what's new, wander down Fifth Avenue to 53rd Street and hang a short right. Don't miss "DisLocations," at the Museum of Modern Art (through Jan. 7), a knockout show of installations by seven artists that hopefully signals MoMa's return to contemporary art.

Book a room, or better, a suite, at the Stanhope Hotel, across from the Metropolitan at 995 5th Ave. Lodging runs from $225 to to $275 and includes continental breakfast and museum passes. Grab the Museum Suite penthouse — remember there's no cap on cost in this fantasy — if it's available ($900). From there, you can almost slide off the sheets into the Met. (212) 288-5800.

Then have a bite to eat at Café des Artistes, the country-French restaurant in the Lincoln Center neighborhood that's decorated with Howard Chandler Christy's beloved murals of cavorting nymphs. Prix fixe lunch will cost you $19.50, dinner $32.50. (212) 877-3500.

When you figure air fare (about $500) into this experience, it gets awfully pricey. But you can scale back for the art lover on your list and still give something wonderful. There's always a great selection of affordable items at the San Jose Museum of Art's book and gift shop. Take a look at Diane Levinson's ceramic pencils you can't write with. They're desk sculptures or paperweights and cost $20 to $45. ■

Arte in

Bimestrale di critica e d'informazione delle arti visive

Anno IV numero 18 - Novembre/Dicembre 1991 - L. 8.000 - Sped. abb. post. gruppo IV/70 - Taxe Perçue (tassa pagata) Ufficio PT Mestre

Augusto Perez - Seurat a New York - Aiuto sparano! (Sui monumenti)
Intervista a Casimiro Porro - Arte & Psicanalisi - Heil Ludwig! - Breton e i surrealisti
Revival USA (Made in Italy) - Fiac - Arte & Banche - Burri a Locarno

Edizioni IAC

"...sono di grande prestigio inventivo, nelle forme quanto nelle combinazioni materiche, quanto nella varietà delle possibili applicazioni... Zorzi pensa il gioiello esattamente come un segno plastico. Un segno, pur nell'assolvenza ad una propria funzione (non soltanto ornativa, ma anche pratica a volte), capace cioè di costituire un'occasione vissuta di riflessione e insinuazione immaginativa motivata in termini di invenzione plastica".

MODENA

Continua fino al prossimo 19 gennaio 1992 presso la Palazzina dei Giardini, la mostra di Enrico Prampolini "Taccuini inediti", organizzata dalla Galleria Civica. I 19 Taccuini, nati tra il 1942 e il 1956, rappresentano una sorta di diario di lavoro dell'artista e contribuiscono a porre in evidenza alcuni momenti salienti della sua esperienza creativa. I fogli presentati, infatti, contengono sia appunti grafici e schizzi colti dal vero, sia studi più complessi, esplicitamente riferibili ad opere poi realizzate con diverse tecniche sperimentali. Accanto ai Taccuini, presentati per la prima volta al pubblico, sono esposti anche numerosi progetti grafici per riviste, locandine cinematografiche, illustrazioni per libri e bozzetti di scena. Il catalogo edito per l'occasione da Nuova Alfa contiene un saggio di Enrico Crispolti e apparati critico-filologici di Gabriella De Marco.

NEW YORK

Fino al 7 gennaio 1992 il MOMA presenta "Dislocation" (in italiano significa "Slogamento" o "Intralcio"), una mostra costituita da sette enormi installazioni sparse in tutto il museo create appositamente per essa da sette diversi artisti: gli americani Chris Burden, Louise Bourgeois, David Hammons, Bruce Nauman e Adrian Piper, la francese Sophie Calle e il russo Ilya Kabakov. Tutti costoro, che differiscono moltissimo per formazione, età ed approccio estetico, condividono il desiderio di sfidare l'osservatore, presentando situazioni poco familiari che lo costringano ad una spietata autocritica, e sollevando una vasta gamma di problemi a carattere sociale, politico e umano. Tra le opere, notevole è la stanza di Nauman in cui video di varie dimensioni propongono l'immagine fissa di un uomo calvo che metà grida e metà canta in una ripetizione senza sosta: "Aiutami. Feriscimi, Nutrimi. Mangiami." Una litania ossessiva che sconvolge e costringe a riflettere sulle impellenti richieste d'aiuto cui assistiamo continuamente e a cui, per assuefazione, non diamo più retta. Da questo frastuono si passa poi al silenzioso palcoscenico abbandonato di Kabakov. Esso ricrea una sala conferenze a Mosca in cui si tiene una mostra di arte russa non-ufficiale, che viene interrotta dall'arrivo di un'orda di minuscole figurine bianche. Le opere e le sedie vengono spinte caoticamente verso il muro, mentre le figurine invadono tutta la stanza. L'atmosfera è sospesa e magica, a metà tra una vera realtà di oppressione e una finzione nata da un'immaginifica mente infantile. L'opera della Piper è una stanza immacolatamente bianca in cui una colonna video al centro mostra una testa di uomo nero che monotonamente ripete: "non sono meschino; non sono pigro; non sono rumoroso; non sono volgare; non sono attaccabrighe", negando via via in una litania commovente, come strappare uno dopo l'altro i petali di un fiore, tutti gli stereotipi attribuiti ai neri da centinaia di anni. Per ultimo vorrei citare il lavoro della Calle che ha prima chiesto a 10 dipendenti del museo di disegnare e descrivere a memoria alcuni dipinti della collezione permanente. Al posto di quei quadri poi ha appeso dei cartelloni in cui ha composto in modo molto personale le opinioni e gli schizzi raccolti, in una delicata eppur sconcertante evidenziazione di quanto precario sia il valore dell'arte, legato com'è all'impreciso giudizio della memoria umana.

Micaela Martegani Luini

NEW YORK

Si è da poco conclusa presso la Galleria Sperone-Westwater una mostra dell'artista torinese Piero Gilardi dal titolo "Inverosimile".

NEW YORK

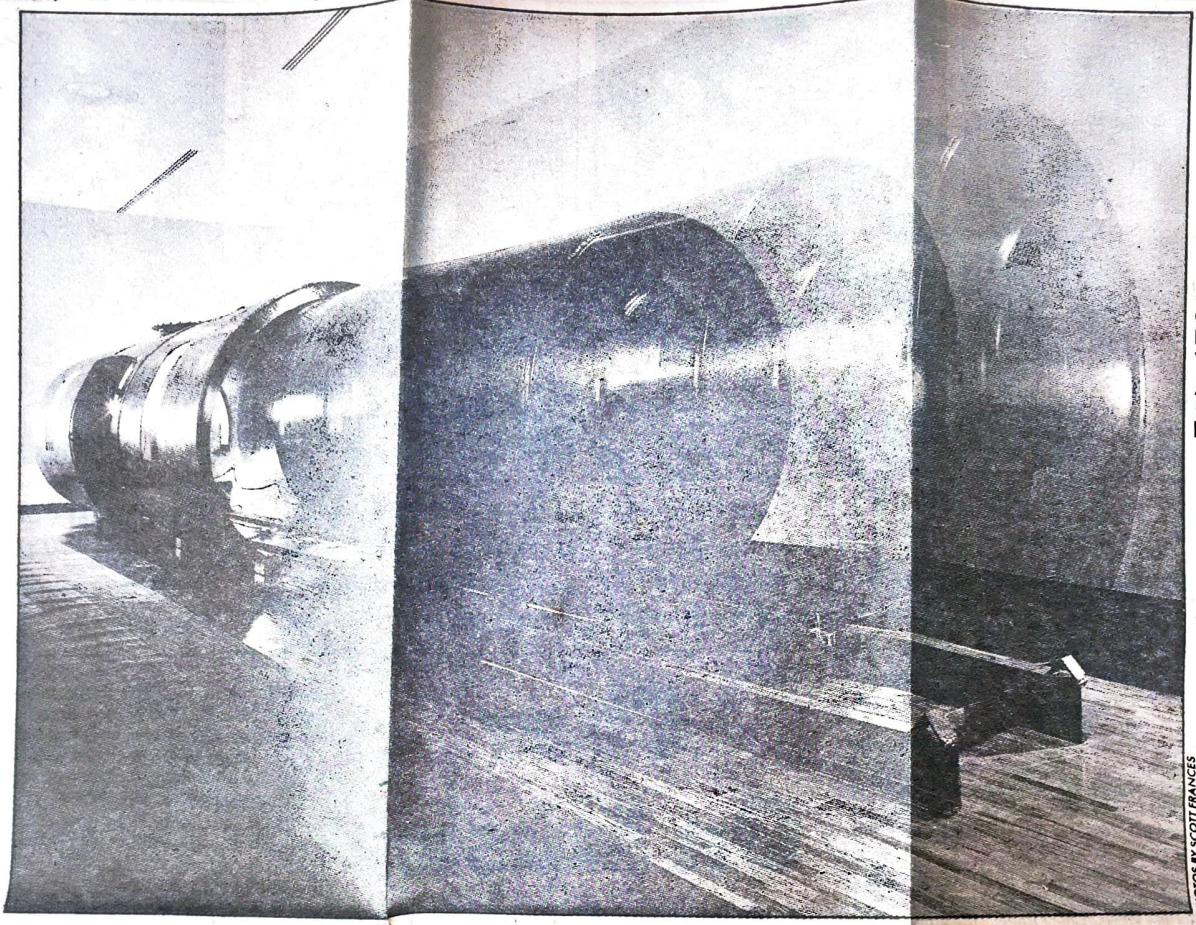
Dopo il MOMA di San Francisco, l'Hirshhorn Museum di Washington e il Museum of Contemporary Art di Chicago, la grande mostra su Sigmar Polke è approdata come ultima tappa a New York, al Brooklyn Museum (ove rimarrà fino al 6 gennaio). Consiste di circa 50 dipinti più una selezione di lavori su carta, che spaziano dai primi anni Sessanta fino ad oggi. In questi trent'anni Polke ha indagato ogni stile o tema possibile, guadagnandosi dunque etichette come enigmatico, camaleontico o eccentrico. Cominciò con le opere del Realismo capitalista (movimento di cui fu tra i fondatori e che si proponeva di esplorare la commercialità della Pop art americana), volutamente piatte e sgradevoli. Negli anni Settanta, poi, il soggetto divenne l'arte in se stessa, attraverso parodie di convenzioni artistiche e di stereotipi derivanti dalla tradizione dell'ormai accettato Modernismo. In questo periodo Polke comincia le sue sperimentazioni sui materiali, utilizzando per esempio pezzi di pelliccia sintetica, tessuti o coperte come supporto su cui dipingere. Negli anni Ottanta la sperimentazione continua attraverso l'uso di vernici sintetiche che garantiscono alla superficie una luminosità e una trasparenza senza pari, trasformandola quasi in un piano vetrificato (non per niente Polke all'inizio della sua carriera aveva studiato tecnica di pittura su vetro). Cominciano ad aumentare anche i significati "alchemici" intrinseci alle opere e realizza così lavori che mutano e reagiscono a tempo, temperatura, umidità e luce. L'opera *Watchtower II* ad esempio, che qui esposta mostra un lucente color purpureo, a San Francisco aveva acquistato un imprevedibile colore verde... Il suo progredire continuo, analizzare, testare è inesauribile ma sempre ricco e fecondo perché "dal suo lavoro traspare la vita - è musica!", come John Baldessari scrive nel catalogo allegato alla rassegna.

Micaela Martegani Luini

È stata inaugurata nella Cattedrale Ex Macello la LXXVI Mostra Collettiva della Fondazione Bevilacqua La Masa di Venezia.

Una mostra antologica di Leoncillo è in atto fino al 30 dicembre presso la Galleria Niccoli. Vi si percorre tutto l'itinerario artistico dello scultore umbro, presentando ogni fase della sua articolata produzione con alcuni capolavori: dall'*Autoritratto* del '42 agli *Amanti antichi* del '66, dal *Piccolo bianco* del '58 al *Taglio nero* del '67. In catalogo testi critici dei curatori e aggiornati apparati bio-bibliografici.

Prosegue presso la Galleria La Sanseverina la mostra personale dell'artista spagnolo Paolo Vallorz comprendente una quarantina di dipinti ad olio su tela. Catalogo a cura di Marco Goldin.



A portion of the New York Museum of Modern Art's 'Dislocations' exhibition: Louise Bourgeois' 'Twosome' (steel and motor), left, and Bruce Nauman's 'Anthro /Socio' (video), below

PHOTOS BY SCOTT FRANCES

NYMOMA's 'Dislocations' Sets Its Ties, Distance From High Modernism

BY KENNETH BAKER
CHRONICLE ART CRITIC

New York

"DISLOCATIONS" at the Museum of Modern Art (through January 7) is being talked about as if it were a turning point for NYMOMA.

Organized by Robert Storr, curator in the Department of Painting and Sculpture, it is a show of seven installation works of the sort that previously might have been expected to appear at the Whitney Museum or at the New Museum of Contemporary Art.

"Dislocations" is really no more unconventional than some things seen in MOMA's ongoing "Projects" series, devoted to new work by contemporary artists. Yet, perhaps because it is scattered over three floors of the museum, this show is taken to portend a shift away from taste and historical logic as compasses for the progress of curatorial activity at MOMA, though what might replace these critical instruments is still unclear.

With what it is able to put on view in its permanent collection galleries at any given time, MOMA can present a more persuasive, comprehensive account of 20th century art than any other museum in the world. For perhaps 30 years after its founding in 1929, MOMA acted as advocate of modernism before a hostile or skeptical public.

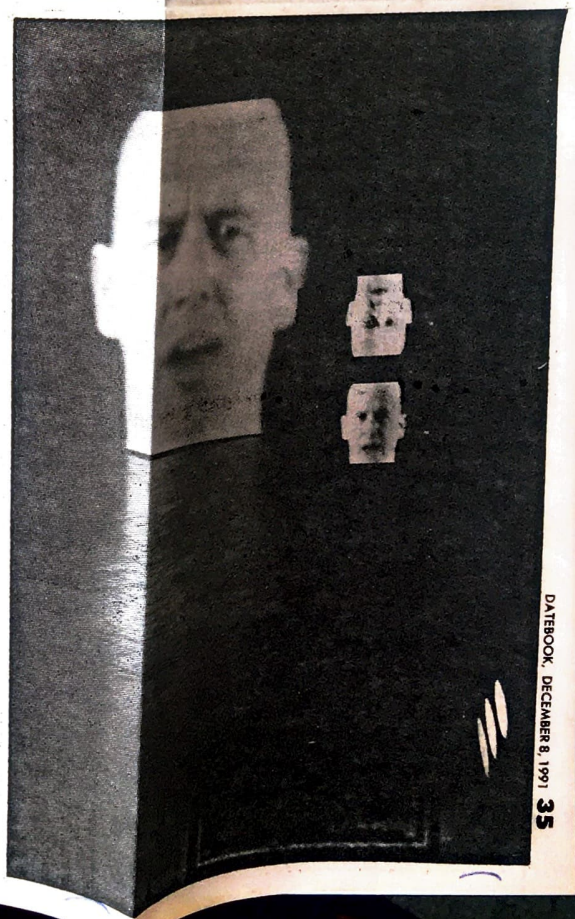
Since the 1960s and the unanticipated growth of a mass audience for art, MOMA's role has shifted to preserver of the elite values of modernism against revision by younger generations of artists more attuned to popular culture, social issues and media notoriety.

At least that was the case until William Rubin retired as chief curator of painting and sculpture and was succeeded by Kirk Varnedoe.

Varnedoe's major 1990-91 exhibition "High and Low," drawing heavily on MOMA's own collection, redescribed the course of 20th century art. It has been, according to "High and Low," an ongoing dialectic of rarefied and vulgar sensibilities, rather than a lineage of styles reinterpreting the founding innovations of Fauvism, Cubism, Dada and Surrealism. This revision may not sound radical, but it gives a credence to Pop art consistent with Pop's powerful influence on artists working today, which the old MOMA line did not.

Storr is Varnedoe's appointee, though his career as critic and painter leaves no one in doubt that he is his own man. For "Dislocations," Storr has chosen seven artists — Louise Bourgeois, Chris Burden, Sophie Calle, David Hammons, Ilya Kabakov, Bruce Nauman and Adrian Piper — who work in very different and often unpredictable ways.

See Page 58



San Francisco Examiner-Chronicle
SAN FRANCISCO, CAL.
SUNDAY 710,516
CA-765

DEC 8 1991

BURRELLE'S

Stone Guest" but, of course, made crucial changes as he developed them as part of a greatly expanded full-evening, two-act work.

Da Ponte cut out two characters, Donna Ximena (another of Giovanni's women) and an accessory servant. Three names were changed, Pasquariello to Leporello, Maturina to Zerlina and Maturina's fiance Biagio to Zerlina's Masetto. The peasant girl Maturina, less scrupulous or more adventurous than Zerlina, goes happily off with Giovanni, clearly joining the others on his list. Her aria of suppliance is Mozartean in its appeal, as sung in the new release by Elzbieta Szmytka, who doubles as Donna Anna.

While Da Ponte keeps Donna Anna central, Bertati dropped her entirely once past the initial scene of Giovanni's murder of her father, her appeal to Ottavio (here, a duke) for vengeance and announcement that she would enter a convent. (That disposed of Anna, freeing the same soprano to sing Maturina.)

Bertati was apparently the one who first broke with the traditional "Don Giovanni" story when he set the finale and descent into hell in the libertine's dining hall. Da Ponte followed Bertati's example and the sequence of events fairly closely.

While Mozart called his work a "dramma giocoso," it always is regarded as serious drama. Gazzaniga's work is closer to the "giocoso" and the commedia tradition. Gazzaniga excelled in the deftness and concision with which he musically describes an action, sets a mood, and expresses a character's nature and disposition.

HIS Don Giovanni is a tenor and much more suave than Mozart's, less arrogant, without such an air of aristocratic superiority. He's a more convincing and romantic seducer than Mozart's; witness the fervent aria with which he wins Donna Ximena. Douglas Johnson, who is coming to the Carmel Bach Festival this summer as one of Weil's soloists, sings the role finely in a clear, bright voice, The striking difference in the Mozart and Da Ponte characterization suggests that the two were still working the sociopolitical agenda of their "The Marriage of Figaro." It strengthens the idea that they saw the Giovanni as the logical continuation of Count Almaviva.

Donna Elvira, Gazzaniga's leading female role, has fine music, a cavatina musically similar to Mozart's "Vedrai carina" for Zerlina, two duets and a full-scale aria. However, the soprano Luciana Serra is the performance's weak spot. Her singing lacked fluidity, warmth and a good legato, didn't do justice to the cavatina, and does even less for Elvira's splendid aria renouncing Giovanni.

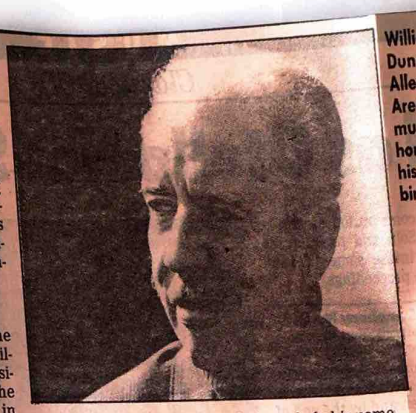
Biagio (bass Anton Scharinger) is every bit the man that Masetto can be; in fact when aroused at Giovanni Biagio reminds one of Figaro. Carlo Allemano, a light tenor, satisfies as Ottavio, a role much less demanding than that created by Mozart. Bass Johann Tilli is the Pasquariello is for a real bass, and Ferruccio Furlanetto makes the most of the buffo opportunities Gazzaniga has composed, making the manservant a pronounced character, a study for Leporello,

Weil conducted a stylish and winning performance, reflecting his impressive European and recording credits. That's good news for the Carmel Bach Festival, already gearing up for its first season under Weil in July.

William Duncan Allen's 85th

A gala celebration honors the 85th birthday and career of William Allen Duncan, a leading musical citizen of the Bay Area. The event will be held at 4 p.m. today in the Calvin Simmons Theater, 10 Tenth Street, Oakland, and is sponsored by the Golden Gate Branch of the National Association of Negro Musicians. A distinguished solo pianist, accompanist, teacher and writer on music, Allen has made a major contribution and has been an inspiration to the black community.

Born in Portland, Ore., in 1906, Allen came to the Bay Area 40 years ago after earning degrees from Oberlin Conservatory and studying with Egon Petrie. He was awarded an honorary doctorate from the Graduate Theological Institute in Berkeley. He taught at Harvard, Fisk and Talladega universities, at San Domenico High School locally and continuously in his own studio.



Artists he has accompanied include Todd Duncan, Leontyne Price, Adele Addison, William Warfield, Betty Allen, William Parker, George Shirley, and Camilla Williams. He wrote music columns for the San Francisco Sun Reporter and Oakland Post and has contributed articles to the Music Journal, Piano Quarterly, Black Perspective in Music and Black Music Research Journal. Allen also served as music director for the Junior Bach Festival and the South Berkeley Community Church.

Any short list of our leading musicians and educators must include his name.

Gifts From the Shensons

Two other names high on that list are brothers Ben and A. Jess Shenson, who will be honored by a special musical Sabbath service at Temple Emanu-El at 10:30 a.m. Saturday. As the most recent of their philanthropies, the Shensons have created an endowment fund at Temple Emanu-El for the preservation of its pipe organs and to commission and perform liturgical music.

William Duncan Allen: Bay Area musician honored on his 85th birthday

Last week, Jess Shenson was elected president of the Merola Opera Program's board of directors. Through their Rose Shenson Opera Scholarship Fund, the brothers have sponsored 16 singers in the Merola program. In addition, through another fund established in 1986, they have underwritten the performance of 10 young solo artists with the San Francisco Symphony.

The rising stars earn and receive the glory; the Shensons help make it possible. ■

CRISIS
Baltimore
January 1992

VISUAL ARTS

Dislocations: Dialogue of Disparate Visions

By Carla Maria Verdino-Sullwold
Writer/Critic, West New York, N.J.

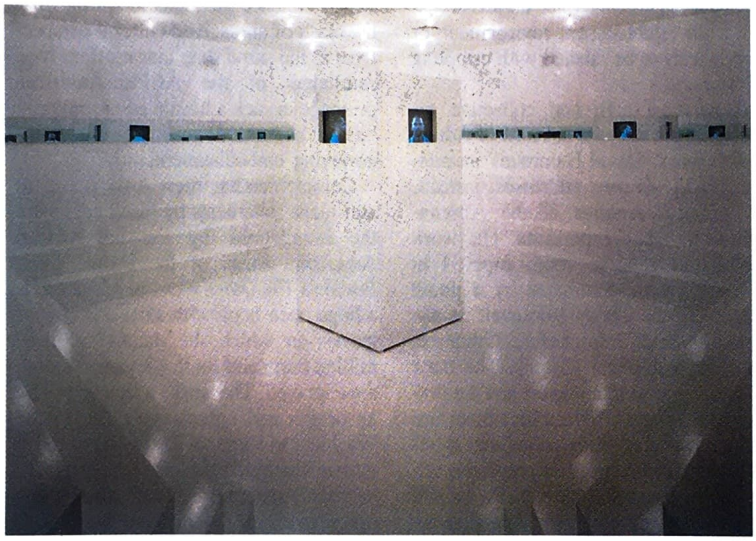


Photo: Scott Frances

Adrian Piper, ***What It's Like, What It Is, No. 3: "Unnerving."***

In a darkened room large video screens assault the eyes and ears with the shifting images of skinheads shouting, "feed me, hate me, date me, eat me, hurt me." The blaring cacophony makes it almost impossible to record my impressions on the reporter's notebook brought along for the purpose. Seeing me writing, a woman approaches and diffidently asks: "Do *you* know what it means?" For an instant the question throws me. The exhibit is not one which lends itself to contemplating meaning in the traditional sense of the term. Rather, it is the provocative work of seven conceptual artists whose installations "mean" to be confrontational, to attack and to dismantle the viewer's core of pat responses, to invade the hallowed space of a major museum with pieces which hold no ready interpretive clues, and which are easy to view but hard to comprehend.

The show entitled, *Dislocations*, which runs from October 1991 to January 1992, represents a major commitment on the part of New York's Museum of Modern Art to explore the world of contemporary conceptual art. The exhibition, organized by Robert Storr, curator of painting and sculpture, with public and private funding from sources like the Peter Norton and Andy Warhold Foundations, foists onto the museum a calculated disruption of gallery space and onto the public a disorientation of perspective that combine to produce an unsettling, but thoroughly dynamic experience. The seven large-scale installations spread throughout the museum's sculpture and painting galleries on three floors have been selected with what Storr calls "the aim of bringing together a broad range of formal, poetic, and social practices by artists of varying backgrounds, ages, and aesthetic approaches." All the works share the goal of "challenging viewers by presenting unfamiliar situations that test habits of observation and call into question settled attitudes about art." Dislocations with its calculated shifts of location and point of view "lends us," Storr continues, "to question some of the familiar landmarks by which we orient our thinking."

The jarring visual and conceptual nature of the exhibition is not its only avantgardism. For a leading establishment institution like MOMA, whose permanent acquisitions are highly conservative and whose changing exhibits have tended to remain safely within accepted media, the decision to give over so much of the museum's space to conceptual installations is, of course, remarkable, but so, too, is the choice of the participating artists – Louise Bourgeois, Chris Burden, Sophie Calle, Bruce Nauman, Ilya Kabakov, David Hammons, and Adrian Piper – who represent a wide spectrum of experience and cultural perspective, as well as a fascinating cross-section of nationalities and races. Furthermore, that two of the seven exhibitors are African-Americans whose controversial work has here-to-fore been largely shown in non-mainstream galleries, testifies to the museum's intent to broaden its roster and message, and specifically to open wider those sacrosanct doors of opportunity to noted artists of color.

In the case of *Dislocations*, this decision has paid off enormously well, for not only do David Hammons and Adrian Piper hold their own among their colleagues, but their works offer the most fascinating and involving experiences in the entire show. Piper's moving installation, *What's It Like, What It Is #3*, invites the viewer into a glaring white cubic room with amphitheater seating. Outside a sign reads, "Please enter and be seated," but upon entering, one finds the risers roped off. In the room's center is a tall, square column topped with four video monitors on which can be seen and heard from several perspectives the head of a black man reciting, against the pounding

pulse of acid rock, a text in which he denies a litany of racial stereotypes.

The man declaims with matter-of-fact emphasis: "I am not smelly, evil, pushy, sneaky, lazy, vulgar, horny, scary, shiftless, crazy, servile, stupid." The entire installation works on surprise. One expects, after the cordial invitation, to be able to enter and sit, but one finds, instead, that in this all-white environment the comfortable dignity of a chair is prohibited. In the pristine room the ambiance becomes unnerving in its self-conscious sterility, just as the focus on the chanting black man becomes unbearably penetrating as his four-headed gaze sweeps the room challenging the viewer with his stare, with his very color which seems antagonistic to the cold environment, and with his accusatory catalogue of racial slurs.

For Piper, herself a light-skinned African American who has been forced to inhabit the tenuous middle ground between black and white which, Storr says, "is fraught with hurtful possibilities," the work has a highly personal significance. Like many of the artist's earlier works which also concern themselves with the problems of racial identity and self-identifications, this new installation probes the results of her own experience with subtle prejudice or heedless ignorance.

Piper, who said she repeatedly found herself in situations where people made racist comments not realizing she was African-American, resolved her dilemma by printing up a calling card to present to an offender which had a message that read (in part): "I am black. I am sure you did not realize this when you made/laughed at/agreed with that racist remark. I regret any discomfort my presence is causing you just as I am sure you regret the discomfort your racism is causing me." This same dispassionate but undeterred tone is central to the current installation which manipulates the alienation between viewer and environment with a cool, but firm civility. It is impossible to leave the arena without emphathizing with the anonymous speaker, without feeling what it is like to be denied access to a white establishment environment, or how it feels to be labeled with crippling misnomers.

If personal pain and collective re-education are the joint subtexts of Adrian Piper's work, David Hammons' installation, *Public Enemy*, addresses, instead, the political realities of the African-American urban experience. His work consists of a large room papered in tasteless green, dominated by a photo blowup of the Teddy Roosevelt monument that stands in front of the 79th Street Museum of Natural History. The floor is strewn with autumn leaves and the flotsam and jetsam of street life; there are balloons hanging from the ceiling, sandbags and police barricades preventing access to the photo-sculpture, and dynamite and automatic weapons strapped to Roosevelt's image.

The design, created with a feeling for random possibility, combines objects that are both discarded and yet have a curious spirit to them—objects which seem to take on a dynamic life of their own and which speak for a cultural rootedness in things African-American.

In *Public Enemy* Hammons gives us a space which combines with peculiar tension interior and exterior—a space in which he assembles a collection of images that appear fraught with the potential for violence. The work has an air of urban guerillaism—a tense threat of explosive passions rendered all the more eerie by the absence of any human presence rather like the surrealistic stillness of one of De Chirico's paintings. Hammons plays on this atmosphere of the unexpected by transforming viewer response: the glorification of Roosevelt that the real monument represents is here ironically turned to a subtle condemnation of the violence and racial exploitation the Rough Rider represented. The installation questions the accepted view of heroism, probes the racial subtexts of American political policy, and examines a scarred, embattled urban universe in which violence threatens to spring from the clash of unresolved cultural perspectives at the same time that it offers lyric reminders of the African-American presence in such a hostile environment—bits of hair, cloth-healing talismans of enriching embellishment.

Complementing these two powerful anti-racist statements by black artists are the installations by the non-African American artists of the show. Chris Burden's *The Other Vietnam Memorial* is a huge open book with steel and copper leaves on which the names of three million north and south Vietnamese dead are engraved. The work, which serves by its design and content as a foil to the Washington Vietnam Memorial to fallen Americans by Maya Lin, makes a non-partisan statement about the sheer magnitude of slaughter in which Americans took part in the Vietnam War. It serves to resurrect the countless Asian sufferers and victims whom political myth and racist insensitivity had consigned to oblivion and to restore to them their proper due as human beings. While not an avowed pacifist, Burden's work, nonetheless, makes an ardent case against the massive destructiveness of war, and cautions the viewer that selective amnesia can never be a solution to collective guilt.

Whether challenging racial stereotypes, political platitudes or erotic fantasies; whether probing the fine lines between meaning and void, acceptable behavior and taboo, the seven artists in the *Dislocations* show demand that the viewer enter unfamiliar territory, accept the risk of losing the way, and ultimately come to terms with a modern world out of joint. The entire context of the exhibit is what Robert Storr calls "a dialogue of disparate visions": a dialogue both adversarial and illuminating between museum and artist, work of art and viewer; between familiar and avant garde; between individuals and races; between alienation and reconsidered identity. □

THE NATION
New York
6 January 1992

ARTHUR C. DANTO

Dislocationary Art

Philosophers, jurists and civil libertarians alike have been intrigued by an argument made by Catharine MacKinnon in the so-called Minneapolis Ordinance, which attempted to treat certain representations as being in violation of the civil rights of women. The ordinance spoke of the graphic sexually explicit subordination of women through images or words. It is not only that images that depict women in sadistic fantasies may have as consequences the actual subordination of women because they inspired sadists to realize such fantasies. Rather, the images *themselves*, whatever their consequences, subordinate women through their content. That images have the power to subordinate in this sense is widely conceded: When someone depicted the former Mayor of Chicago as in drag, wearing frilly underthings, the black community felt that to be a degradation, an unac-

ceptable picture, and undertook to remove it from the wall. Subordination, thus, is one of the "powers of images," to borrow the expression David Freedberg uses for the title of a book that treats the phenomenon of empowered images throughout history. Freedberg's thesis is that treating images as possessing a wide range of powers is at once ancient and universal, and that the attitude persists in many of the ways in which we respond to and think about images: Think of the toppled statues of Lenin throughout Eastern Europe, or the way images are prayed to, injured, kissed or treated as uncanny throughout the world. Freedberg believes, I dare say rightly, that art historians have neglected these powers, and that in consequence there are entire empires of art to which the formalistic and iconographic modes of analysis they (and most art critics) favor have no application. They do not touch that which in images verges on their presumed magical and moral force. The testimony of the "experts" in the famous trial in Cincinnati over whether Robert Mapplethorpe's images are "obscene" is a case in point: The experts claimed that they saw the work only as "figure studies," as "classical proportions," as "symmetrical," virtually denying the almost shattering sexual energy of those morally challenging photographs.

Even so, a distinction must be drawn between the power of images and what one might call the *power of art*, where the effect of experiencing a work of art can be tantamount to a conversion, a transformation of the viewer's world. Ruskin, for example, underwent just such a transformative experience with Tintoretto's stupendous paintings in the Scuola San Rocco in Venice: "I never was so utterly crushed to the earth before any human intellect as I was today before Tintoret," he wrote his father in September 1845: "As for *painting*, I think I didn't know what it meant till today." Some years later, Ruskin sustained what he termed an "unconversion" inspired by Veronese's *Solomon and the Queen of Sheba* in Turin. He had just suffered through a dispiriting sermon on the vanity of life, and seeing the great painting against this bleak characterization of the world, he asked, "Can it be possible that all this power and beauty is adverse to the honour of the Maker of it?" His wonderful letter, again to his father, continues:

> Has God made faces beautiful and limbs strong, and created these strange, fiery, fantastic energies, and created the splendour of substance and the love of it; created gold, and pearls, and crystal, and the sun that makes them gorgeous; and filled human fancy with all splendid thoughts; and given to the human touch its power of placing and brightening and perfecting, only that all these things may lead His creatures away from Him?

Ruskin's very language belongs to the world it describes, and to which Veronese's painting reconciled him. He was converted from a kind of evangelism to a redemptive form of humanism.

The aim here is to re-place the viewer in a conceptually recast world.

Ruskin's are extreme instances of the transformative impact art can have, and the very fact that such experiences are possible must surely be part of what Hegel had in view when he claimed that art, philosophy and religion are aspects or "moments" of what he designated Absolute Spirit. My sense is that anyone who has had any sustained intercourse with art must at some time have undergone some such experience, and I hold it greatly to the credit of Robert Storr, in his inaugural exhibition as curator at the Museum of Modern Art, that he should have sought to reconnect with the possibility of such transformations. "To be moved by art," he writes, in a text that accompanies "Dislocations," as the exhibition is called, "is to be lifted out of one's usual circumstances and taken out of oneself, the better to look back upon the place one has departed and the limited identity one has left behind. With or without metaphysics, and for however brief a moment it lasts, this state may be fairly called transcendence." Of course, such dislocations are rare in anyone's affective history. Countless tourists have trudged through the Scuola San Rocco thinking of little more edifying than how chilly they feel or when lunch might be. However greatly one admires Veronese, few have been catapulted by his gorgeousness into a totally new moral attitude. And Ruskin, for all his sensitivity, was numb to works that stirred others profoundly. Speaking for myself, I was absolutely knocked off my horse by certain works of Andy Warhol that others found blank or meretricious or cynical or silly. For all their importance, dislocative experiences are unpredictable, and presuppose certain states of mind on the viewer's part that not everyone will share.

Still, dislocation is a bold direction for MoMA to take, not least of all because of the close identification of modernism with formalism, not only in the thought and writing of Alfred Barr but in the practice and discourse of any number of curators or docents when they explain works of art to one another and to the world. Formalism, moreover, as may be seen from the responses of the experts at the Mapplethorpe trial, is clearly the lingua franca of art criticism and what is tacitly appealed to and contested in the issue of "quality" that has lately so exercised the art world. It is formalism against which David Freedberg inveighs in his polemic in favor of recognizing the power of images. And it is formalism, however correctly believed to have been the philosophy and critical posture of Clement Greenberg, that has been so polemicized against by those who have sought a more political mission for art, or who practice what is called "the New Art History." The art world, especially that sector of it corresponding to middle management in industry, is today a politicized, indeed an angrily politicized, group of persons, and there can be little doubt that some of the dislocation aspired to by the seven installations of which this show consists is political: The works mean to get those who view them to think differently about matters of gender, race and war. This is not likely to happen easily, just because so many of those who will see the show already share so many of the beliefs and attitudes of the artists. Even so, I cannot suppose that the overall aim of a show, the raison d'être of which is cast in such terms as "transport" or "transcendence" or as "mapping previously unimagined spaces," can be construed as political in any narrow way. The aim is rather something like a conceptual revolution, a way of seeing things fresh, of re-placing the viewer in a conceptually recast world. This is a pretty tall order, all the more so if animated by the belief that there are works capable of doing this in any uniform and dependable way. Conversion is hardly something one can promise ticket holders as the reward of a few hours spent in the galleries.

Dislocation, moreover, does not seem to figure greatly in the day-to-day expe-

riences with art of the MoMA cadre, typical, no doubt, of museum personnel everywhere. This is certainly the inference to be drawn from one of the works, "installed" by the French conceptual and performance artist Sophie Calle in the galleries of the museum's permanent collection. Calle's work is called *Ghosts*, which translates the French term *fantômes*, though the latter has a use in French for which we have, so far as I know, no English word at all—though I imagine "ghost" is destined to enter the language as such. A *fantôme* is the photograph of a painting that replaces the painting when the latter has been taken away from a museum wall, together with a label that explains what happened to the work: It is on loan, or being cleaned or restored, or it has been stolen. Calle had the poetic idea of substituting for the "ghost" the memories of the missing work carried by those supposed most familiar with it—curators, administrators, guards and the like. It is always interesting to find out how images are stored—I have read that Americans divide equally on the question of whether Lincoln faces right or left on the standard U.S. penny—and it is to be expected that even when a painting is as familiar as the penny, memories will conflict and decay. Remembering paintings, in fact, turns out to be almost like remembering dreams, and it is fascinating to read what Calle has written in the blank spaces on the walls where just a few weeks ago there hung a Magritte, a Modigliani, a Seurat, a Hopper, a de Chirico. It is easy to pick out the official MoMA voice. Of de Chirico: "Very sterile, very angular." "It's mostly those typical de Chirico colors, mustard, gold, brown, and blue." The angry feminist voice is readily identified as well. Of Magritte: "It's just one more picture where the woman is naked and the men are clothed." Of Modigliani: "It's like any other nude. It's a horizontal painting of a female lying naked." And then there are the usual bitchy art world voices. Of Hopper: "An icon of American art. I respect it historically but I'm not passionate about it." Of Seurat: "There's something anal about it." These are voices of the located, rather than the dislocated. Storr draws a certain moral from Calle's work. It should "at the very least, give pause to those who declare themselves to be sure of the import of such canonical pictures." "Canonical" is tendentious: I would say it shows how unsure we ever are of the import of pictures, given the immense diversity of individual histories and beliefs. Some of Calle's ghosts are very evocative and poetically confessional. It would be interesting to know at least the rank in museum hierarchy of the different orders of respondents: Are the guards more likely than the curators to say such things as, "You have the feeling you are not in reality, you are on a film set, and something is wrong . . . " of the de Chirico? Or of the Seurat: "The painting reminds me of a sequined dress." Anyway, what ghosts would be left behind from the memories of the non-canonical works in "Dislocations"? Ruskins are few and far between.

The closest to a transformative experience was occasioned for me by Bruce Nauman's *Anthro/Socio*, though part of its impact was due to certain accidents of when I viewed it. There were just a few shadowy visitors in the darkened gallery, with a few more crossing the largely empty space. It made no impact on a friend who was at the opening, when this particular room was dense with guests standing in line to see the next exhibit, and paying no attention to the work. Could the fact that I was one of a handful, each of us in fact paying attention, an enhancement of the experience? In any case, it consists of three colossal projections of the same male head onto the bare walls, one of the heads upside down. The heads are chanting, over and over, as if it were a mantra, what sounds like calls for help. The same striking head, sometimes upside down again, appears on several monitors placed here and there in the gallery, taking up the chant, as if a chorus of semblables. The volume of the sound, the volume of the *room*, the repetition, with felt intensity, of the phrases "Feed me/Eat me/Anthropology. Help me/Hurt me/Sociology," the urgency of the voices, the floor-to-ceiling scale of the dislocated heads, achieve a very powerful effect, especially when experienced in a near empty gallery where one sees other visitors silhouetted, singly or in pairs, against the chanting heads. But if it was dislocating, it was so only momentarily, and it left me with nothing by way of a transformed philosophy. The world after Nauman looks a lot like the world pre-Nauman. Perhaps that is because, knowing there is more to come, one is primed to see what the next installation does.

The next installation I saw was Louise Bourgeois's *Twosome*, having taken a wrong turn in the intended progression of the exhibition. Hers has something of the scale of Nauman's, and it enacts an alternation where his merely chants alternations, but her work uses mechanical protagonists rather than explicitly human ones, and does not touch us with the same immediacy of sympathy. Her alternation is what Alex, in *A Clockwork Orange*, calls "The old in-and-out." The work consists of two very large tanks, rescued for the purposes of art from the scrap yard, lying on their sides, but end to end. The one with the larger diameter has windows cut into it, through which a sort of reddish light shines out. The other slides in and out of it on tracks. It is thus a sort of love machine, an emblem perhaps of the act of love in an age of mechanical reproduction. The receiving cylinder can be seen as a kind of shelter, what with the windows, and so a sort of woman-house (or perhaps a house-wife). One senses that some mischievous reading is intended, like: House-wives are screwed. In a personal statement, Bourgeois philosophizes a bit on in/out as the general metaphysical condition of humankind: We are in/out of love, in/out of luck, in/out of debt, and so on. But none of this is made visual enough by a work that seems awfully large to be at best a kind of joke on the circumstances of copulation. One waits for a more ample revelation, but none comes. It in any case diluted the impact of the Nauman.

Hammons's art ends up sullen and inert in the museum.

I ought to have seen Bourgeois's work after passing through an installation by Ilya Kabakov called *The Bridge*. Indeed, there is a bridge, from which one sees, in the dark space of the room it traverses, furniture pushed back against the walls. A narrative is pinned to a bulletin board, telling of what was to have been a critique, in a housing project in Moscow in 1984, of some paintings held to display "dangerous bourgeois tendencies." This event never came off. The furniture instead was all pushed where one sees it, and there, in the cleared space, are what are described as "groups of little white people, constantly exchanging places." Binoculars have been placed along the bridge for us to look at what to New Yorkers have the appearance of cock-

roaches dusted with boric acid, showing their usual negatively phototropic behavior. One feels that some magic must have leaked out of Kabakov's installation in its transit from Moscow to New York, where it appears as a sort of mess intended to be a hybrid of political satire and science fiction.

I felt there was little magic to leak out of David Hammons's piece on the third floor, the title of which is *Public Enemy*. It consists of a sort of barricade surrounding blown-up photographs of a piece of public sculpture of an earlier era: Teddy Roosevelt, mounted, is flanked by a Native American and an African-American on foot. Some guns lie here and there against the barricade, and there are balloons and streamers coming down from the ceiling, as if a victory were being celebrated, or had been. Hammons is a legendary artist, latterly much honored, whose work, until now, has been street art, made of things found in the street, for an audience whose habitat is the street. It is easy to understand the impulse to bring a vision such as his within museum space, which I fear rather defeated it. Given his edificatory impulses, he ought to have put museum space into question, but instead he settled for a political diorama not worthy of his true powers. Had such a work been created in public space, around a real monument, it might have been inspiring and even dislocative. But here it is merely sullen and artistically inert.

Another clear failure is Chris Burden's *The Other Vietnam Memorial*, which is doubly defective. It is defective as art, in the first instance, and it is defective because it ought to have been good if it was done at all. The idea is certainly a good one—to memorialize those who died in the conflict but are not memorialized in the Vietnam Veterans Memorial because they were on the other side. It has the form of a bulletin board with rotating leaves, on each of which is etched the "names" of dead Vietnamese, in tiny, tiny letters. It touches no emotions, not least of all because the names are generic Vietnamese names, designating anyone and no one. The power of Maya Lin's masterpiece is that there is a direct causal and semantic tie between each name and a specific individual, so that in touching the name one is multiply related to that very person. Had she used generic American names—Smith, Brown, Robinson, Jones—it would have failed just as Burden's does. After all, we are not talking about Unknown Soldiers. It shows disrespect for the very persons it was meant to represent by putting an abstract screen of namelike marks between them and us. No one is moved to touch this memorial.

The final work, by Adrian Piper, is about racial stereotypes: In a sort of amphitheater, an African-American male declaims from monitors positioned atop a central pillar that he is not lazy, not shiftless, not sneaky, scary . . . is not any of the things men like him are said to be. It is not that he is a *Mann ohne Eigenschaften*—a "Man without Qualities"—but a man of whom those racist predicates are not true. One can be, one perhaps must be, moved by the message without especially being moved by the work. New Yorkers have seen the theme of racism addressed by Piper, who is a philosopher and a teacher of philosophy, in works that show her engaged in an acidic pedagogy, mocking the viewer, insinuating, putting us off balance. When one of these works showed up in the window of the New Museum, passers-by who paused to look at it responded with anger. Perhaps this work is diminished by Nauman's, with which it in any case shares the feature of talking heads.

There is a distinction to be made between bad art and failed art. Nothing in this show is bad, but a lot of it fails, perhaps because of the burden put on it by the charge to dislocate us. It has on the other hand two successes—Calle's and Nauman's—and a near success in Bourgeois's affectionate tanks. And the show itself, as distinguished from its contents, is a great success, reconnecting our concept of art with that for the sake of which art, after all, exists: to move the souls of men and women. □

THE NEW YORK OBSERVER
4 November 1991

MoMA Mia, You Call This Art?

By Hilton Kramer

A Critic's View

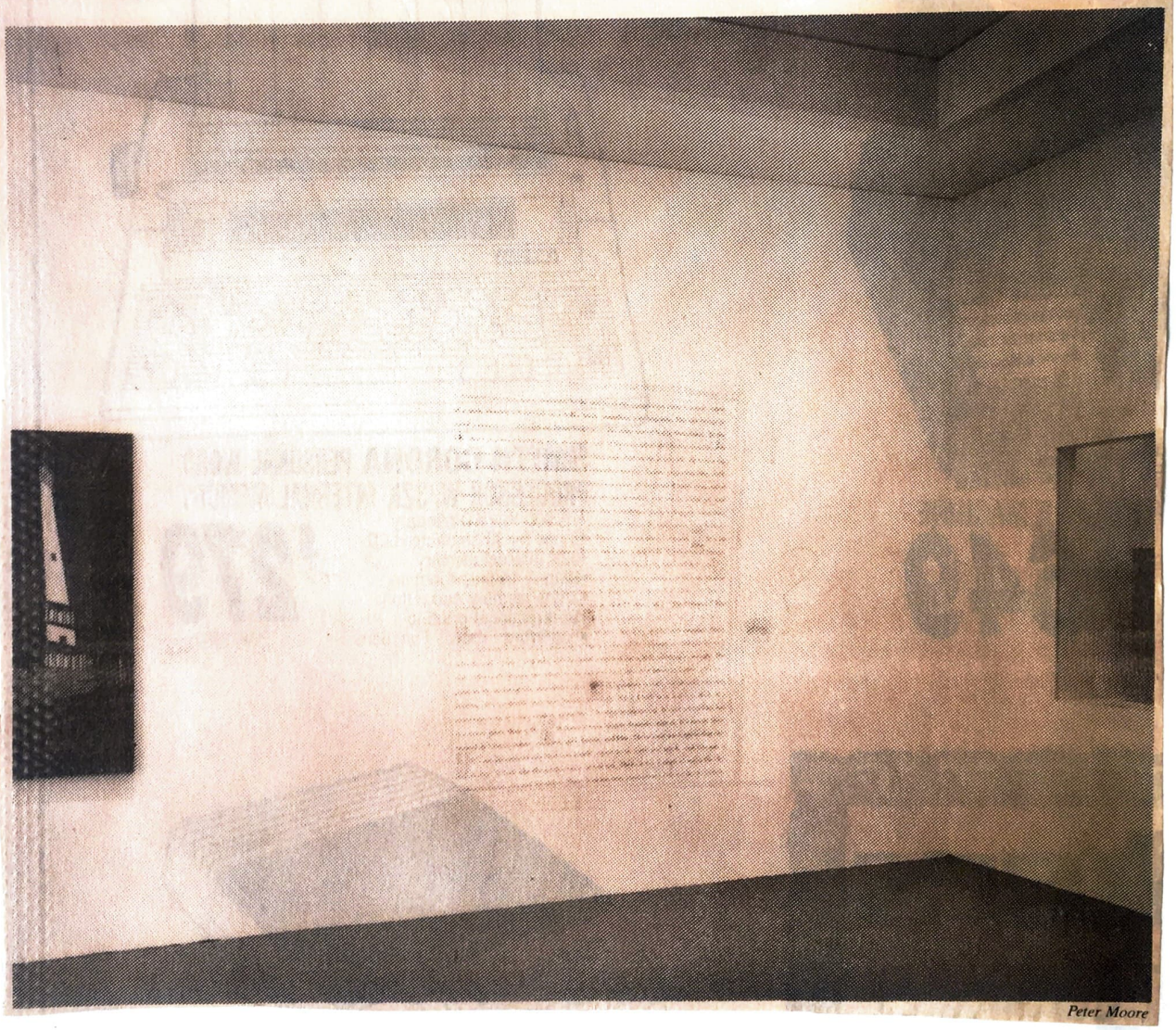
Every age probably gets the museum curators it deserves, and it was thus inevitable, I suppose, that in an age of rampant schlock in high places we would get someone like Robert Storr at the Museum of Modern Art. The contemporary art establishment had for years been clamoring for MoMA's capitulation to every new trend the market and the media had spawned, and it was clear that the folks with the power and the money would no longer settle for token gestures. They have large investments to protect, and nothing less than unconditional surrender was going to satisfy them.

The urgent need, therefore, was for the appointment of a curator of contemporary art at MoMA who could be counted upon to call every new sow's ear a silk purse and every new species of cabbage a rose. In that respect, certainly, Mr. Storr filled the bill to perfection. As a writer he has, after all, an unblemished record for performing this essential service with the requisite energy and enthusiasm, and for this reason he is much admired by the new generation of cabbage collectors and the dealers who specialize in the new varieties of sows' ears.

My own expectation had been that a man of Mr. Storr's credentials would be snapped up by the new regime at the Whitney Museum, but MoMA's need was apparently greater and they got to him first, or at least with the better offer. And so it now looks as if the 1990's are going to be devoted, at least as far as contemporary art is concerned, to what can only be called the Whitneyization of the Museum of Modern Art. It's an awful fate to contemplate, but the signs and portents are unmistakable.

The first strike in this direction is a miserable event—it can hardly be called an exhibition—that Mr. Storr has now staged at MoMA under the title of *Dislocations*. It consists of "installations" by seven artists —or perhaps one should simply say, seven installers—who appear to have been chosen on the basis of race, sex, age, ethnicity, etc., to meet Mr. Storr's standard of political correctness. *Dislocations* may also be the first event at MoMA to be governed by the politically correct notion of "lookism." Lookism, as connoisseurs of political correctness already know, is the political crime of acknowledging that some people

A Plague on Both Your Houses: the Whitneyized MoMA



Peter Moore

are better-looking than others. Mr. Storr has applied the ban on lookism by guaranteeing that all seven "installations" here would be equally devoid of visual appeal.

It is Mr. Storr's conviction, I gather, that these political tests are the only standards that are to be applied to the art of the 90's, and it is his further conviction that what is to be given priority in the art of the 90's is the ability of its creators to make us feel bad. In both respects, *Dislocations* may be said to be a rousing success. It is only as art that it fails to give us anything worth looking at.

In Bruce Nauman's video installation called "Anthro/Socio," for example, what we are given to look at is a large, darkened space in which a bald white man cries out for help on television monitors large and small. The sound of his not very intelligible voice is maintained at the kind of ear-splitting volume that is obviously intended to cause pain. As art it is worthless, but as evidence of what now passes for "advanced" taste in the art world it is certainly instructive.

Even more lugubrious, though mercifully less noisy, is Ilya Kabakov's "The Bridge," which offers us a reconstruction of a housing project tenants' club in the Soviet Union. Furniture has been pushed aside and overturned and some paintings can be dimly discerned in the distance from the bridge that Mr. Kabakov has constructed as a symbol of his allegedly "mystical" triumph over miserable circumstance. As art, this, too, is worthless.

But then, so is everything else in *Dislocations*. For myself, the saddest installation here is Louise Bourgeois's "Twosome," a big, ugly construction made of old gasoline storage tanks that, with the help of red lights and machinery, has been turned into a vaguely ominous symbol of sexual disorder. Those of us who are old enough to remember a time when Ms. Bourgeois was still a serious artist can only lament her descent into this kind of fashionable claptrap.

Yet by far the worst of the installations here is unquestionably Sophie Calle's "Ghosts," for this really does represent something new at MoMA. Ms. Calle was permitted to put in place of real works of art from the galleries of the permanent collection—a painting by Seurat, for example—some stupid comments on these works by members of the MoMA staff. These are printed on the walls of the galleries together with some inept scrawls and dabs by Ms. Calle herself. On the basis of the comments that are quoted in this installation—my own favorite, so to speak, is the one that describes Seurat's "dots" as "anal"—I think it is obvious that all these staff members should be fired for mental incompetence. "Ghosts" is nothing but an atrocious act of intellectual vandalism, and from a museum administration that encourages such inane atrocities we can now expect only worse things to come.

As for *Dislocations* as a whole, most of it is only an up-to-date rehash of the kind of installation stuff that has been standard fare at the Whitney, the New Museum and other such purveyors of fashionable crap for a good many years now. The only really new note here is Ms. Calle's assault on the permanent collection, and that is indeed an ominous portent.

Meanwhile, down in Philadelphia the tireless Mr. Storr has also been busy, organizing a survey of the art of the 1980's. Pretentiously entitled *Devil on the Stairs*, this show at the Institute of Contemporary Art includes some of the names represented in *Dislocations*—Mr. Kabakov, for example, gives us another dismal room installation—plus a roundup of names that dominated the fashionable art of the 80's.

Here, too, political correctness is the principal theme, with a special installation devoted to names of artists and others who have died of AIDS, and a heavy emphasis on feminist art and what Mr. Storr dubs "Social Studies" and "History Lessons," the kind of art that is basically political in content and manner. All the usual suspects are present and accounted for—Jean Michel Basquiat, Keith Haring, Leon Golub, Jenny Holzer, Barbara Kruger, among many others—and all, you may be certain, selected on the basis of race, sex, age, ethnicity, etc.

From a museum administration that encourages such inane atrocities we can now expect only worse things to come.

Mr. Storr presents this familiar picture of 80's art as a "project-in-progress" and acknowledges that he hasn't quite sorted out what he calls his "lingering thoughts regarding race, sexuality, the economy of signs, and the politics of artistic method,"

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Page 4

but what now counts as art for him is perfectly clear, and these two exhibitions are obviously a preview of coming attractions at MoMA and elsewhere. And so the

Above, Robert Storr, curator of contemporary art at the Museum of Modern Art, who is organizing *Devil on the Stairs: Looking Back at the 80's* at the Institute of Contemporary Art in Philadelphia; at left, Sophie Calle's "Ghosts," 1991, detail of an installation, and part of the *Dislocation* show staged by Mr. Storr at MoMA—"an atrocious act of intellectual vandalism."

Whitneyization of MoMA—and probably the Guggenheim, too, should it ever reopen its doors—is off to an energetic start.

The only question that remains unanswered is: When are we going to have a Salon des Refusés that gives us a look at the real art of our time? Now that the museums, with MoMA as the prize, have been taken over by political commissars like Mr. Storr, it is surely time for a rebellion in the name of art itself. But at the moment, alas, I don't see any sign of this happening. The money—including gobs of it from the National Endowment for the Arts, which has sponsored both *Dislocations* and *Devil on the Stairs*—is now all flowing in Mr. Storr's direction. This is going to be an even grimmer decade for the art world than the 80's was.

THE NEW YORK OBSERVER
11 November 1991

A Fatality on Art's Critical List?

By Hilton Kramer

A Critic's View

A few days after reading Roberta Smith's review of the Matthew Barney show in *The Times*, I went down to SoHo to see what all the fuss was about. Mr. Barney is having his first New York exhibition at the Barbara Gladstone Gallery on Greene Street, and Ms. Smith reported that "some visitors" already regarded it as marking "a seismic shift in sculpture" comparable to the emergence of Jeff Koons. She was announcing, in other words, the arrival of a new art superstar, so I thought I should take a look at this stellar phenomenon.

As readers of the *Times* art pages are well aware, it is Ms. Smith's custom in these matters to sound studiously judicious. Thus, she also dutifully reported that "Others condemned [Mr. Barney's show] as little more than astute rehashings of 1970's art issues." This is the way Ms. Smith always writes about superstar events on the art scene. On the one hand, there are the folks who think it's great ("a seismic shift"), and on the other, there are the folks who think it's not quite so great ("astute rehashings"), and it is Ms. Smith's habit to come down firmly on both sides of the question. In the end, of course, her heart, if not always her head, tends to side with the "seismic shift" crowd, and this was clearly the case with Mr. Barney's show, to which she devoted a quarter of a page of the Weekend section of *The Times*.

To be perfectly frank, I wasn't expecting much when I set off to see this "seismic" event. After all, I've read Ms. Smith's accounts of other art world earthquakes, and you get inured to the hyperbole. Indeed, I had read her a week earlier on Robert Storr's *Dislocations* show at MoMA. On that occasion, she began by announcing that the show might be "hard to take, at least at first," and ended, as we knew she would, by reporting an "unexpected denouement," which allegedly consisted of a reconciliation of "the disparate subversive strands of *Dislocations* with the very tradition that many of its artists seem to disavow." For Ms. Smith, every art world earthquake has a happy ending, every "seismic shift" ends in reconciliation with the "tradition" it seems to disavow.

Anyway, I can't honestly say I was looking forward to Mr. Barney's show. The promise of seeing what Ms. Smith described as "a muscular young gladiator who spends a great deal of time on video in elegant drag or wearing almost nothing" wasn't much of a draw for me. Neither were the other themes or objects that Ms. Smith found the show to consist of—"sports, androgyny, birth, penetration, weight training," etc., among the themes, and "a huge specially made chunk of yellow and white candy" and "a gynecological speculum" among the objects. We all know that there is now almost nothing that someone won't do in public in the name of art, no matter how stupid or nasty, and we also know that Ms. Smith is likely to give the thing a favorable review. It was really Ms. Smith's work, rather than Mr. Barney's, that drew me to this "seismic" debut of an artist (as I suppose he must be called) whom few readers of *The Times* had ever heard of before encountering Ms. Smith's endorsement.

For Ms. Smith has perfected a style and an attitude in writing about "seismic" art and the hype surrounding it that are almost as interesting, as a cultural development, as the stuff she writes about. Unlike other critics who are professional boosters of "seismic" art—Kay Larson at *New York* magazine, for instance—Ms. Smith never displays the slightest emotion in writing about it. She is never offended by anything. She isn't even angry with the people who don't like it, or at least she never appears to be angry. She is, well, sort of understanding about everything. And in her case, as with so many acolytes of earthquake art today, to understand all is to forgive all, and to forgive all is, well, to sort of like it, or at least not actively dislike it.

No matter what the provocation, then, Ms. Smith is always cool and—I was about to say "ladylike," but as that is now a politically impermissible locution, let me say instead that she is always well-mannered in her responses to every earthquake that comes her way. She is cool, calm and collected. I wasn't in the gallery the day she was obliged to study at length the close-up images of Mr. Barney's naked behind that completely filled the television screens in

Count On The Times*'s Taxonomist To Report a Seismic Shift in SoHo*

***The Times*'s art critic Roberta Smith.**

the basement installation, but I can imagine that she took it in stride. Certainly, her prose did, for Ms. Smith writes the kind of prose that never, but never, shows the slightest jiggle of emotion.

In that respect, Ms. Smith isn't so much a critic as she is a taxonomist—a cool and detached classifier of whatever the fashions of the art scene happen to throw her way. In another life she might have devoted her talents to classifying fossils or the shards of ancient pottery uncovered in an archeological dig. In this life, however, it is her task to examine the videotapes of Mr. Barney's naked behind and such other delights as the art of the moment may offer for her taxonomical talents, and she classifies them with the requisite detachment and aplomb. As the saying goes, she never turns a hair.

That is more of a feat than is commonly supposed. The art scene, as we know, is nowadays crowded with ambitious hustlers dreaming up the kind of provocations that will win them superstar status. This is hard work, and the ante must be raised every season. And so the programmatic outrages grow ever more provocative and the promotion of them ever more cynical. What is essential to their success, however, is the kind of criticism (as I suppose it must be called) that embraces the latest offering as a "seismic shift" while taking note of its "astute rehashings" of familiar "issues." The writers of this "criticism" apparently never encounter anyone at these earthquake events who thinks them altogether trashy. Ms. Smith never does, anyway, or if she does she never says so. Such opinions do not fall within the parameters of her taxonomical task.

In the end, of course, such "criticism" serves as a necessary appendage to the "seismic shifts" it embraces, lending respectability to outrage and thereby rendering it acceptable and salable. That the writing itself might sometimes be a bit boring in its utter impersonality and detachment is absolutely essential to its function. This, too, is a requirement that Ms. Smith's writing is always equal to.

Next week we can look forward to another scheduled "seismic shift" when Jeff Koons and his Italian porno queen show their latest stuff at the Sonnabend Gallery on West Broadway. It has already been announced that there will be a cop at the door to keep out everyone under the age of 18, and so I suppose this must be classified as the season's first officially X-rated art show. That it is bound to be a sensation we already know. What I shall be most interested in, however, is Roberta Smith's review of the show. It may be, of course, that Mr. Koons and his bride are now such established superstars that they are beyond any talk of "astute rehashings" of familiar "issues," but then again, perhaps they're not. We can count on Roberta Smith to give us a dependable classification of the matter.

9475

Forget the pretense and focus on the art

Hammons retrospective is rousing the rubble

By ROBERT L. PINCUS, Art Critic

David Hammons is an intensely committed artist who dislikes nearly everything about the art world.

Of museums, he observes: "They look like mental institutions with those scrubbed white walls."

Of dealers, particularly American ones, he comments: "They have deceitful pretensions; I don't need them."

For much of his career, which has taken him from the American heartland to Los Angeles to Harlem to Rome, the 48-year-old Hammons has been ignored by museums and galleries that exist in the vaguely defined territory called the mainstream. Not until last year did he have a show in a well-known commercial space: New York's Jack Tilton Gallery.

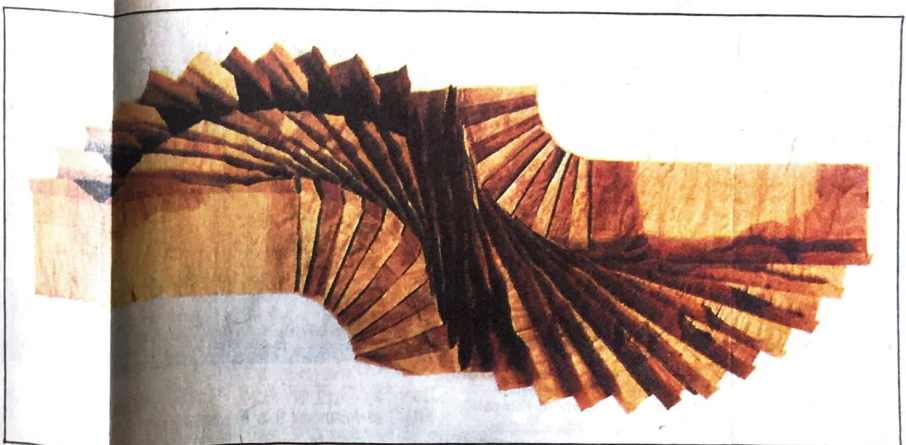
"Someone once called me the 'the dean of alternative space artists,' " he recalled, looking thoroughly amused with that concept.

The most durable of alternative spaces, New York's P.S. 1 Museum in Queens, organized and premiered the retrospective of his work, "David Hammons: Rousing the Rubble," that opens tomorrow night at the San Diego Museum of Contemporary Art and continues through Nov. 10. (The curator of the exhibition, Tom Finkelpearl, will lead a tour and discussion of the show at 2 p.m. Sunday.)

See Hammons on Page E-4

▼ *"I always wanted to do work with elegance, like Duke Ellington. He had a velvet sound and my work is all about trying to achieve that."* **Artist David Hammons** ▲

The San Diego Union
Dave Siccardi



▲ 'Bag Lady in Flight,' from shopping bags, grease and hair, typifies Hammons' ability to make elegant art from handy materials.

◀ Hammons' penchant for puns is exemplified by an untitled work, made from coal and bottles, whose former title is 'Coal Train.'

Hammons—

6

Continued from E-1

Different opening

As at previous venues, the local opening of his show will be, in Hammons' term, "a sports opera" — combining basketball and music. Instead of being a members' event, this reception is open to the public.

Jameel Mondoc (a longtime friend of the artist) and the Jus Grew Orchestra played at his New York opening. Here, he's not sure what the program will be. "Perhaps a violinist will play along with a couple of athletes in suits."

"This is my road show, my circus act," Hammons quipped, flashing a mischievous smile. It's clear he distances himself from the

Datebook

What: "David Hammons: Rousing the Rubble," a retrospective featuring bodyprints, sculptures and mixed-media installations
When: Sunday through Nov. 10 (opening reception tomorrow from 7 to 10 p.m.)
Hours: 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. Tuesday through Sunday; 10 a.m. to 9 p.m. Wednesday
Where: San Diego Museum of Contemporary Art, 700 Prospect St., La Jolla
Tickets: $4; seniors and students, $2; children under 12, 50 cents (admission free 5 to 9 p.m. Wednesday)
Information: 454-3541

art world by lampooning it, even as he advocates an ambitious role for the artist.

"Its important for art to have beauty," he insisted, "and for it to be a beauty everyone must be able to see."

"But it takes a lifetime if that's the kind of dreams you have."

Hammons makes it clear, taking time out from installing his exhibition, that this dream is his own. It has taken a long time for him to gain acclaim, but he wanted recognition to be on his terms.

With little hype, he has managed to gain a rush of recognition from the art world and from other quarters. Two years ago, he was provided a Rome Prize, offering him an opportunity to work at the American Academy in Rome. This year, he was given a prestigious MacArthur fellowship, a substantial award often referred to as a "genius grant." Hammons has spent much of his career surviving on severely limited funds and this grant was $290,000.

A lucky strike

In addition to his current retrospective, Hammons was represented in the national tour of "Awards in the Visual Arts" exhibition, seen in La Jolla in 1989. He will be provided space to create an installation in the "Dislocations" exhibition at New York's Museum of Modern Art, which will open in October. And his art will be included in "Documenta 8" and the Carnegie International in 1992, two much-publicized extravaganzas. (The Museum of Modern Art recently purchased one of his basketball hoop sculptures and the San Diego Museum of Contemporary Art acquired a graceful assemblage, "Champ.")

"Overexposure in America will kill you," Hammons said. But he doesn't think there is any danger that will happen to him anytime soon.

A pivotal event in his rise from relative obscurity was a 1989 work that quickly turned notorious. Called "How Ya Like Me Now," it was a 10-foot metal mural picturing Jesse Jackson with white skin, blond hair and blue eyes. For Hammons, its message was simply that Jackson would have been president if he were white. When the image was installed in a Washington neighborhood, however, others read it differently; its detractors took sledgehammers to it, believing it to be racist.

Now, the mural is part of a museum piece; sledgehammers ring it. One implement bears a Lucky Strike package, since Hammons found the turn of events fortunate for him.

The recycler

The work is atypical of the artist's oeuvre. Hammons' art is largely sculptural, consisting of materials scavenged from the streets and shops of Harlem.

He has made a number of pieces that employ basketball-style hoops made from such things as a bottomless garbage can or plastic milk crate. Other selections, spanning two decades, are fashioned from a host of cheap, readily accessible materials: wine bottles, bottle caps, chicken wings, spareribs bones, grease, hair from barber shops, paper bags and a saxophone, among other things.

One connective thread is the

See Hammons on Page E-5

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Hammons

Continued from E-4

part his recycled objects play in the lives of African-Americans. Chosen items, in his work, resonate with a history of individual use and insist on being recognized as cultural icons.

Another bond is their physical grace, and Hammons draws an analogy between his art and music. "I always wanted to do work with elegance, like Duke Ellington. He had a velvet sound and my work is all about trying to achieve that."

Like jazz, for which he has an intense passion, Hammons' art is decidedly urban. "The energy of New York, it's in the work," he said.

But even in that vast metropolis, he has begun to feel cramped.

"I want my art to go beyond that. I can't afford to stay here, visually."

Since his residency at the American Academy in Rome, Hammons has continued to spend a good deal of time there. Italy seems like a likely choice for him, too since the *arte povera* sculptors who emerged there in the late '60s and early '70s were an influence. Like Hammons, they favored cheap materials and stylish results. He has found them congenial company since taking up residence in Rome.

Away from home

Concerning Italian culture, Hammons has other thoughts too. "Art is mostly on the street in Italy," he said, referring not to art but to women's fashions.

Figuratively and literally, Harlem and Rome are a long way from his birthplace: Springfield, Ill.

"I'm a victim of that place," Hammons said, recalling the oppressive atmosphere of his hometown.

It seems as if he has spent a lifetime proving he wasn't a victim of what he perceives to be the narrow views of small-town America. He journeyed to Los Angeles in the mid-'60s, simply because it seemed a place that would offer opportunities. "The gold rush seemed to be repeating itself there," he said.

Hammons went to Los Angeles Trade Technical College for a couple of years and when he became interested in art, moved on to Chouinard Art Institute and then Otis Art Institute. He also studied privately with one of Los Angeles' pivotal black painters of the post-war era, Charles White.

Hammons left Los Angeles for Manhattan in 1974 — "to run with the big boys," as he once put it.

For him, there was a sense of inevitability about settling in Harlem. It grounded him in a community, even as he kept abreast of the larger New York art scene. Or, as Hammons put it, "I've lived downtown and slept uptown."

He remains an artist with his head in two places, since he plans to spend time in Harlem still. Only this time Hammons' chosen locales are separated by the Atlantic rather than a subway ride.

La Jolla is the last of three venues after New York and Philadelphia. Other museums wanted to host the show but Hammons balked since their offers surfaced only after a flurry of rave reviews in the New York press.

In spite of his general disdain for the art world, he seems to have enjoyed the brief tour of his exhibition. "I enjoy forcing museums to do things," Hammons said, flashing another mischievous smile.

In spite of his general disdain for the art world, he seems to have enjoyed the brief tour of his exhibition. "I enjoy forcing museums to do things," he said, flashing another mischievous smile.

Hammons insisted on having an African-American as part of the installation crew for his exhibition and thus local artist Johnny Coleman is temporarily working at the museum.

There will surely be other requests before the exhibition opens. "I think I may need the museum to order a lot of flowers," Hammons said, offering no further explanation.

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BURRELLE'S

Delaware Art Museum photo

The Delaware Art Museum show includes "La Prostituta y el Solitario," ink and gouache, by Armando Brito of Wilmington.

Contemporary cache

From kitchen kitsch to political pieces, recent artwork fills two museums with delightful range of images

ART

Gary Mullinax

9475

WILMINGTON — If your choices about what art to view in the coming weeks include a big pile of broomsticks, works made of artificial turf and plastic birds, words running up and down a wall, sculptures of body parts and cartoon figures treated as integral parts of a painting, you can bet exhibitions of contemporary art have landed in the area.

In other words, plenty to jolt you, to fascinate you, to thrill you — maybe to make you angry. But definitely plenty to look at.

The Delaware Art Museum is presenting "Biennial '91," an exhibit of 147 works by artists in Delaware and Pennsylvania, Maryland and New Jersey. Philadelphia is the city most represented. The show runs through Dec. 1.

In Philadelphia, the Institute of Contemporary Art at the University of Pennsylvania is offering "Devil on the Stairs: Looking Back at the Eighties" through Jan. 5. It features work by some 50 artists from this country and elsewhere who helped set the tone for that tumultuous decade. The big names are here, from Barbara Kruger and Sherrie Levine to Jeff Koons, David Salle, Sigmar Polke and Elizabeth Murray.

The Philadelphia show is more impressive on the whole. While devoted to a decade now past, much of the work feels more up-to-date than the work here. In a way, both shows have an '80s feel. As critic Lucy Lippard writes in her juror's statement, the work she selected for the Delaware show is not quite "cutting edge." But the show is filled with wonderful things, nonetheless.

"Filled" is the word, too. Works seem to be scattered all over the museum, from the arrangement of tools, kitchen utensils and other common objects in the foyer downstairs to the kitschy, phantasmagoric mixed-media works by Karen Stone in the main lobby to the highly political word-and-photo pieces by Blaise Tobia on the back wall of the last room in the main galleries.

A political note is sounded elsewhere in the Delaware show, too — particularly in several works inspired by the Persian Gulf war. But generally it is a bit less confrontational than the ICA offering, where more works seem designed to afflict the complacent.

The '80s flavor of these shows need not make us feel we're missing the *right now* when we go there. No particular '90s style has emerged yet. We do know the money ran out at the end of the past decade, so don't look for big, self-important paintings like those by Julian Schnabel and Salle, which collectors favored.

And we know an increased interest in political art has been in evidence since the late '80s — particularly from feminists and blacks. We see evidence of this in both shows. Much attention has been paid to the human body in recent years as well, a fact suggested more by the Philadelphia show — including moving word-and-image art about AIDS by David Wojnarowicz.

Installations probably will be big for the next few years. A major show at New York's Museum of Modern Art will feature contemporary installations when it opens this week. Lippard writes approvingly of installations — site-specific works that include a number of pieces and that create a distinct environment — and has chosen several for the Delaware show.

It's easier to get a fix on the '80s. Artists borrowed images — or words — from the mass media and consumer culture to underscore and question their intrusion into our lives or to blur the line between low and high art. In fact, high art was being "deconstructed" everywhere you looked, often by artists who borrowed examples of it for their own work.

Ransacking the past, creating an eternal present where anything goes, was seen as a function of postmodernism. "Post-" and "neo-" were key prefixes. The favored painting style — *gestural*, exuberant, figurative on some level — was neo-expressionism.

Robert Storr, curator of the ICA show, avoids both terms — and many others from the '80s — in the show's catalog and in the exhibit itself. He wants to help us rethink the art of the decade by tossing out the labels and letting us see it grouped thematically.

But his groupings often seem like more labels. A category called "History Lessons" simply addresses the looting of history but tells us less than discussions of postmodernism did.

Some categories are essentially meaningless. "Things II," for instance, includes Koons' luridly colored nude in a bathtub, surprised by a rising snorkel. The work mocks the way consumer culture tries to lure us with such lascivious images; it intrigues, but at the same time feels like a dirty joke. In the same category is Mike Kelley's "Eviscerated Corpse." Long, stringy, tied-together stuffed toys tumble from the innards of a stuffed-toy figure — an unnerving piece that dismantles the sentimental pieties of childhood. "Things II" is an inadequate title for this grouping.

"Disjunctions" includes paintings by Salle, Polke and others who juxtapose diverse images in multipart works, but the label tells us little about the uses of disparate images. We can, of course, see the impact for ourselves. But why bother to establish categories at all if they are

See ART — back page

Philadelphia Museum of Art photo

At the Philadelphia Museum of Art: medical and pharmaceutical posters.

Art: Modern images arrive

BB

FROM PAGE H1

not going to illuminate? It might have served as well to just throw it all out there in a jumble.

That's what happened at the show here, with some exceptions. And it works. Next to Wilmington painter Ken Mabrey's "Check Out" — a cheerful post-punk slice of life in a Reginald Marsh key — you'll find photo documentation of a fascinating installation by Todd Gilens, who has been painting the walls of an abandoned Philadelphia factory.

You pass M.J. Fox's bright, kitschy paintings of women in their underwear — undercutting male definitions of the female form — on the way to Carol Sivin's mysterious masks with weird birds on top of them.

Beyond that is David Foss' "Guns or Pepsi" installation, a powerfully negative commentary both guns and commodities. Next to that is an amusing painting of Delaware beach-goers by Lewes' Barbara Petterson.

Plan to stay awhile. It'll be worth it.

Something completely different

Through Dec. 1, the Philadelphia Museum of Art is presenting a delightful display of medical and pharmaceutical posters, drawings and trading cards from the 18th century to the present.

ÚJ MŰVÉSZET 92/5 május

ÚJ MŰVÉSZET

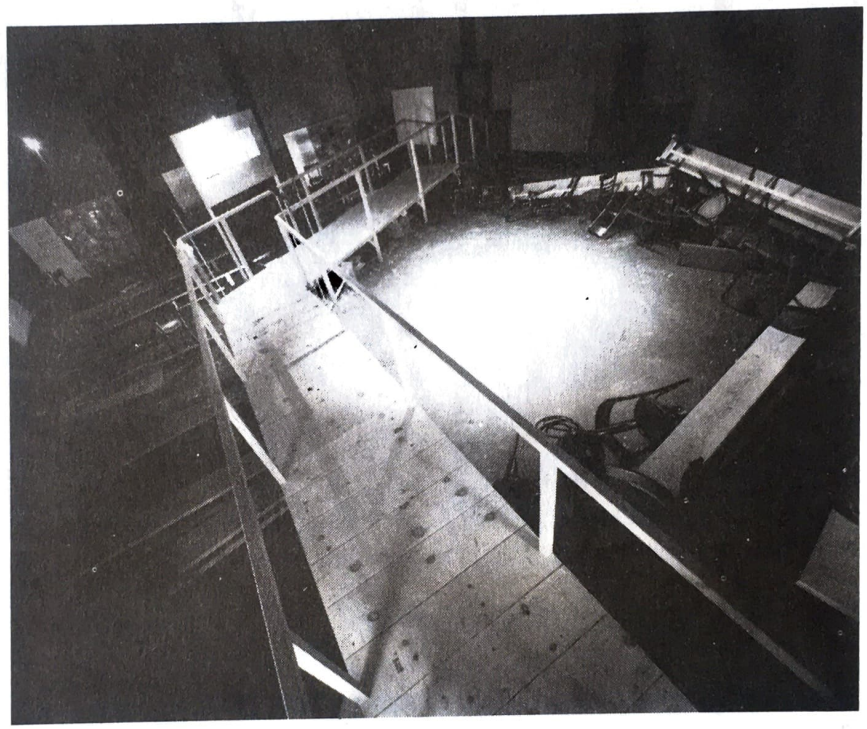
ART TODAY 92/5 MÁJUS

Perneczky Géza: A művészet bővített újratermelése I. ● *Emblematikus törekvések* ● *P. Szabó Ernő: A Fiatal Képzőművészek Stúdiója éves kiállítása* ● *Hann Ferenc: Az I. Győri Nemzetközi Grafikai Biennáléról* ● *Vajang* ● *FIAC – PÁRIZS* ● *András Edit: Törésvonalak a kilencvenes évek Amerikájában* ● *Thomas Strauss: Tót Endre legsajátabb gondolatai* ..... *80 Ft*

TÖRÉSVONALAK

a kilencvenes évek Amerikájában

András Edit



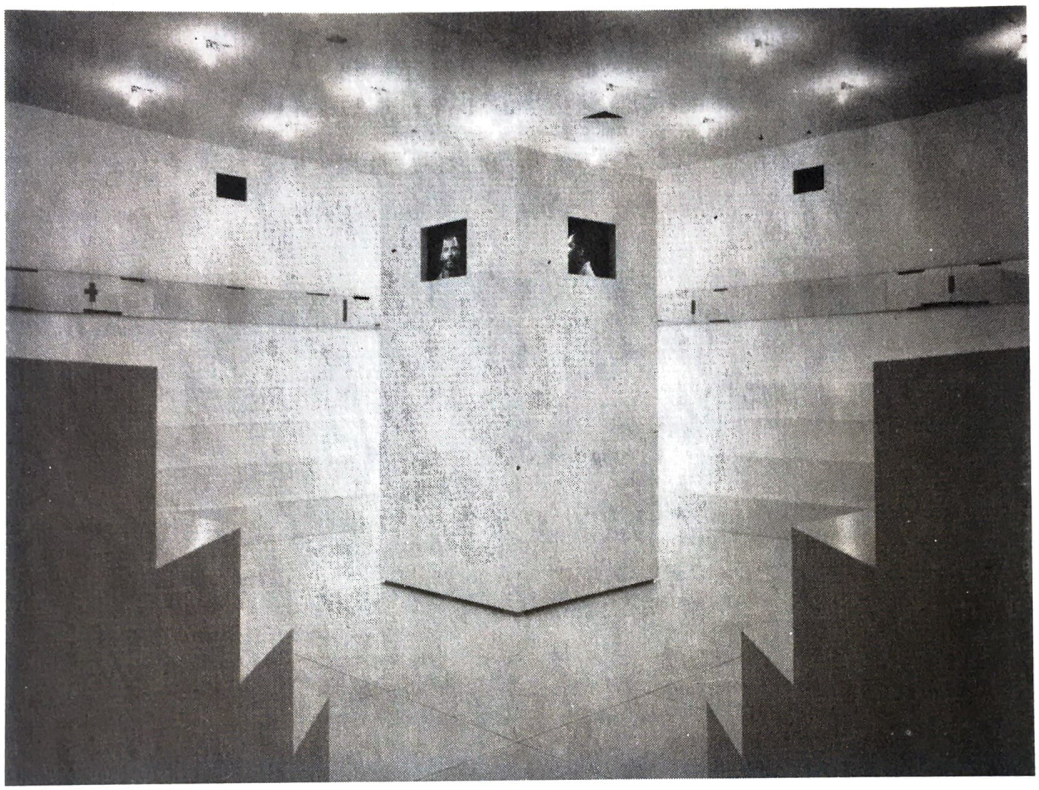
Ilja Kabakov: Híd, 1991, installáció, vegyes technika

Az 1991-es amerikai művészeti biennálén (*Whitney Museum of American Art*) még csak találgatni lehetett, hogy mi motiválta azt a kiállításrendezői elvet, amely a hagyományos értelemben vett magas művészetekhez s a fő, domináns tendenciákhoz sorolható művek döntő többsége mellett a kisebbségi és alternatív tendenciáknak is helyt adott. Újabb kiállítások tükrében úgy tűnik, hogy még a természeténél fogva regisztráló és nem előrejelző kiállítástípus, az összamerikai seregszemle sem tudott kitérni a kihívás elől: a multikulturalizmus akceptálása (illetve amerikai identitásként való elfogadása) elől. Ami jó ideig nem volt egyéb, mint degradáló bélyeg, majd úgy volt számontartva, mint az East Village „charme"-ja, s néhány baloldali, zömében feminista gondolkodó „rögeszmé"-je, mintha lassan kezdene beszivárogni a múzeumok falai közé is.

Az erjedés, a szélsőségek persze a másik jelentős New York-i múzeum, a *The Museum of Modern Art* épületének falain is kívül maradnak, de *Dislocations* című kiállításával (1991. okt.—1992. jan.) ez az intézmény is tanúbizonyságot tesz a kortárs áramlatok iránti fogékonyságáról.

E kiállítás határozottan politikus, amin ez esetben egy intellektuális attitűdöt és nem napi politikai dogmák direkt vizuális megjelenítését kell érteni. Minden egyes, kifejezetten erre az alkalomra készült, egész termet elfoglaló installációja szociális érzékenységet, fogékonyságot mutat, vagy még inkább, arra épül, minthogy ez is olyasmi, ami benne van a levegőben.

A hét meghívott résztvevő között van egy „renegát" fekete művész, *David Hammons*, meg egy másik fekete művész, aki tetejébe nő is, *Adrian Piper*, egy idősödő, tekintélyes feminista nőművész, *Louise Bourgeois*, és még egy nő, egy francia(-amerikai?), *Sophie Calle*, egy fehér, középosztálybeli, tősgyökeres amerikai művész, afféle fenegyerek, *Bruce Nauman*, meg egy másik, hozzá ha-



Adrian Piper: Amilyennek látszik, olyan is, 1991, videoinstalláció, vegyes technika

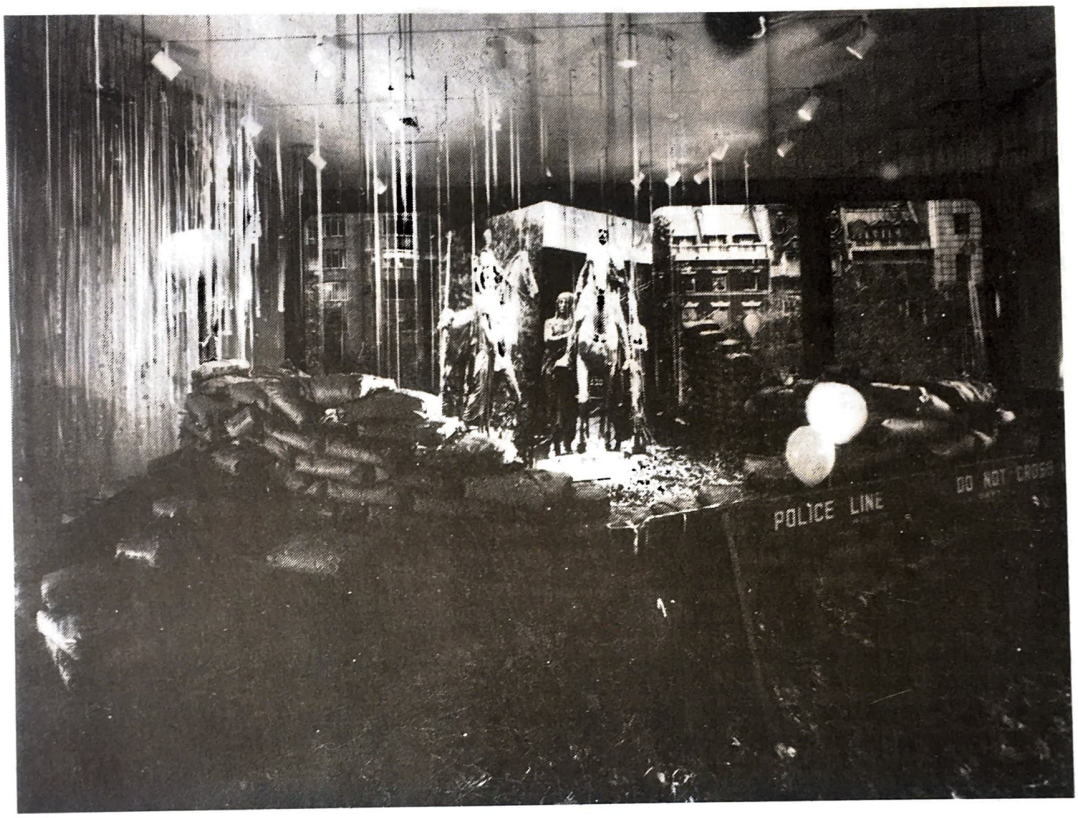
sonló amerikai, *Chris Burden,* s végül egy világpolgárrá lett orosz, *Ilja Kabakov.*

A posztmodern kulcsfogalom, amely köré a kiállítás szerveződött, amelynek körüljárására, értelmezésére *Robert Storr* kurátor kiválasztotta és meghívta a művészeket, sokféleképpen, talán leginkább elmozdulásoknak, kibillenéseknek, törésvonalaknak fordítható. Ennek megfelelően a kiállítás a kétségeknek, a visszásságoknak, az ambivalenciáknak, a stabiltól, a biztostól, a bizonyostól való eltéréseknek ad teret, a látszatok káprázatával, sérülékenységével, az igazságok képlékenységével szembesít.

A ,,normális"-tól, a ,,helyén való"-tól való eltérés, kimozdulás egyik lehetséges módja a léptékváltás.

Bruce Nauman videoinstallációja (*Anthro/Socio*) nagyrészt erre az effektusra épít. Az elsötétített terem három oldalára vetített, óriásira nagyított kopasz férfifej magas fejhangon kántálja, hogy ,,Feed Me/Eat Me, Help Me/Hurt Me". Az időben egymáshoz képest elcsúsztatott, monoton kántálás egyetlen zengő, templomi rituális zenét idéző kórussá olvad össze; kong, visszhangzik a tágas, üres térben. A videoképernyőkkel megsokszorozott, s mindenünnen körülvevő látvány fáziskésésben ismétlődik. Az egész hangos vízió valami nyomasztó rémálomra emlékeztet, melytől szabadulni szeretnénk. Az ,,Etess meg!", ,,Segíts meg!" segélykiáltások aktualizálható realitását Nauman átdimenzionálja az önmagunkra vonatkoztatott erőszak (,,Egyél meg!", ,,Üss meg!") abszurditásával. Az első ellentétpárhoz időnként az ,,antropológia", a másodikhoz a ,,szociológia" megnevezést illeszti, tükröt tartva önmagunkról s közösségünkről való ismereteink elé: hogyan fordul át kiszolgáltatottságunk alávetettséggé, s függőségünk mások hatalmává.

Fordított irányú a léptékváltás *Kabakov Híd* című installációjában. A híd, egy keskeny, megemelt faépítmény, mely egy moszkvai lakógyűlés kiürült helyszínén ível át. Mint a művész kommentárjából kiderül, itt korábban egy nem hivatalos művészről tartottak hivatalos előadást. A művész dolgai — Ilja Kabakov táblaképek — a terem szélére (perifériára) vannak szorítva, leakasztva a falról, illetve falnak fordítva. Valami félbeszakította az eseményt. A nem kellően éber szemlélőnek időbe telik — vagy rászorul a középúton lévő ,,faliújság-szöveg" útmutatásaira —, hogy észrevegye; a szétdobált székek, padok közti soksok apró, fehér ,,szemét" nem egyéb, mint gombostűre ragasztott fehér papírfigurák személytelen emberserege.



David Hammons: Közellenség, 1991, installáció, vegyes technika

E tökéletesen egyforma, hangyányi fantomok „tanulmányozására" külön e célra a hídra szerelt távcsövek állnak rendelkezésre. Sehonnan nem derül ugyan ki, hogy kik a jövevények, az általuk közvetített üzenet mégis — akarva-akaratlan — belesimul a hidegháború óta alig változott sztereotípiák sorába: így látja Nyugat Keletet.

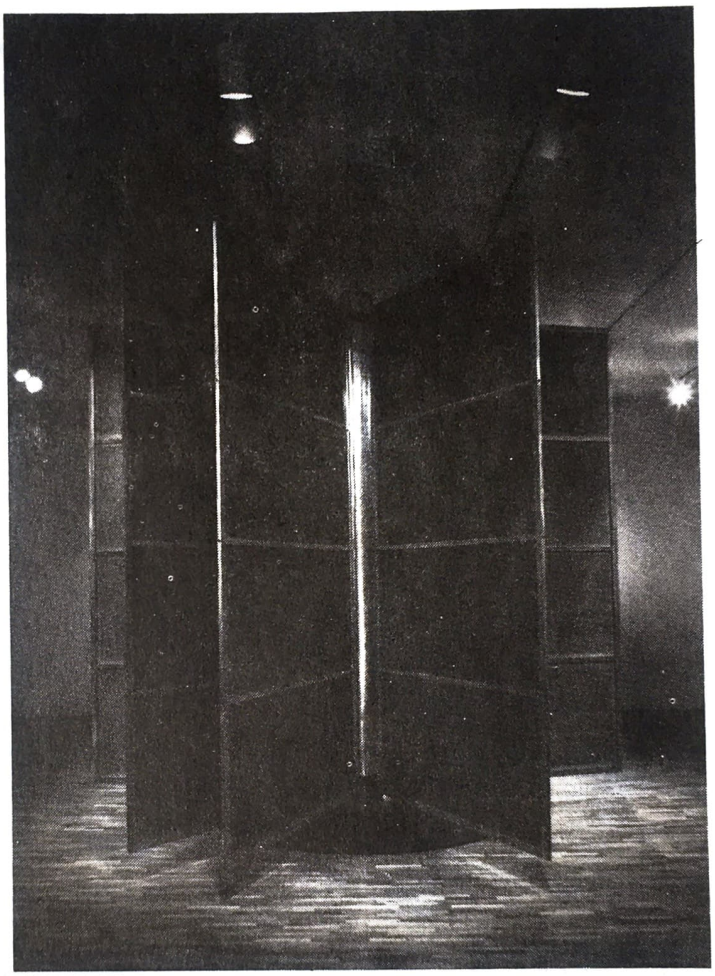
Van egy rossz érzésünk: félő, hogy a korábban illegalitásban dolgozó orosz underground oly üdítő sokszínűsége fogja kárát látni az orosz konceptualizmus, a „szocart" konjunktúrájának, s hogy közben ez utóbbi képviselői is kényszerpályára kerülnek, kiürülnek, vagy anakronisztikussá válnak. Az egykori non-konformistákat ma egy másfajta, de ugyancsak konformizmus veszélye fenyegeti.

Talán *Bourgeois* fogalmazásmódja a legáttételesebb. Műve a léptékváltás mellett a potenciális irányváltás és a kint és bent kategóriáinak értelmezésmódosító rafinériáját is magában hordja. Hatalmas *Pár*ja, sínen mozgó, feketére festett, üreges vasszerkezete két egymásba ízülő, eltérő átmérőjű hengerből, kiszuperált benzintartályból áll, belsejében egy villogó, vörösfényű lámpással. Oldalán többhelyütt — a kimetszett és a belső térbe benyomott idomok szélén támadt rés (ablakok, ajtók?) mentén — bepillanthatunk a fémmonstrum belsejébe, de be nem léphetünk, megmaradunk kívülállónak, a misztérium tehetetlen szemlélőinek. Éppúgy, mint a gyermek, akinek számára befoghatatlannak tűnik az egyszerre vonzó és taszító, meglesett felnőtt/óriás világ. Talán a nézőpont, talán a többszörös nagyítás, talán az ősi színszimbólum teszi, hogy megjelenésében van valami ördögi, valami bestiális, s egyidejűleg valami időtlen harmónia. Holott a tárgy csak egy kitűnően megmunkált, hideg, merev, szenvtelen vasdarab, egy mechanikus szerkezet, melyből pusztán asszociációink teremtenek organikus formát. Mozgó állapotában nyilvánvaló a szexuális utalás, nyugalmi állapotban azonban éppúgy tekinthetjük valami hatalmas, emberkéz alkotta harci eszköznek, vagy — mint a kommentár sugallja — búvóhelynek, melyből csapda válhatik, mint a fallikus, férfi közép- és nézőpontú világkép ledöntött kinetikus emlékművének, méginkább finom iróniájának.

Annak eldöntését, hogy végső soron minden emberi produktum antropomorf-e vagy csak az ember kapaszkodik ezekbe a fogódzókba, a művész ránk bízza, mint ahogy azt is, mennyire tágítjuk ki a művében, okos és szellemes szoborkolosszusában rejlő világértelmezést.

A „normális"-tól való eltérés, kimozdulás másik lehetséges módja a szilárdnak tűnő alapigazságok áttetszővé tétele, a kontúrok, a válaszvonalak foszlékonnyá vékonyítása, átjárhatóvá lyuggatása.

Hammons Közellensége éppúgy megfoghatatlan, éppúgy víziószerű, mint Don Quijote ellenségképe. Mert mi is zajlik itt tulajdonképpen? Az ordenáré zöldre festett, hengerelt falú terem közepén Theodore Roosevelt diadalmas lovasszobra áll; egyik oldalán egy indián, másikon egy néger fogja a kantárszárat. A szoborra dinamit van szerelve, az emlékmű pedig homokzsákbarikáddal van körülvéve, rajta géppisztolyok, ágyúk a szoborra irányítva. Nincs viszont, aki támadjon: a barikád elhagyatott, szinte betemette az őszi lombhullás. A plafonról szerpentinek, léggömbök lógnak alá, az elsárgult falevelekkel konfettik keveredtek. Itt valamit ünnepelnek!? Vége a harcnak? No de ki a győztes és ki a legyőzött? Vagy még el sem kezdődött a harc, csak hangulatkeltés folyik? S ki van a barikád egyik és ki a másik oldalán? De főleg: valóság-e ez egyáltalán vagy csak káprázat? A szobor nem is igazi szobor, csak az eredetinek papírmaséra kasírozott fotóimitációja, az ágyú műanyag játékszer. A lufik viszont igaziak; vicc volt tehát az egész, megkönnyebbülhetünk, akár nevethetünk is. Ha van még kedvünk nevetni.



Chris Burden: Másik vietnami emlékmű, 1991, installáció, acél, vörösréz
(Fotók The Museum of Modern Art, New York)

Hammons és *Piper* szkepszise és heroizmusa azonos gyökerű (Don Quijote-val is), eszközeik, művészi attitűdjük, szellemiségük azonban különbözik. Bár ez utóbbi nem is olyan gyökeresen, mint ahogy első pillanatra tűnik.

Piper terme (*Amilyennek látszik, olyan is*) szinte szó szerint vakító fehér: az éles féntől fizikai fájdalmat érzünk — mint akit a szemébe világított fénnyel vallatnak —, s egy ideig hunyorognunk kell, hogy kitisztuljon látásunk. S mit látunk? Egy „cirkuszi mutatvány"-t, avagy egy modern-kori arénát, melyben a bőrszín alapján „vetnek embereket az oroszlánok elé". Egy feje tetejére állított emléképület, egy masztabasír formájú építmény belsejének hófehér lépcsőjén ülve szemlélhetjük a látványt: a terem közepén magasodó hasáb tetején látható, négy videókészülék által közvetített látvány négy nézetét. Egy fekete férfit, amint folyamatosan ismételve, dühödten tagadja a vele s fajával kapcsolatos sztereotípiákat, előítéleteket; lassan, tagolva, nyomatékot adva minden szónak: „Én nem vagyok lusta! Én nem vagyok ostoba! Én nem vagyok közönséges!" stb. (Maga az építmény, a „gigászi fallosz", a fekete férfiakkal kapcsolatos legelterjedtebb sztereotípia vizuális megidézése.)

Piper nem csitítja el, nem helyezi más összefüggésrendszerbe, ő fel akarja ébreszteni a kollektív lelkiismeretet. Csakhogy a képernyők magasságában, a falon körbefutó tükörben megsokszorozódik a látvány: végeláthatatlanul. Van ennek vége egyáltalán? Installációjának vizuális együttese e költői kérdésre rímel rá leginkább.

Ördög tudja, hogy övön aluli ütésnek számít-e azt latolgatni, hogy vajon *Burden* még az Öböl-háború előtt kezdte-e *Maya Lin* washingtoni *Vietnami emlékművé*nek pandanját, a *Másik vietnami emlékmű*vet, vagy sem. Vagy tekintsük úgy, hogy ez az ő kockázata, ha már ilyen

kényes témát feszeget?! Azt mindenesetre megállapíthatjuk, hogy az aktuálpolitikai témák errefelé is avulékonyak. Mert hol van ma már Vietnam, s a Vietnam okozta trauma, meg az a 3 millió ember — a másik oldalon elesettek —, akiknek nevét (a rekonstruálhatatlanság miatt fiktív nevek) Burden apró betűkkel, akkurátusan rávéste a 12 darab vörösréz lapra, a terem teljes belmagasságát kitöltő óriási „könyv" lapjaira. A dimenziók valóban meglepőek, de szó sincs sokkolásról — ahogy a művész véli. Talán, ha az Öböl-háborúban, a túloldalon elesetteknek, megnyomorítottaknak állít emléket, avagy csak halkan emlékeztet rá, hogy ott is emberek élnek... No de az egykori polgárpukkasztó éppen csak a tűrőképesség határáig megy el; dehogy is feszegeti azokat. Ezt a művet a történelem dimenzionálta át; ha van törésvonal, az ebből fakad.

Calle légies, tünékeny, tüneményes (mindkét értelmében a szónak). *Szelleme*, mint afféle szellem, van is meg nincs is. De biztosan nem az, aminek látszik. Vagy ez nem is olyan biztos?

Az épület II. emeletén ki van írva, hogy itt folytatódik az ideiglenes kiállítás, de csak ennyi, nincs semmi további támpont. Akármerre is indul az ember, minduntalan az állandó kiállítás anyagába ütközik. Ha nem adja fel egykönnyen, persze rátalál az incselkedő, csúfondáros, játékos kedvű *Szellem*ekre, egyre rögtön a második teremben, *Seurat*-éra; pontosabban Seurat azon képének „szellem"-ére, amely rendesen azon a helyen szokott lógni. Most csak a *Calle* által készített „lenyomat" van ott a falra festve, az „eredeti"-vel azonos méretben. A pingált keretben humorral tűzdelt, fecserésző, s pici illusztrációkkal, skiccekkel tarkított szöveget olvashatunk a képről: tíz felkért múzeumi dolgozó emlékeit, „interpretáció"-ját tíz kiválasztott képről, azt, ahogy bennük él a kép. S végül is melyik az igazi? Van olyan, hogy igazi egyáltalán?

Mert például maguk az installációk sem „igazi" képzőművészeti alkotások, sokkal inkább, mondjuk: színháziak. Ha véget ér a produkció, szét kell szedni a kulisszákat, s már csak emlékezetünkben, illetve imitációjában (reprodukciójában) fog élni a kiállítás. Ez a kurátor „elmozdulás"-a, mint ahogy az az alapul szolgáló attitűd is, amely a műalkotást flexibilisnek, az interpretáció irányában nyitottnak tételezi.

A „kurátori koncepció" posztmodern intézményében egyébiránt benne rejlik a vajúdó, érlelődő új törekvések stimulálása, katalizálása, életre hivatása is. A jelenlegi nem ez az eset. Ez a kiállítás regisztrál, rögzít egy érvényes, jelenvaló állapotot — köszönhetően kurátora jól működő „intellektuális radar"-ának —; inkább tudomásul vesz, befogad egy meglévő művészeti folyamatot, mintsem elindít egy újat. De rögvest tegyük hozzá: csepet sem érdektelen ebben a minőségében sem. □

A művészet bővített újratermelése

(folytatás a 11. oldalról)

san elismert tőkeértéket kaphassanak, s így nemcsak „drágák", de *védettek* is legyenek. Erről a kérdésről később még bővebben akarok szólni.

A kettéhasadás másik oldalán az új-avantgárd produktumai állanak. Ezek sem buktak meg, sőt bizonyos csoportok, például a New York-i iskola vagy Európában *Joseph Beuys* műveinek az értéke tovább növekedett. Általában azonban az figyelhető meg, hogy az árak megálltak s a forgalom visszaesett. Sok galéria — komoly nagy cégek is — visszavonultak a kereskedelmi tevékenységtől. Több jelentős üzletember államhivatalt vagy múzeumi állást vállalt. A hetvenes években ismételten megerősödő olajválság és a nyugati országok devizatartalékainak a kimerülése a művészeti produkció és a művészetről szóló irodalom visszaeséséhez vezettek. A legtöbb vezető galéria örült, ha a magasra tornászott árakat tartani tudta, és a már engageált (szerződtetett) művészekből álló „istállóját" nem kellett leépíteni — ha ezeket a művészeket foglalkoztatni tudta. A hatvanas években különben is annyi művész futott fel s kapott nemzetközi rangot, mint a század első felében és az egész tizenkilencedik században összevéve. A művészeti élet egy, Tokiótól San Franciscón át New Yorkig, Párizsig és Düsseldorfig, valamint Milánóig húzódó roppant megalopolisszá alakult át, amelyben a közlekedés a csekkek és a yet-setek segítségével gyorsabban és hatásosabban bonyolódik le, mint egykor Párizsban, az impresszionisták idején a Szajna két partja között.

A raktár azonban olyan nagy, hogy a jelenlegi, mérsékelt növekedés igényeit több évtizedre is képes ellátni. Mi legyen a fiatal művészekkel, akik nem olvasnak közgazdasági híreket, hanem „alkotnak", s néha meglepő dolgokat? Ezek egyszerűen a hihetetlenül szolid, a pénzzel és intézményekkel körülvett piac kapui előtt állnak. Megostromolni a beérkezettek várait nem lehet. Az egyedi művész esélyei rosszabbak, mint a tizes évek elején az akkor még fiatal avantgárdistáké volt. Azóta ugyanis az avantgárd föllépés, az újjal való „fenyegetődzés" közhellyé vált s roppant infláción esett keresztül. Nem felháborodás vagy elkeseredett védekezés a reakció — hanem közöny. Ez a közöny gyilkol, tehetségtelenné tesz. A várak nemcsak hogy bevehetetlenül erősek, hanem a *falaik gumiból vannak. Kifelé és befelé egyaránt.*

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* * *

Assi: Art by Kay Larson: The Human Condition.

"What a week for theater. In the window of the IB Gallery--IBM Gallery on Madison and 56th Street, Tibetan monks rasp metal tubes against each other to guide thin strains of colored sand into the filigree complexities of the Kalachakra sand mandala. The room fills with a ratchety hum. At the Museum of Modern Art on 53rd Street, a radio projection of Bruce Nauman broadcasts the image of a bald man singing in a strange antiphonal harmony of--at a decibel level that rivals the subway. 'Feed me,' he bellows. 'Help me.' I live in New York for days like this when it all comes together--the risks, the surprises, the rewards.

"The Nauman piece is in 'Dislocations,' an exhibition of seven installations spread out through three levels of MOMA. A warning: It won't be an easy experience. Some of this work is going to push the idle and unwilling over the edge. At the same time, 'Dislocations' is the most riveting contemporary show I can remember at the moment. Taken one at a time, each piece holds its own, but together they vibrate in a synchronicity that is more remarkable because nobody planned it that way. The artists were simply invited by MOMA's curator, Robert Storr, to do something--do something. They responded--sponded by flash-freezing the human condition at this instant.

"Nauman, for example: To get to Anthro/Socio, you descend the escalator into what is basically a basement. While you sink into Hades, the bizarre song rises up to meet you. The mystery is confronted in the dark empty room where stacks of video monitors broadcast--on three walls like a modern mandala--the bald head of Rinde Eckert, a performance artist and classically trained singer. In six separate tape loops, like a musical round, he sings variations on 'Feed me,' 'Eat me,' 'Anthropology,' and 'Help me,' 'Hurt me,' 'Sociology.'

"The song beats in a physical tide against your ears and brains. Need and pain hammer at the walls and clamor for attention. The primal mind cries out

its desires in barely tolerable tonalities. There is no one--there is no one explanation for this extraordinary intensity. Rinde Eckert is the screaming multitudes of the earth and the body politic. He's the infantile archetypal child and the insatiable adult. He's an irritating--he's as irritating as the homeless who rattle their paper cups in your face, pleading in the surging Dies Irae. The pressure to leave is irresistible but if you fight it, you begin to hear an undertone of the malishifous--mellifluous and seductive, of monks joining the voices in Gregorian chorus--human pain assauged through self-recognition. After a while, though, you just have to get out.

"But escape leads you into another room still within earshot of Rinde Eckert's abrasive song. You walk on Soviet artist Ilya Kabakov's low bridge over the aftermath of some cataclysmic event. In the center, an earth-red floor is scattered with tiny white human figures. Binoculars are trained on them from the catwalks. At one level, this brilliant, many-layered insulation is the creation myth about tiny humans that play in the fields of the gods. More urgently, it's a metaphor of the Russian revolution which swept aside art philosophy and law and froze all pol--politics at the moment of upheaval , instituting perpetual surveillance of its citizens. Those obnoxious binoculars actually make it harder to view the people. But try telling that to the Soviet state. Even more urgently, this is a superb parable of the miseries that governments inflict on the--on the humanity wailing next door. When citizens cry out, governments send in the police.

"Off the bridge, through a door and you confront the human paradox in its third aspect. Louis Bourgeois' 'Twosome' consists of two dramatic room-filling black tubes--former gasoline tanks--nested one inside the other. Flashing red lights and grinding its motor, the inside tube rolls in and out of its larger counterpart. This rumbling byplay elicits all possible associations with the big In-Out: excretion, ingestion--what babies do. Sex and power--what men and women do. The great motor/engine/machine that drives us to couple and to live together and the Freudian phantoms that attend it. Bourgeois has added windows and a door in the configuration of her parents' house."

And that is, unfortunately, where we have to stop.

THE NEW YORK POST
25 October 1991

OFF THE WALL AT MOMA

EYE ON ART

JERRY TALLMER

EVERYBODY who has ever been in the Museum of Modern Art knows Edward Hopper's "House by the Railroad," and so do a great many other people — thousands going on millions — who've never been in MOMA in their lives.

For the next 2½ months, if you come to the place on the wall of the second floor of MOMA where "House by the Railroad" should be, it won't be. Instead there's one of those little cards that says: "Temporarily Removed, on loan to Geneva/Musee Rath, by order of [illegible scrawl]." Right next to this little card is a big white panel covered over with a running text interrupted at various points by 10 postage-stamp-size doodle-sketches of Hopper's masterpiece.

I can only give a bit of the remarkable text. I'd like to give it all.

"It's a hell of a painting," the wallboard begins. (Well, it's not a board, it's applied right on the wall.) "The whole picture is this big house, with white columns, a black ornate roof, and an orange chimney. It reminds me of being on the road and finding things monotonous. Same houses, same gas stations, same McDonald's ... The first time I saw it, it made me think of 'The Twilight Zone' ... What you have is this haunted Victorian mansion emerging out of nowhere, looming above the rails. You wonder how that house got there ...

"It's a very famous oil on canvas, identified with this Museum, since it was the first painting donated to it in 1930. It's painted in that definitive Hopper style, not drawn or laid out, just generated by the paint ...

"The house reminds me of 'Psycho.' It terrifies me ... The sadness is part of the title. It's an empty house by the railroad waiting for people to come home. But the train just passes by, there's no need to stop."

The train just passes by, and you walk on through the second-floor permanent collection and come to another "Temporarily Removed" card and another such enormously evocative wall panel, this one for Magritte's "The Menaced Assassin," and another, De Chirico's "The Enigma of the Day," and another, a Modigliani "Reclining Nude," and another, Seurat's "Evening in Honfleur."

Five panels, five ghosts, and in fact what you have been looking at, rather in the spirit of a deja-vu parlor game of poetic depth and memories and resonance, is an installation called "Ghosts," by a young Frenchwoman with huge eyes and open ears and her name is Sophie Calle.

She is one of seven participants in the big "*DIS*-locations" show that ranges through three floors of the museum, the first major exhibit organized on these premises by MOMA's new curator of painting and sculpture, the 41-year-old Robert Storr, who asks: "What happens when one steps outside one's usual environment only to find that one cannot go back, or that once back, nothing seems the same? How does one deal with a world out of joint?"

Supplying answers, each in their own way, are Louise Bourgeois, Chris Burden, David Hammons, Ilya Kabakov, Bruce Nauman, Adrian Piper.

When Rob Storr asked Sophie Calle that question — asked her to take part in this show — she asked

Peter Moore/Courtesy Museum of Modern Art

POETIC DEPTH: *Sophie Calle at work on "Ghosts" at MOMA.*

a question of her own: Which of the museum's paintings would be on out on loan in the period in question, replaced by one of those little cards the French call a *fantome* — a ghost?

"They sent me back a list of 15. I chose among them the most interesting five. So then I've been asking people, the people who work here in the museum, cleaning people, guards, curators, the people who repair, you know? — not visitors, but people here 20 years, who don't look anymore — I ask them what are *their* memories. And these things I write down, and I ask them to make a little sketch of the missing work. I talked to about 15 or 20 people, with a very wide range, and then worked and reworked what they had said. Editing work.

"No," she said, "I am not a painter. What am I? I am an artiste, dealing with text and image, no?"

Yes.

MOMA, 11 W. 53rd St., (212) 708-9400, through Jan. 7.

AUFBAU
New York
22 November 1991

"Dislocation" ist der Titel der Ausstellung, in der Louise Bourgeois, Chris Burden, Sophie Calle, David Hammons, Ilya Kabakov, Bruce Nauman und Adrian Piper repräsentiert sind. Hier werden in je einem Raum des Museums riesige Installationen gezeigt — darunter 'objets trouvés', ein Boden voller Gartenlaub, Luftballons und anderes. Die Grundidee: Obwohl völlig verschieden in ihrer künstlerischen Auffassung, sind alle der hier repräsentierten Künstler bemüht, den Betrachter mit ungewohnten Situationen zu konfrontieren, die das bisher angenommene Denken sowie feststehende Beobachtungen von Grund auf erschüttern — und verändern sollen. — Museum of Modern Art (MoMA), 11 West 53 Street. *Bis 7. Januar.*

The Art of the Topical

David Hammons's mordant installations and haunting sculptural objects have long been known within the black art community. Several recent exhibitions, bringing his art to a wider audience, reveal a body of work that combines the communal and the personal, the political and the poetic.

BY NANCY PRINCENTHAL

Installation view showing (foreground) a re-creation of one of David Hammons's untitled 1981 works (human hair, rubber bands, popcorn, eggs and wire); at P.S. 1, 1990. On right-hand wall, a Flight Fantasy *(records and hair plaster) from 1980 has been placed over a refabrication of* Lady with Bones, *1983 (shopping bags, grease, rib bones). Photo Dawoud Bey.*

"I can't stand art actually. I've never, ever liked art, ever," said David Hammons in a 1986 interview. "Then how come you do it if you can't stand it?" he was asked. "I was born into it," Hammons replied. "One day I said, 'Well, I'm getting too old to run away from this gift,' so I decided to go on and deal with it."[1] Given the depth of Hammons's skepticism about the art world's primary institutions and audiences, the pull that art continues to exert on him must be powerful. Born in Springfield, Illinois, in 1943, he studied in Los Angeles during the '60s, at the Otis Art Institute and the Chouinard Art Institute. Charles White, a black WPA veteran still dedicated to art of social protest, was an early mentor. Many of Hammons's early works were topical: a number of them used the American flag, and one was inspired by the trial of the Chicago Eight. From the beginning, found objects and performance also entered in.

From the beginning, too, Hammons made art mostly for—and in—his own community. When he moved to New York in the mid-'70s, he showed at the now defunct Just Above Midtown gallery, a nonprofit space dedicated primarily to minority artists; he exhibited his "Greasy Bags and Barbeque Bones" series there in 1975. By 1980 he was thinking more in terms of installations than objects, as was evident in his show that year at P.S. 1, where he used human hair as a wallpaper material. In the same year he also carried out his first public commission, *Flight Fantasies*, four assemblages in overhead bays at the Atlanta international airport.

But Hammons kept his sights on the black community rather than the art market. After his arrival in New York, the works he produced became increasingly fugitive. Throughout the '80s, he carried out guerrilla-style street "performances" with informal documentation, if any. He patrolled Harlem carrying sculpture fragments and welcoming comment, and he installed *Higher Goals*, a basketball-hoop work, on 125th Street in 1983. Further downtown, he sold rubber doll shoes by the (linear) foot and offered customers snowballs in graduated sizes spread out in a sidewalk display. Nothing explicitly signaled the presence of art or an artist.

Recent opportunities have placed Hammons in a very different relationship to the public. A 1989 installation at Exit Art [see *A.i.A.*, Sept. '89] attracted considerable attention, and in the same year he won the

Above, installation view of "Rousing the Rubble" at P.S. 1, 1990. Photo Dawoud Bey. Left,* High Falutin', *1985–90, crystal candelabra, window frame, glass, wire, rubber, metal, 130 by 58 inches.

Rome prize. He is currently featured in the Carnegie International and in "Dislocations," a show of installations organized by Robert Storr at MOMA [to be covered in a forthcoming issue], and he will take part in the 1992 Documenta. Earlier this year, an article in the *New York Times* described Hammons's new success after "years of obscurity," and then quoted Tom Finkelpearl, organizer of Hammons's currently touring retrospective: "Obscurity, yes, but only by the standards of the mainstream New York art scene. David has been famous for years among black artists, collectors and curators and the people of Harlem."[2]

Last winter, for his first solo show at a commercial gallery in 20 years, Hammons played it cool. Initially he proposed filling the main room at Jack Tilton with urinals (he has employed such objects in outdoor installations) or elephant dung (a material he has used in his sculptural objects). He ultimately settled on an installation in which three large flags were suspended like blades over washtubs filled with big blocks of ice. The flags were South Korean, Yemeni and American—the last, however, rendered in the black-liberation colors of black, red and green. At the time of the show, a confrontation was raging in Brooklyn between Korean shopkeepers and black customers amid reciprocal accusations of shoplifting and price gouging; there was also resentment, in black communities throughout the city, against Arabic shopkeepers. Hammons's reference to the situation was oblique, and getting the point of the work required a fair amount of prior knowledge. The piece, *Who's Ice Is Colder?*, was thus acutely ephemeral: its subject was topical, its form perishable, its meaning deliberately elusive.

In the gallery's anteroom was one of Hammons's trademark basketball-hoop sculptures. *High Falutin'*, at once mordant and haunting, was assembled from a bowed window frame, three crystal candelabras, electric candles with flame-shaped bulbs and a simple green metal rim. This piece served, in effect, as a prelude to a second Hammons show at Tilton, which opened when the first closed, and also to his full-career survey, "Rousing the Rubble," that opened at the same time at P.S. 1. The latter show commenced with a glorious array of Hammons's improvised hoops: there were hoops that doubled as halos, a net made from a truncated garbage can, skeins of strung-together bottle caps. But the hoops are also meant to strike a note of skepticism (which the artist has made explicit in interviews) in their suggestion that for the black

View of **Who's Ice Is Colder,** *1990, flags, oil cans, ice; installed at the Jack Tilton Gallery. Photo Ellen Wilson.*

Elephant Dung Sculptures with Gold Leaf, *1978, elephant dung, paint, gold leaf, each approximately 6 inches high.*

Hammons's references to basketball, music and food all play on associations that are common to widely held racial stereotypes—as well as being sources of black pride.

Bird, *1973, saxophone, mannequin hands, spade, 34½ by 11 inches. Collection the artist.*

community, basketball offers a false promise of transcendence—physical, spiritual or otherwise. At P.S. 1, the several backboards made of window panes called up an implicit sound track of shattering glass.

The materials that Hammons likes best to work with, though, have a far closer relationship to the body. The earliest works in the P.S. 1 survey were barbecued "Body Prints" from the late '60s, which Hammons made by pressing his greased face and hands against paper and dusting the imprint with powdered pigments. He repeatedly uses food remnants of the kinds associated with black and Southern cooking—fried chicken, barbecued ribs. *Flying Carpet* (1990) is a Turkish-style rug repatterned with semi-gnawed chicken wings and legs. Another work uses hair along with splayed segments of greasy brown bags and pork ribs, licked clean, to conjure up the image of a decorous woman. Empty bottles, often for cheap wine, are assembled in multitudes—each bottle, Hammons has said in interviews, bearing the memory of a black person's lips. Even more intimate are the sculptures made of human hair. Working with barbershop sweepings, Hammons has caused hair to seem to sprout on stones or grow like balls of cotton on slender wire stems. In work not included in the P.S. 1 survey, he has woven hair through metal screens to make a series of "quilts."

Food and hair also, of course, speak volumes about personal and social identity. Hammons's awareness of cliché as a point of intersection between self-affirmation and prejudice is crucial to his work. His references to basketball and to black music—as in assemblages using record fragments—as well as to food and hair, all play on associations that are common to widely held racial stereotypes as well as being sources of black pride. In the same vein, Hammons uses the opening receptions for his exhibitions as occasions for impromptu jazz concerts cum basketball games: on opening day at P.S. 1, the Jemeel Moodoc and Jusgrew Orchestra performed during a lively invitational game.

An installation that Hammons made for the exhibition featured full-throttle recorded gospel music and tiny glow-in-the-dark crucifixes suspended overhead like stars. Amid such spectacles, a mostly white audience (the kind presumed at P.S. 1 and the other stops on the survey's tour) is liable to feel a little out of its depth—entertained, fascinated and maybe slightly abashed. "White viewers have to look at someone else's culture in those pieces and see very little of themselves," Hammons has said of these works.[3] The experience is an inversion of the one encountered by many black viewers of mainstream culture.

Hammons jokes about his new stature. "I'm 48 now," he says, "I can handle success."[4] And Tom Finkelpearl says, with regard to the artist's traveling exhibition, "He wasn't worried so much about being appropriated by the white art world as by revealing too much about his work. He doesn't want to lay all his cards on the table."[5] But the new context will surely pose new challenges. Some of his most "public" sculpture to date has also been his most overtly political—for example the eloquent *Free Nelson Mandela* (1987) in Atlanta's Piedmont Park, a profile fashioned from a wrought-iron gate, barbed wire and a fortuitously shaped boulder; the controversial, wall-size sign painting of Jesse Jackson with blond hair and a white face, *How Ya Like Me Now?* (1988), temporarily installed in Washington, D.C. [see *A.i.A.*, "Front Page," Feb. '90]; and the recent MOMA and Carnegie installations. All Hammons's work, in fact, probes social relations. Like Barbara Kruger, he names a reprobate *you*: a *you* that stigmatizes and oppresses. And getting the message doesn't necessarily exonerate the viewer.

If Hammons doesn't mind making us squirm, he is also a remarkably generous artist. Unlike Kruger, he never harangues, even ironically. He shares unstintingly the "gift" he has chosen to accept, which is formidable and manifold. It involves a clairvoyant recognition of the expressive life latent in the simplest materials. But more impressively, perhaps, it also involves a breadth of spirit that amounts to an act of faith—in his materials, in his subjects and in his growing audience. □

1. Kellie Jones, interview with David Hammons, *Real Life*, no.16, Autumn 1986, p. 2.
2. Quoted in Patrick Pacheco, "Art Gets Serious with a New Set of Stars," *New York Times*, Mar. 3, 1991, section 2, p. 25.
3. Kellie Jones, interview with David Hammons, op. cit., p. 6.
4. Patrick Pacheco, "Art Gets Serious with a New Set of Stars," op. cit.
5. Conversation with the author, April 1991.

David Hammons's work was on view in two successive shows at Jack Tilton gallery, New York, Oct. 30-Dec. 1, 1990, and Dec. 4-Dec. 27. His exhibition "Rousing the Rubble" appeared at P.S. 1, Dec. 16, 1990-Feb. 10, 1991. It traveled to the Institute of Contemporary Art, Philadelphia, Mar.15-Apr. 28, and to the San Diego Museum of Contemporary Art, Aug. 17-Nov. 10. A catalogue featuring essays by Kellie Jones, Tom Finkelpearl and Steve Cannon accompanies the exhibition.

Author: *Nancy Princenthal is a free-lance critic who lives in New York.*

Free Nelson Mandela, ***1987, wrought-iron gate, barbed wire and boulder, approximately 11 feet high; installed in Piedmont Park, Atlanta, Georgia.***

SAN FRANCISCO CHRONICLE
8 December 1991

NYMOMA's 'Dislocations' Sets Its Ties, Distance From High Modernism

BY KENNETH BAKER
CHRONICLE ART CRITIC

New York

"DISLOCATIONS" at the Museum of Modern Art (through January 7) is being talked about as if it were a turning point for NYMOMA.

Organized by Robert Storr, curator in the Department of Painting and Sculpture, it is a show of seven installation works of the sort that previously might have been expected to appear at the Whitney Museum or at the New Museum of Contemporary Art.

"Dislocations" is really no more unconventional than some things seen in MOMA's ongoing "Projects" series, devoted to new work by contemporary artists. Yet, perhaps because it is scattered over three floors of the museum, this show is taken to portend a shift away from taste and historical logic as compasses for the progress of curatorial activity at MOMA, though what might replace these critical instruments is still unclear.

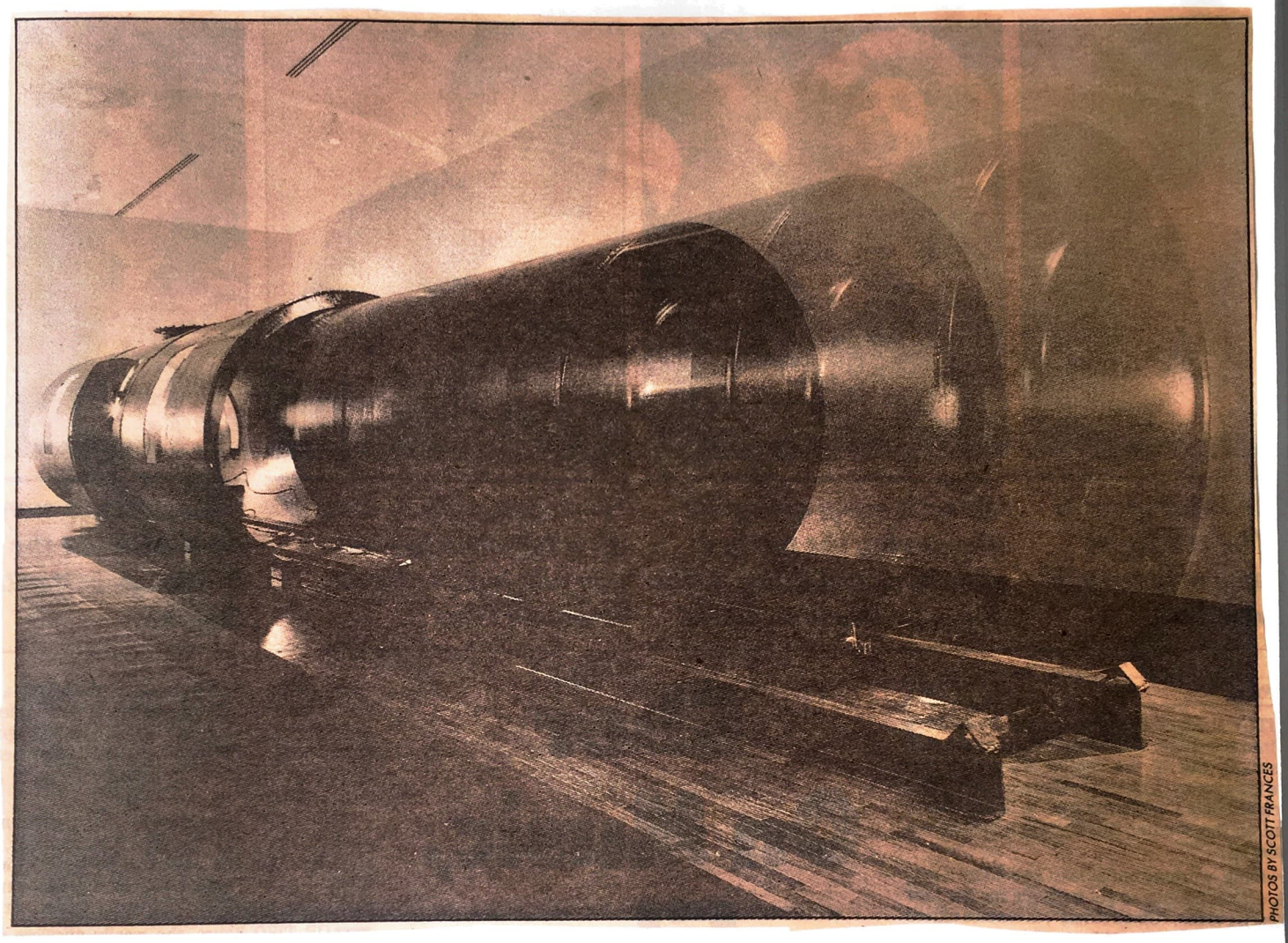
With what it is able to put on view in its permanent collection galleries at any given time, MOMA can present a more persuasive, comprehensive account of 20th century art than any other museum in the world. For perhaps 30 years after its founding in 1929, MOMA acted as advocate of modernism before a hostile or skeptical public.

Since the 1960s and the unanticipated growth of a mass audience for art, MOMA's role has shifted to preserver of the elite values of modernism against revision by younger generations of artists more attuned to popular culture, social issues and media notoriety.

At least that was the case until William Rubin retired as chief curator of painting and sculpture and was succeeded by Kirk Varnedoe.

Varnedoe's major 1990-91 exhibition "High and Low," drawing heavily on MOMA's own collection, redescribed the course of 20th century art. It has been, according to "High and Low," an ongoing dialectic of rarefied and vulgar sensibilities, rather than a lineage of styles reinterpreting the founding innovations of Fauvism, Cubism, Dada and Surrealism. This revision may not sound radical, but it gives a credence to Pop art consistent with Pop's powerful influence on artists working today, which the old MOMA line did not.

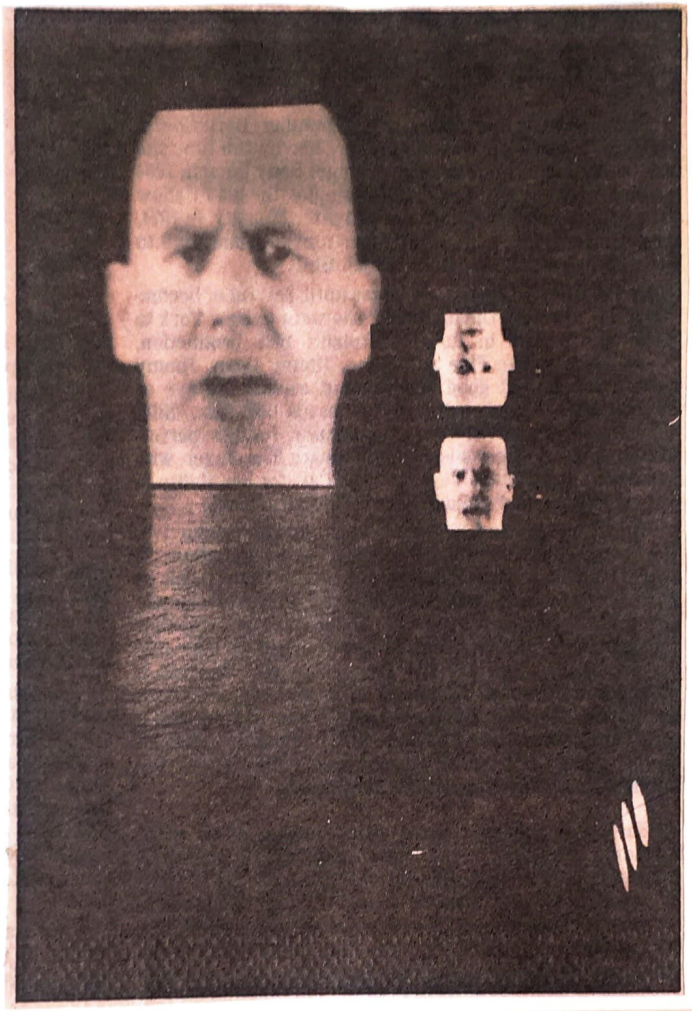
Storr is Varnedoe's appointee, though his career as critic and painter leaves no one in doubt that he is his own man. For "Dislocations," Storr has chosen seven artists — Louise Bourgeois, Chris Burden, Sophie Calle, David Hammons, Ilya Kabakov, Bruce Nauman and Adrian Piper — who work in very different and often unpredictable ways.



PHOTOS BY SCOTT FRANCES

A portion of the New York Museum of Modern Art's 'Dislocations' exhibition: Louise Bourgeois' 'Twosome' (steel and motor), left, and Bruce Nauman's 'Anthro /Socio' (video), below

SAN FRANCISCO CHRONICLE
Page 3



'DISLOCATIONS'

His introduction to the show continues, along a different path, the kind of dialectical argument behind "High and Low." "Dislocations," he explains, presents expressions in contemporary art of an ever-present "counterforce" to the modernist ideal of the artwork as perfected experience, as a moment of historical consciousness cleansed of dread.

"Inasmuch as the modernist notion of logical purity was conceived of in tension with a modern sense of confusion and unease," he writes, "then the aesthetic ambition to stir misgivings or instill acute alienation corresponds to the longing for quiet, or constitutes a form of resistance to oppressive stasis and regulation. Successfully contradicting the essentialist view of modernity entails finding . . . the most direct and effective devices for evoking a world out of joint."

To me, the striking assumption here is that an art institution has more to tell about "a world out of joint" — or a better chance of putting it across — than, say, the evening news or the experience of everyday urban life. That the world is in trouble seems to be the premise or conclusion of every conversation I overhear in public nowadays. Perhaps the only solace that MOMA has to offer today is its canonizing of so many artworks that accept the 20th century as an age of shattering forces and conflicts. If it really strikes anyone as challenging that institutional function from within, which I doubt, then "Dislocations" is liable to evoke a museum, rather than a world, out of joint.

The show is not without interest or impact, though.

Calle's piece is the quietest, but may be the most telling, just by dint of occupying the second floor galleries reserved for the permanent collection of painting and sculpture. She has been permitted to grasp the levers of the museum's history-making machinery, even if not to reposition them by much.

Her piece, titled "Ghosts," is in five parts that can be located only by roving through the galleries. (One thing to be said for her piece is that it gets people looking at the permanent collection.) Calle has arranged to work in the empty

SAN FRANCISCO CHRONICLE
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wall spaces left by works that have been temporarily removed, either at her request or because they are out on loan.

In each case, the missing picture — a Georges Seurat, a Giorgio De Chirico, a Rene Magritte, an Edward Hopper and an Amedeo Modigliani — is replaced by text stenciled on the wall. The text consists of memories of the pictures recounted to Calle by museum staff (who are not identified).The recollections in each case are punctuated by tiny sketches of the absent picture.

It is touching and depressing to see just how vague, literal-minded and indifferent many of her respondents' memories are. One or two people accurately recall details of Magritte's "The Menaced Assassin," for instance, but no one knows what to make of it. (It is a vision of a murderer's anxiety: We see the murderer turned away from his victim, trying to act nonchalant while, out of his view, armed men, who are figments of his guilty imagination, are lined up to seize him the moment he leaves the room.)

Calle's piece suggests just how tenuous is people's grasp of any historical positioning of artworks that a museum attempts, never mind the "essentialist" "logical purity" of modernism.

Her point is evidently to show the degree to which people accept paintings as significant (or resentfully refuse to) just because they are museum mainstays. The most dismissive responses she records appear to be the most genuine: "It's just one more picture where the woman is naked and the men are clothed," someone says of the Magritte. Of the Seurat, another remarks, "My biggest nightmare would be to be stuck in that picture for a weekend that never ends."

After you see — or read — "Ghosts," it is not easy to take the rest of "Dislocations" seriously as redressing MOMA's overemphasis on the stasis of form and in interpretation in classic modernist objects. Still, the installations by Nauman and Bourgeois are exciting to see. (Kabakov's "The Bridge" is puzzling without being intriguing.)

In darkened rooms on the first floor, Nauman has positioned monitors and giant video wall projections, fed by a sequence of video discs. Each image is a close-up of the face of shaven-headed performance artist Rinde Eckert. On some of the discs, Eckert chants loudly "Feed me/ eat me/ help me / hurt me." On others, he alternates "Feed me/ eat me/ anthropology" with "Help me/ hurt me/ sociology."

Eckert's talking head (which appears upside down half the time), is a Mr. Hyde to the Dr. Je-

SAN FRANCISCO CHRONICLE
Page 5

kyll of every coiffed, composed network news anchor. His chants are a kind of nursery rhyme amplification of the pleading, bullying and imaginary intimacy that are the essence of so much media matter.

Also on the first floor Bourgeois, one of the most unpredictable artists around, has a big kinetic sculpture called "Twosome" that manages to be a crude physical joke, a bundle of metaphors and a powerful spectacle.

The piece is a long steel cylinder, painted black on the outside

'Dislocations' is really no more unconventional than things in MOMA's 'Projects' series

and red inside, with a red beacon flashing deep within it. Red light pulses from perforations in the tank's wall as another, slightly smaller black cylinder rumblingly glides into it and out again along a steel track.

The pieces on the third floor are more topical and less effective. Hammons stages a theatrical assault on the racism of an old Manhattan public sculpture that glorifies Teddy Roosevelt.

Burden has made "The Other Vietnam Memorial," a huge display of copper placards inscribed with 3 million Vietnamese names, representing the Vietnamese casualties of the war in Indochina. (The names are merely representative, he says, because so few records exist of the victims' real names.)

And Piper has made a sort of Minimalist amphitheater, an all-white room with bleacherlike steps up each wall. Taking a seat, you face a white pedestal at the center of the room, with a video monitor in each side of it. On-screen a black man speaks slowly, turning one way, then another, as if in a police lineup, declaring, "I'm not lazy, I'm not noisy, I'm not vulgar, I'm not rowdy, I'm not horny," and so on. The piece aligns the idealism (that is, the exclusions) implicit in geometric form with the distortions of racist stereotype.

"Dislocations" shows us artists taking over some theatrical prerogatives and devices of the museum itself. The activist impulses behind Hammons', Burden's and Piper's works are understandable, even sympathetic, but the "art" of these pieces is just a rubric under which they earn access to the museum as an apparatus of public address.

The really memorable things here are those that have more ambiguity than message. (Even Kabakov's elaborate, dimly lit room, though I find it unengaging, lingers in the mind like an incomprehensible, half-remembered dream.) It is on the axis of skillfully handled ambiguities that the convincing pieces in "Dislocations" — Nauman's, Calle's and Bourgeois' — connect with and set their distance from the "museum art" of high modernism. ■

C
Toronto
Winter 1992

Dislocations

Museum of Modern Art, New York

Robert Storr's curatorial project at the Museum of Modern Art opened the museum to the less than permanent world of contemporary art with new works by seven artists – Louise Bourgeois, Chris Burden, Sophie Calle, David Hammons, Ilya Kabakov, Bruce Nauman and Adrian Piper. All of the works had the sense of fleeing temporality and social commentary that is an inextricable part of installation art. It is a sensibility that contrasts with the authorial and revered historicity that is part of the museum aura. This contrast was emphasized by interspersing the works throughout the hallowed permanent collection on three floors of the museum.

All of the works in the exhibition dealt directly with social issues. Chris Burden's *The Other Vietnam Memorial* is the flip side of Maya Lin's Washington monument dedicated to American troops. Burden has engraved four thousand Vietnamese names onto large bronze sheets that are joined concentrically and displayed like the spokes of a wheel. These names, though not the names of actual dead, are meant to remind one of those three million Vietnamese casualties that Americans, in their solemn recording of their own 57,939 dead, all too often forget.

David Hammon's rambling and chaotic installation, *Public Enemy*, is like an urban street scene in which some great revealer of truth has laid bare the mendacity of social relations. The work is both surrealist and expressionist in its sources: the room was filled with trash, party streamers, street barricades and blown-up images of political repressors. Good times, bad times, all blown up in your face. Both Adrian Piper and Ilya Kabakov, a Russian artist, showed works that also illustrated the extremes of political ill-will; Piper with a video installation of a black man recanting racist stereotypes, and Kabakov with a dramatic

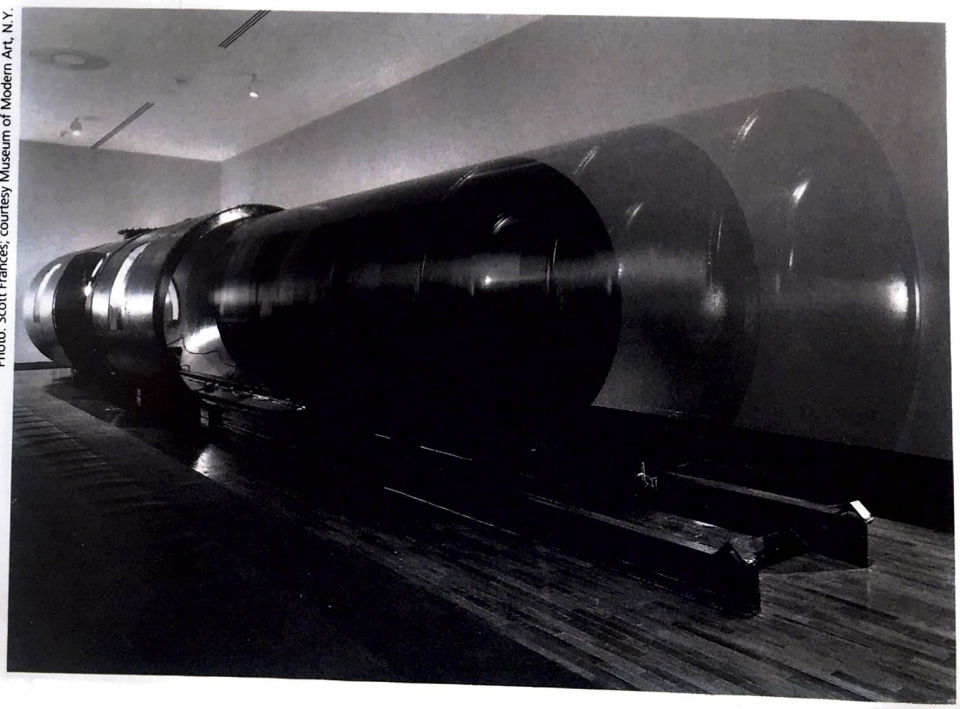


Photo: Scott Frances; courtesy Museum of Modern Art, N.Y.

Louise Bourgeois
Twosome
(1991)
Steel and motor

reconstruction of the debacle at the Tenant's Club of Moscow Housing Project No. 8: an exhibition of avant-garde art scheduled to show there was perfunctorily cancelled by the authorities at the last minute.

Bruce Nauman's *Anthro-Socio* created an amazingly claustrophobic environment in the very large room that housed it. On large screens projected onto the wall and in the monitors distributed throughout the room, a bald, rubber-faced man screamed the words, "Feed me, eat me, help me, hurt me." Infant-like both in appearance and the intensity of his desires, the man screamed at the viewer from all directions from different starting points in the chorus of demands, like some children's musical round gone mad. Freud should have seen this one.

Louise Bourgeois and Sophie Calle had the most intriguing and successful pieces in the exhibition. Bourgeois made an enormous and hilarious coupling device titled *Twosome*. Taking very large and ominous black gas tanks, she mechanically attached them so that the smaller "female" one repeatedly delved into the larger "male" one. Inside the moving tank were red lights, looking warm and inviting but also bringing to mind the flashing red lights of emergency vehicles. It was a world – a house-like haven hidden inside the blank exterior, but only occasionally glimpsed when the tank mechanically pulled away; it was never completely accessible to one's physical self and provoked both desire and fear. Bourgeois, who has been autobiographically documenting her sexual traumas for decades, continues to achieve strength and complexity of meaning in her sculptures. Like her other work, this piece was invested with overlapping, sometimes compatible, sometimes contradictory meanings from domestic life, sexual intimacy/combat, symbolic identification of the unreachable other and personal identity as a woman.

French artist Sophie Calle addresses the layered and ephemeral connections that we have with other people, and how it is that we come to share an experience. In her installation for this exhibition, she wrote words directly on the wall in the empty spaces where paintings had hung. These words were a composite of the descriptions given to her by various museum staff members when asked what they remembered of the temporarily removed painting. Calle calls these quietly muttered recollections *Ghosts*, after the French expression for the label used to describe where a temporarily removed painting has gone (*phantômes*). It is an apt expression for a kind of Greek chorus reminiscence of the visual/psychic associations that a specific piece of art has. Calle's work gives visual potency to the mnemonic act.

Dena Shottenkirk

Sophie Calle
Ghosts
(1991)
Paint, silkscreen, photographs

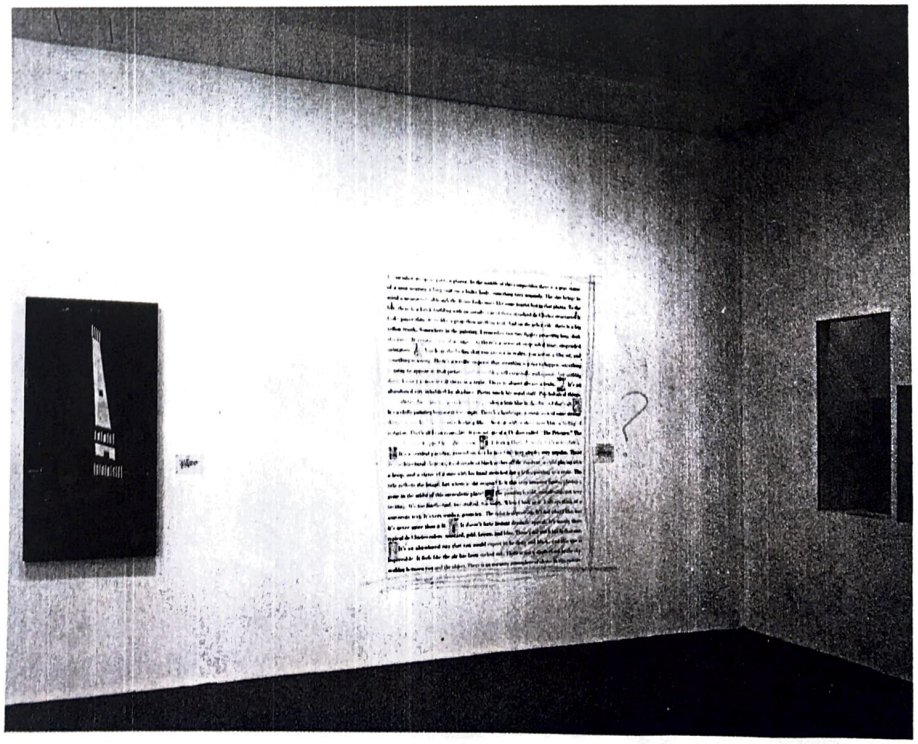


Photo: Peter Moore, courtesy Museum of Modern Art, N.Y.

SCULPTURE
Washington D.C.
March/April 1992

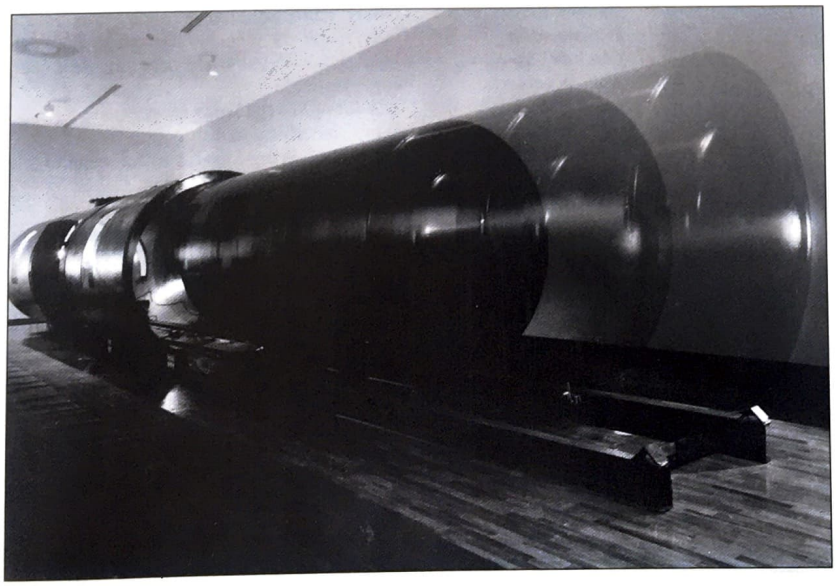
"Dislocations"
Museum of Modern Art, New York

"Dislocations" was Robert Storr's first major exhibition as curator in the department of painting and sculpture at the Museum of Modern Art (MoMA). Representing a range of ages, backgrounds, styles and agendas, the artists—Louise Bourgeois, Chris Burden, Sophie Calle, David Hammons, Bruce Nauman, Ilya Kabakov and Adrian Piper—each designed an installation for this impressive show. Located not in one contiguous space but on three floors of the museum, the exhibition was intended to trigger a variety of artistic, social and psychological "dislocations."

The show's three most engaging pieces shared adjoining darkened spaces on the museum's lower level. For Nauman's *Anthro/Socio* (1991), bald performance artist Rinde Eckert appeared on three pairs of monitors and three projectors in a dim, cavernous gallery. Eckert's obsessive voice repeated in rounds, "anthropology feed me/eat me" and "sociology help me/hurt me," a solo choir conjuring the realms of nightmare, fear, pathology.

Escaping the barrage of "sound bites," one crossed a narrow walkway equipped with several pairs of binoculars for Ilya Kabakov's *The Bridge* (1991). Through the binoculars viewers could keep guard over the horde of minuscule white figures, scattered on the floor below, who seemed to represent an absurdist, imaginary threat to order. It was as if these Lilliputians might disrupt a critique of bourgeois tendencies in art, such as those suggested by the paintings propped against shabby, dark walls in this reconstruction of Kabakov's *Tenant's Club of Moscow's Housing Project No. 8* (1991).

Also in the darkened lower galleries was Louise Bourgeois's *Twosome* (1991), featuring a pair of large black oil tanks. One of the tanks had windows and a door through which red light glowed. The two tanks slid on tracks, one into the other, richly resonant of sexuality and childhood hideaways.



A trio of works with social agendas was clustered in MoMA's upper galleries. Strongest of these was *The Other Vietnam Memorial* (1991), Chris Burden's response to Maya Lin's Vietnam Veterans Memorial listing the more than 58,000 American dead. From a steel pole *The Other Vietnam Memorial* radiated movable copper sheets etched with three million names, an estimate of Vietnamese military personnel and civilians killed during the years of U.S. combat.

David Hammons reconstructed, through life-sized photographic views, an equestrian statue of Teddy Roosevelt, flanked by an Indian and an African-American. Despite the surrounding trappings of a parade, *Public Enemy* (1991) suggested a war zone where the adventurer-turned-president was the target.

In Adrian Piper's *What It's Like, What It Is No. 3* (1991) bright white bleachers surrounded a white column inset with video monitors. The monitors displayed the head of a black man who repeated, "I'm not sneaky. I'm not lazy. I'm not noisy. I'm not vulgar. I'm not crazy," etc. A response? A statement? A performance? Piper's and Hammons's pieces seemed too self-evident, too thin in their commentary, while Burden's work pointedly continued a dialogue about war.

Visitors had to scout second-floor galleries of MoMA's permanent collection to find Calle's *Ghosts* (1991). On walls that were empty because works had been removed for repair or loan, the artist asked staff members to recall their memories of the works and to record these in a sentence or two and a tiny drawing. In stark contrast to the political trio above and the more psychological one below, Calle's project focused on the shifts in viewers' perceptions and memories of art.

In the end, perhaps the "dislocations" theme worked best in simple ways, forcing the viewer to move around the museum's spaces, looking at seven new works not ordinarily seen in this treasure house of classical modernism. As far as questioning assumptions, genuinely disorienting the viewer in profound ways, one would have to say that "Dislocations" didn't reach quite that far. But if Storr's exhibition does mark a beginning, an opening up of an aged and established institution, then that is dislocation enough. —*Regina Cornwell*

THE WALL STREET JOURNAL
New York
31 December 1991

Armchair Activism at MOMA

By JACK FLAM

New York

For many years the Museum of Modern Art has been seen as a bastion of high modernism, reluctant to give due attention to the more rough-and-tumble forms of contemporary expression, such as installation and performance art. So "Dislocations," Robert Storr's first major show since his recent appointment as curator of painting and sculpture, may seem more radical than it really is.

If you saw a show like this at the New Museum of Contemporary Art, for example, it would seem unexceptional, even a bit old-fashioned. But many people, and I mean people of experience in the art of their time, have taken "Dislocations" as evidence of a new wind blowing through MOMA. Some have regarded it as a fresh breeze while others see it as just so much hot air.

The Gallery

"Dislocations"

Which is it? A fair response, I think, would distinguish more gas than zephyr on West 53rd Street. On the one hand, Mr. Storr should be given credit for trying to extend the range of art that MOMA gives serious attention to. But the art in "Dislocations," which will be on view until Jan. 7, is such a sorry lot of stuff that it is hard to work up much sympathy, let alone enthusiasm, for it.

All of the works in "Dislocations" were commissioned especially for this show, and that may be a large part of the problem, since all of the seven artists represented have produced much better work than what they show here. In fact, although Mr. Storr describes the purpose of the exhibition in terms of profound philosophical questions, such as "Where are we?" and "How does one deal with a world out of joint?" the works in the show are not new and deep products of serious pondering, but actually quite predictable—what one would have expected from these artists long before Mr. Storr posed his questions—both in their formal predictability and in their unoriginally "correct" political activism.

Bruce Nauman's installation features large video images of a man with a shaved head screaming "Feed Me, Eat Me, Anthropology" and "Help Me, Hurt Me, Sociology." Or at least that's what we're told he's saying, since the words themselves are hard to make out, and what mostly comes across is a sense of untrammeled rage. Ilya Kabakov's large dark room full of broken chairs and other assorted junk is supposed to evoke the Tenant's Club of Moscow Housing Project No. 8 and be taken as a defense of unofficial art within a totalitarian system. In fact, although it is elaborately interpreted in the newspaper-like brochure that accompanies the exhibition, like so much of the other work shown here it ends up looking a bit like an archaeological remnant of some other, previous avant-garde.

As a way of encouraging us to probe our imaginations and question the world around us—especially the normally static world of MOMA's permanent galleries—the exhibition is spread throughout the museum, so you wend your way through the second-floor galleries in order to find Sophie Calle's amusing but slight installations, called "ghosts," in which paintings such as de Chirico's "The Enigma of a Day" have been replaced by wall texts. These texts are descriptions of the missing work written by members of the museum staff, then edited and arranged by the enterprising Ms. Calle.

The most overtly activist art is on the third floor, where we are greeted by David Hammons's large installation, "Public Enemy," which features a photographic replica of the statue of Teddy Roosevelt that stands in front of the American Museum of Natural History.

In this statue, the soldier-statesman-scientist is on horseback, flanked by an American Indian and an African, who are on foot. Mr. Hammons has surrounded his image with sandbags, toy cannons, machine guns and other war materiel, so as to suggest a military emplacement. It is a flat joke on a grand scale.

Actually, if you want your T.R. served up as an imperialist blowhard, you'd do better to read Gore Vidal's hilarious essay on the subject, almost any sentence of which has more wit and bite than Mr. Hammons's entire installation. Unless, of course, I am missing the point and this piece is to be read allegorically—as the embattled curator on his high horse, leading the disenfranchised against the entrenched minions of the art establishment.

Chris Burden's "The Other Vietnam Memorial" is an ungainly construction of large copper plates engraved with the names of the Vietnamese people killed during the war. According to the artist, it is supposed to help right the wrong of our celebrating our own war dead, whom he describes as "the aggressors basically." The "Hey, look, I'm more self-righteous than you could even imagine" attitude behind this solipsistic piece of bad taste boggles the mind.

But it prepares you for Adrian Piper's "What It's Like, What It Is, No. 3." Here we walk into a big white cube of a room that offers us bleacher seating from which we can watch a performance on four TV screens in the center. All of these show us a black man repeatedly denying nasty racist cliches: "I'm not scary, I'm not servile, I'm not stupid, I'm not dirty," and so forth.

Works like these are hard to criticize, because when you do so it seems that you are criticizing their implicit good intentions. But a well-intentioned theme is no guarantee of good art, as can be witnessed in the innumerable high-minded aesthetic disasters of 19th-century academic art, or in the abysmal quality of so much contemporary religious imagery.

Most of the works in "Dislocations" offer little of interest to look at. Here one might counter that visual meaning per se doesn't have to be the primary purpose of the visual arts—that works of art should be judged not by what they offer us to look at, but rather by what they offer us to think about. And here, the works in this show are in even bigger trouble. For in their recycling of an already tired formal vocabulary to accommodate the current vogue for self-righteous political cliches, they become so enmeshed in banality that they actually undermine the significance of the issues they address.

It seems to me that art like this is largely a cop-out that trivializes political activism as well as art. You leave this show feeling that you have not been encouraged to see or think about the world in a more profound or even a slightly different way. On those grounds, the works fail as art. Moreover, you also leave with a sense of real irritation at the narcissistic self-absorption that underlies its armchair activism. In fact, if you actually care about any of the issues that are addressed here, you can't help feeling that the time, effort and money spent putting this show together could have been better spent on dealing with those issues in a more direct way.

"Do something," this show seems to demand. To which one wants to repeat, to artists and curator alike, W.H. Auden's lines about how "poetry makes nothing happen . . . it survives, A way of happening, a mouth." And to remind them that if poetry is not enough, they have the option of rising from their armchairs and really doing something about what they think is wrong with the world.

NEW YORK NEWSDAY
29 December 1991

New Voices

This was the year that art-for-art's sake (or at least for the sake of the artist's ego and pocketbook) went the way of the '80s. As the artmarket crashed, and it got harder and harder to sell the bluechip best of Jasper Johns and Roy Lichtenstein — not to mention anything at all by '80s artstars — museums, galleries and critics suddenly, it seemed, started to notice artists of different colors or different persuasions who had been all but invisible during the big-spending years.

David Hammons, who makes wicked poetry of the debris of the Harlem Streets, was rewarded for two decades of prolific oblivion with museum shows, gallery sell-outs and a MacArthur Foundation "genius" grant. Artists who dealt with subjects as explosive as racism or AIDS had no trouble showing. And to cap it all, the Museum of Modern Art welcomed all these disparate voices into its hallowed halls with its "*Dis*locations" exhibition of work by Hammons, Louise Bourgeois, Adrian Piper, Ilya Kabakov.

— Amei Wallach

THE VILLAGE VOICE
New York
17 December 1991

'*DIS*LOCATIONS': Video installations by Adrian Piper and Bruce Nauman have their aesthetic strategies rooted in '60s minimalism and their politics in '90s actualities. Both pieces are single-minded, spatially paradoxical, and overwhelming as sight and sound. Nauman, with three video projectors and three pairs of monitors, turns his cavernous space into a cross between cathedral and madhouse. The focus of Piper's gleaming white room is a tall box housing four monitors that show a close-up of a black man who denies the stereotypes we might harbor about him: "I'm not lazy, I'm not stupid, I'm not . . ." Through January 7, Museum of Modern Art, 11 West 53rd Street, 708-9400. (Taubin)

ART

NEW YORK NEWSDAY
21 July 1991

THE BOOK OF THE DEAD

New York is getting an atypically long view of Chris Burden this year. In October, he'll be represented in the Museum of Modern Art's "Dislocations" exhibition by a work he calls the most political he's ever made — a massive book, with large metal pages engraved with the names of Vietnamese who died during the Vietnam War. They will be representative rather than actual names of those killed, since there aren't sufficient records, and the pages will be attached to a spiral so they can be turned, though that may not be possible in a museum. The book echoes the Vietnam Memorial, which made it possible for this nation to mourn our own dead. These are the dead we killed in that war. The timing obviously has a great deal to do with a war more recently fought. "I'm not sure what people's reactions are going to be," says Burden. "Right now we're supposed to feel good about being a military might. A lot of people might take that as unnecessary criticism, or whatever." It is far too soon to talk about those we killed in the Iraqi war. "That's too hot a potato to talk about right now," he says. "I don't want to be lynched. It's too topical, too." — Wallach

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DATE October 18, 1991 ACCOUNT NUMBER 54/9475
TIME 10:00 AM-12:00 Noon
NETWORK In Touch Networks
PROGRAM The New York Times Weekend Section

Harriet Krantz reporting:

And now the Weekend Section from The New York Times for Friday, October 18th. Your readers are . . .

Roselyn Schear reporting:

Roselyn Shear.

Krantz: . . . and Harriet Krantz.

Schear: At the Modern, Works Unafraid to Ignore Beauty, by Roberta Smith.

"For those who still see art and the art museum as a respite from the pressures and problems of everyday life, 'Dislocations,' the Museum of Modern Art's latest foray into the contemporary, is going to be hard to take--at least at first.

"This exhibition, which is the first one organized by Robert Storr, the museum's new curator of painting and sculpture, is devoted to challenging, discomforting installation pieces created especially for the show.

"The seven artists Mr. Storr has selected represents a consciously varied mix of sex, race, generation and viewpoint but are all well-known excavators of the substrata of late 20th century life--the Americans Chris Burden, Louise Bourgeois, David Hammons, Bruce Nauman and Adrian Piper, the French artist Sophie Calle and the Russian Ilya Kabakov.

"The exhibition formed by their efforts is at once moving and infuriating, one-sided in its es--esthetic approach but encompassing in the issues it tackles.

"The museum has been usual--unusually generous in giving itself over to this often difficult art, allowing the artists free reign in the lower gallery, on the third floor and even in the hallowed permanent collection itself. This show reflects an increased sensitivity to contemporary art and a heartening desire to respond to its special needs, although it is, in fact, not unprecedented at the museum. It should be remembered that its 1970 'Spaces' exhibition presented installations by five artists and one artist's collaborative in specially designed galleries.

"Like 'Spaces,' 'Dislocations' celebrates the determination to move beyond the portable art object, supposedly making art more real and engaging, closer to life itself. In keeping with the fashions of the moment, which favor clear-cut preferably political subjects, the show comes at you from all sides,

often with the tribulations of war, colonialism, racial prejudice, childhood pain, memory and simple human existence utmost on its mind.

"The show's flaws stem from the fact these efforts sometimes have a streamlined simplified quality, as if all wrinkles had been ironed out for the museum's large public. Mr. Nauman's video installations are better when they also include his sculptures. Mr. Hammons's efforts are more visceral when they emphasize discarded or psychologically charged materials, from bottle caps to human hair. In addition, there is often a sense the message and the medium are out of sync in these pieces, that the concept has been emphasized at the expense of form with results that can be earnest and preachy, or don't seem inevitable. It's not clear, for example, why the three million names in Mr. Burden's piece, 'The Other Vietnam War Memorial' had to be etched on copper. The impact of their great numbers would have been much the same had they been printed on paper covering the walls.

"Adding to the earnestness is a consistent and rather puritanical disdain for simple visual pleasure as an important experience in itself and a vehicle for understanding the world. At certain points, the exhibition, which opens on Sunday, swings between extremes of art as funhouse and art as tutorial. This bent on making each viewer a better citizen or a more self-aware person. It can convey the rather creepy feeling that art is now going to spend the '90s doing penance for the '80s. But with time the show becomes engrossing--especially in the ways the individual works play off one another--even though a steady diet of this kind of art would leave one extremely undernourished.

"In the museum's downstairs galleries, one can be harangued by Mr. Nauman's 'Anthro/Socio,' in which a bald white man seen in enormous video projections half shouts and half sings in relentless repetition 'Feed me. Help me. Beat me. Hurt me.' A hellish onslaught of sound under it suggests a Gregorian chant by way of Mad Max. It can send one running from the room or force an inner confrontation with one's own conflictive desires to be independent but also protected.

"The barren assault of the Nauman piece is juxtaposed with the silent, abandoned stage set that is Mr. Kabakov's 'Bridge'--another of the scenes for which this conceptualist is well known and the most purely magical work in the show. This installation recreates a Moscow meeting hall in disarray, weaving an elaborate narrative about a display of unofficial Russin--Russian art interrupted by the arrival of a horde of tiny white figures. With the art and benches pushed chaotically against the walls, these nearly infinitesimal beings drift across the room's center like migrants across the steps or workers across Red Square. From a wooden bridge that traverses the room, visitors can watch their progress through binoculars, experiencing fact and fiction, real space and the imaginary kind in a single childlike instant.

"Childhood takes hold in a more nightmarish way in Ms. Bourgeois's 'Twosome,' a monster machine made of two oil tanks whose added doors and windows suggest a playhouse for children but whose incessant coupling evokes something more parental as well as a dangerous trap.

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RADIO CLIPS

"Upstairs, the contrast between the theatrical and the austere continues. Like Mr. Nauman, Mr. Burden offers brutal simplicity. His installation, 'The Other Vietnam War Memorial,' pays homage to the Vietnamese who died during the United States involvement in Southeast Asia with a giant copper-carved carousel. Its twelve big copper leaves are engraved front and back with three million names--far more than the fifty-eight thousand names on the Vietnam Veterans Memorial in Washington.

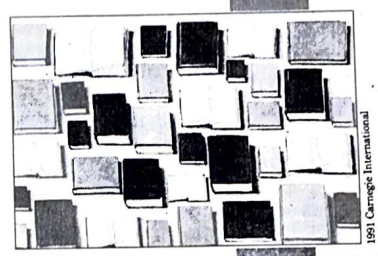
"Next door is Mr. Hammons' densely theatrical concoction 'Public Enemy,' a humorous diatribe against politics, great white warriors past and present and the inquisitive nature of museum all rolled into one. At its center is a nearly life-sized photographic recreation of the equestrian statue of Theodore Roosevelt that guards the entrance of the American Museum of Natural History on Central Park West while Indian and African companions cling to his stirrups."

The Next Wave Makes a Pitt Stop

BY AMEI WALLACH
STAFF WRITER

Courtesy Robert Miller Gallery / 1991 Carnegie International

Louise Bourgeois' 'Cell V,' paint, wood and metal, 92 inches by 72 inches by 72 inches



1991 Carnegie International

Lisa Milroy's 'Books,' 1990, oil on canvas, 76 inches by 112 inches

1991 Carnegie International

Photograph by Boris Michailov from the series 'Lurike, 1975-76'

PITTSBURGH

THERE'S ONLY one city in America where aficionados from around the world can go for a preview of the next wave in international painting and sculpture the way they regularly voyage to Venice, Italy, for the Biennale and Kassel, Germany, for Documenta.

That city is not New York, and it is not Los Angeles. It's Pittsburgh, where on the day the Pirates lost the pennant, the 51st Carnegie International opened with work by 43 artists from Tokyo to Moscow, from Detroit to Madrid.

Instead of a clear trend this time, there's a kind of double message that mirrors pretty well some of the dilemmas art itself is facing. The split is between work that's down-and-dirty gutsy, that clothes personal demons and social traumas in telling metaphor; and work that's cold and conceptual, minimizing the effects of the outside world.

That part's OK. But the bad news is that the artist who was awarded the coveted Carnegie Prize this year is the trendy and tepid Japanese artist On Kawara, who straddles both camps — boringly. His "Today" series consists of plaques, each hand-painted with a significant date from the last quarter-century. The execution is cool, but the connotations are hot. Not only is this sort of numbering strategy as old as the '60s when On Kawara started it, but he renders it crude and obvious. He doesn't even trust us to supply our own memories and indignation; instead he actually supplies newspaper front pages in various languages to remind us about the dates surrounding Desert Storm.

The prize has always been political, depending on the international composition of the panel that chooses the work and the prizewinner. But Rebecca Horn clearly deserved to win three years ago, even if it *was* the year of the Germans, and she happens to be German. Ditto for the German painter Anselm Kiefer and the American sculptor Richard Serra, who shared the prize the time before that.

So maybe it is the turn of the Japanese this year. For too long our xenophobic take on Japanese contemporary art has been that it consists of American re-runs. Shows like this have tended to exclude Japanese artists altogether. This year, the Carnegie has three. And the panel included the powerful Japanese curator and critic Fumio Nanjo, as well as Kasper Konig, of Frankfurt, and David Ross, director of the Whitney Museum in New York, and Carnegie International staff curators Mark Francis and Lynne Cooke. My pick would have been that priestess mof angst, the 84-year-old New Yorker Louise Bourgeois or the 58-year-old spinner of tales, Ilya Kabakov — if either Russia or New York has the clout these days.

Even if it is the year of Japan, however, a far better choice would have been Tatsuo Miyajima, or even Hiroshi Sugimoto. Sugimoto has divided his work between IBM headquarters in Tokyo and the Carnegie Museum of Art in Pittsburgh. Fifty seascapes he has been photographing over the past 11 years are hung outdoors on concrete walls or, protected in plastic frames, under man-

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CONTINUED

THE NEXT WAVE AT PITTSBURGH

made waterfalls. Eventually, they will fade in the sun, and so they raise questions about reality vs. image, and also the place of memory.

Tatsuo Miyajima has succeeded at the far more difficult task of transforming numbers into terror and poetry. His "Over the Border" consists of numbers in digital lights, moving inexorably around a darkened room at baseboard level. Green numbers advance on two sides of a room; red on the other sides. They are interrupted by a wall — a border. The implication is that instead of time, and the numbers running out, something magical might happen if the two sides (nations, belief systems, ancient enemies, religions) could ever join up.

Miyajima's lights are installed a good 15 minutes from the museum in a marvelous, innovative art space called the Mattress Factory. Taking its cue from European arts festivals, this year's International has spread itself around town, and this is its most successful venue outside the museum.

One of the delights of this International is that it regards venerable artists as alive and kicking — and full of better ideas than their juniors. So also on view at the Mattress Factory is a new work by John Cage. He's taken over the building's sun-splashed top floor, placed chairs — from Arts & Crafts to Bauhaus in design — here and there, plus art by several artists, including him. The position of art and chairs are changed every day according to his beloved rules of chance, which opens our eyes to both art and space.

Down in the basement of the Mattress Factory, the French artist Christian Boltanski continues his exploration into portrait-by-memorabilia by stacking gray archival boxes row upon row, floor to ceiling, each with a label bearing the name of an artist — most of whom are long forgotten — and a date. It's spoiling a little of the pleasure to note that the date represents the date when that artist exhibited in a Carnegie International. The guessing without that information is delicious. Those with the chutzpah to open a box will find that a few of them contain something pertinent.

Equally evocative is Ohio artist Ann Hamilton's installation down the street, in an abandoned house. Enter and you smell beeswax, note some melted on the floor, and hear birds. On the second floor the melted wax drips heavily from a table, the rafters are burned, and you see the first live canary. The canaries inhabit the top floor, along with a vitrine filled with wax casts of Victorian heads. Canaries, of course, were used in the coal mines to detect gases; here they detect loss, death, nostalgia and haunting spirits.

The most successful installations in this Carnegie International tell sad tales — including installations by five of the artists who are currently on view in the "*Dis*locations" exhibition at the Museum of Modern Art in New York.

David Hammons' Pittsburgh piece — which is not his best — called "Yo-yo," even makes one rethink what he did in New York. In New York, he's staged a version of last summer's Soviet coup. Only instead of a statue of Lenin, it's a replica of the Natural History Museum's racially insensitive Teddy Roosevelt statue that's being toppled and attacked by machine guns amidst autumn leaves, balloons and streamers. In New York, the piece looks like a celebration of the cultural coup that's made it possible for this black artist to show in the white-on-white museum.

But "Yo-yo" says these things have always gone back and forth, like the bright red yo-yo that hangs from the ceiling; like the basketball in a vise on a paint-mixing machine that shakes crazily to James Brown's music. But the machine's on a timer: activity, stop; activity, stop.

Maybe, in New York Hammons is saying "We won't take this anymore!" Maybe the coup he is staging is a prediction of a real coup, camouflaged as a funny / scary Halloween party.

IN PITTSBURGH, too, Bourgeois ups the ante in one of her most potent, excruciating works yet. She's constructed a series of five walk-in "Cells" out of old doors, each of which encloses the emblems of psychic traumas, from unresolved losses to death by AIDS.

And the Russian artist Ilya Kabakov, whose evocations of drab Moscow rooms inhabited by lost souls produced sheer poetry in New York, evokes even more engaging ghosts in Pittsburgh. He's built a two-story "orphanage" that's suddenly been abandoned as its residents wait outside to go they know not where. We hear their voices, we see tiny personal messages strung with debris on lines across the room, along with more official Soviet jargon and decrees on the walls. "We Are Leaving Here Forever!" is the title of the piece. The fearsome question it poses is: "Where are we going?"

Photography is alive and well at the Carnegie International — though it fares better in the hands of the Russian Boris Michailov than the American Richard Avedon. But painting, by this evidence, is in a dreary state indeed, despite Lisa Milroy's painterly glamorization of books and lightbulbs. That may have something to do with the scores of altogether fine painters the curators overlooked. The exhibition remains on view through Feb. 16. ■

CONTINUED

MADE-FOR-CABLE MOVIES

most cases, they're established stars who are moonlighting to do a pet project that might not get produced as a theatrical film. And these are starring roles," he points out. "Not the character roles or secondary roles they might do" in theatrical films.

"It's work," he adds. "I'm sure they're well paid."

That's probably so on a per-day basis. Whereas theatrical movies usually have three-month shooting schedules, cable movies average about 35 days. (Network-TV movies take 21 to 28 shooting days.) And a quick shoot can have a lot of appeal.

Keith Carradine, who freely admits, "I'm not on any studio's 'A' list," says he did the Showtime movie "Payoff" because "the part was fun and the people I had an opportunity to work with were good people. But as much of a consideration was the timing of it and the fact they were willing to pay my salary, because I was trying to put together enough funds to be able to get myself through this Broadway experience," referring to "The Will Rogers Follies."

Many other cable-movie stars are on the same B-list as Carradine. Laura Dern, soon to star in HBO's "Afterburn," is a talented and busy actress who is getting rave reviews for her work in "Rambling Rose." Yet in a Hollywood where stardom is defined by whether a Julia Roberts or a Michelle Pfieffer can draw big crowds on opening weekend, Dern is not yet A-list.

But perhaps soon that won't be the consideration it is now. Says HBO's Cooper, ever hopeful: "I would bet that with the right kind of movie, Michelle Pfeiffer would do a movie for us." ■

Frank Lovece is a free-lance writer.

CONTINUED

HAMMER INCORPORATED

credibility of Gaye's 1971 message masterpiece "What's Goin' On." In fact, Hammer draws heavily on 1970s musical themes in his ballads, from a cover of Timmy Thomas' 1972 R & B ballad "Why Can't We Live Together" to the seductive narrative of "Lovehold," a ringer for the bubble bath soul talk of Barry White. "Street Soldiers," which makes the criminal-minded people he addresses seem awfully noble, has a vintage Isaac Hayes tone.

Hammer's best ballad, "Good to Go," has a pleasantly mellow new age jazz feel — nice flute. But the lyrics require suspension of disbelief as Hammer, as ambitious a hustler who ever invented himself, sings the praises of a conventional job. "If you're working 9 to 5, I want you to know you're doing the right thing, and everything's all right. Hang on, hang on," quoth the Hammer.

The best track is "Addams Groove," which in the coming weeks is likely to become the most inescapable song in America. It's irrepressible fun, thanks to its appropriation of the beloved riff from "The Addams Family" theme. But it really stands apart from the rest of the album. With marketing on its mind, with Michael Jackson's "Thriller" sales numbers as its aim, it's no surprise that the often energetic, sometimes entertaining music on "Too Legit to Quit" feels hollow, as the means to an end, not an authentic artistic expression. ■

PAPER MAGAZINE
New York
October 1991

The work of Louise Bourgeois can also be seen in the provocative exhibition, *Dislocations*, which explores the more visceral aspects of the relationship between the viewer and the work. By redefining the context in which work is viewed, the installations by Chris Burden, David Hammons, Bruce Nauman and Adrian Piper, along with Bourgeois and others, successfully rattle the cages of our more cherished, if questionable assumptions. Organized by Robert Storr, curator of painting and sculpture, at the **Museum of Modern Art, 11 W. 53rd St., Oct. 16 - Jan. 7, 1992.**

PORT FOLIO
Virginia Beach, VA
27 August 1991

For stress, stop by *DisLocations* at the **Museum of Modern Art** (Oct. 16-Jan. 7), where provocateurs of installation will be questioning everything we've believed for decades — and from the Soviet Union, superstar Ilya Kabakov will be on hand to challenge *glasnost*.

FRENCH NEWS
New York
October 1991

At the Museum of Modern Art, 11 W. 53rd St. /708-9400/:
—**LOUISE BOURGEOIS AND SOPHIE CALLE** in a group show **"DISLOCATIONS".** Site-specific installations are once again the center of widespread activity. Ranging from freestanding sculptures to large-scale interiors to video environments, each work, according to Robert Storr, Curator Dept. of Painting and Sculpture, "locates the viewers in a real or imagined situation, yet, in so doing, shifts the ground beneath them and reminds them that their sense of where and who they are in the world may be based upon uncertain emotions or questionable assumptions". *Oct. 16 - Jan. 7.*

THE VILLAGE VOICE
New York
5 November 1991

'DISLOCATIONS': MOMA livens up at last with a group of smart psycho-socio-sexual-personal-political installations: Bruce Nauman's chilling video chant, Ilya Kabakov's mystifying group visitation, Louise Bourgeois's alarming *Twosome*, David Hammons's semicelebratory parade barricade, Chris Burden's *The Other Vietnam Memorial*, Adrian Piper's endless antistereotype amphitheater, and, skipping through the permanent collection, Sophie Calle's treasure hunt. They're all terrific. Through January 7, the Museum of Modern Art, 11 West 53rd Street, 708-9400. (Levin)

NEWSDAY
Long Island, NY
8 September 1991

MULTI-CULTURAL FOCUS

BY AMEI WALLACH
STAFF WRITER

MODERNIST ARTISTS of the establishment will be sharing equal time this fall with the lesser-known, equally accomplished artists that the new emphasis on multiculturalism is bringing out of the shadows. The new voices will be heard in unexpected places — including the Museum of Modern Art, where its "Dislocations" exhibition in October gives notice that an artist no longer need be white and male to join the party.

Artists invited to make their often difficult work specifically for this show include Louise Bourgeoise and her psychologically tantalizing sculpture; Adrian Piper, whose installations bait white prejudices; Ilya Kabakov, the most interesting of the artists to have emerged from the Soviet Union's era of glasnost; and the Californian Chris Burden, whose massive metal book will commemorate the Vietnamese who died during the Vietnam War.

The Brooklyn Museum will display the finest of its historical American Indian collection, including objects Native-Americans still consider sacred. And, in these more even-handed times, it will also display the work of contemporary Native-American artists.

As part of a citywide Tibetan festival, the IBM Gallery will acquaint us with "The Wisdom and Compassion of Tibet" through its art.

And The New Museum will consider the decidedly cross-cultural question of how contemporary art deals with death in the exhibition, "An Interrupted Life." ■

THE NEW YORK OBSERVER
11 November 1991

A Fatality on Art's Critical List?

By Hilton Kramer

A Critic's View

A few days after reading Roberta Smith's review of the Matthew Barney show in *The Times*, I went down to SoHo to see what all the fuss was about. Mr. Barney is having his first New York exhibition at the Barbara Gladstone Gallery on Greene Street, and Ms. Smith reported that "some visitors" already regarded it as marking "a seismic shift in sculpture" comparable to the emergence of Jeff Koons. She was announcing, in other words, the arrival of a new art superstar, so I thought I should take a look at this stellar phenomenon.

As readers of the *Times* art pages are well aware, it is Ms. Smith's custom in these matters to sound studiously judicious. Thus, she also dutifully reported that "Others condemned [Mr. Barney's show] as little more than astute rehashings of 1970's art issues." This is the way Ms. Smith always writes about superstar events on the art scene. On the one hand, there are the folks who think it's great ("a seismic shift"), and on the other, there are the folks who think it's not quite so great ("astute rehashings"), and it is Ms. Smith's habit to come down firmly on both sides of the question. In the end, of course, her heart, if not always her head, tends to side with the "seismic shift" crowd, and this was clearly the case with Mr. Barney's show, to which she devoted a quarter of a page of the Weekend section of *The Times*.

To be perfectly frank, I wasn't expecting much when I set off to see this "seismic" event. After all, I've read Ms. Smith's accounts of other art world earthquakes, and you get inured to the hyperbole. Indeed, I had read her a week earlier on Robert Storr's *Dislocations* show at MoMA. On that occasion, she began by announcing that the show might be "hard to take, at least at first," and ended, as we knew she would, by reporting an "unexpected denouement," which allegedly consisted of a reconciliation of "the disparate subversive strands of *Dislocations* with the very tradition that many of its artists seem to disavow." For Ms. Smith, every art world earthquake has a happy ending, every "seismic shift" ends in reconciliation with the "tradition" it seems to disavow.

Anyway, I can't honestly say I was looking forward to Mr. Barney's show. The promise of seeing what Ms. Smith described as "a muscular young gladiator who spends a great deal of time on video in elegant drag or wearing almost nothing" wasn't much of a draw for me. Neither were the other themes or objects that Ms. Smith found the show to consist of—"sports, androgyny, birth, penetration, weight training," etc., among the themes, and "a huge specially made chunk of yellow and white candy" and "a gynecological speculum" among the objects. We all know that there is now almost nothing that someone won't do in public in the name of art, no matter how stupid or nasty, and we also know that Ms. Smith is likely to give the thing a favorable review. It was really Ms. Smith's work, rather than Mr. Barney's, that drew me to this "seismic" debut of an artist (as I suppose he must be called) whom few readers of *The Times* had ever heard of before encountering Ms. Smith's endorsement.

For Ms. Smith has perfected a style and an attitude in writing about "seismic" art and the hype surrounding it that are almost as interesting, as a cultural development, as the stuff she writes about. Unlike other critics who are professional boosters of "seismic" art—Kay Larson at *New York* magazine, for instance—Ms. Smith never displays the slightest emotion in writing about it. She is never offended by anything. She isn't even angry with the people who don't like it, or at least she never appears to be angry. She is, well, sort of understanding about everything. And in her case, as with so many acolytes of earthquake art today, to understand all is to forgive all, and to forgive all is, well, to sort of like it, or at least not actively dislike it.

No matter what the provocation, then, Ms. Smith is always cool and—I was about to say "ladylike," but as that is now a politically impermissible locution, let me say instead that she is always well-mannered in her responses to every earthquake that comes her way. She is cool, calm and collected. I wasn't in the gallery the day she was obliged to study at length the close-up images of Mr. Barney's naked behind that completely filled the television screens in

Count On The Times's *Taxonomist To Report a Seismic Shift in SoHo*

The Times's art critic Roberta Smith.

the basement installation, but I can imagine that she took it in stride. Certainly, her prose did, for Ms. Smith writes the kind of prose that never, but never, shows the slightest jiggle of emotion.

In that respect, Ms. Smith isn't so much a critic as she is a taxonomist—a cool and detached classifier of whatever the fashions of the art scene happen to throw her way. In another life she might have devoted her talents to classifying fossils or the shards of ancient pottery uncovered in an archeological dig. In this life, however, it is her task to examine the videotapes of Mr. Barney's naked behind and such other delights as the art of the moment may offer for her taxonomical talents, and she classifies them with the requisite detachment and aplomb. As the saying goes, she never turns a hair.

That is more of a feat than is commonly supposed. The art scene, as we know, is nowadays crowded with ambitious hustlers dreaming up the kind of provocations that will win them superstar status. This is hard work, and the ante must be raised every season. And so the programmatic outrages grow ever more provocative and the promotion of them ever more cynical. What is essential to their success, however, is the kind of criticism (as I suppose it must be called) that embraces the latest offering as a "seismic shift" while taking note of its "astute rehashings" of familiar "issues." The writers of this "criticism" apparently never encounter anyone at these earthquake events who thinks them altogether trashy. Ms. Smith never does, anyway, or if she does she never says so. Such opinions do not fall within the parameters of her taxonomical task.

In the end, of course, such "criticism" serves as a necessary appendage to the "seismic shifts" it embraces, lending respectability to outrage and thereby rendering it acceptable and salable. That the writing itself might sometimes be a bit boring in its utter impersonality and detachment is absolutely essential to its function. This, too, is a requirement that Ms. Smith's writing is always equal to.

Next week we can look forward to another scheduled "seismic shift" when Jeff Koons and his Italian porno queen show their latest stuff at the Sonnabend Gallery on West Broadway. It has already been announced that there will be a cop at the door to keep out everyone under the age of 18, and so I suppose this must be classified as the season's first officially X-rated art show. That it is bound to be a sensation we already know. What I shall be most interested in, however, is Roberta Smith's review of the show. It may be, of course, that Mr. Koons and his bride are now such established superstars that they are beyond any talk of "astute rehashings" of familiar "issues," but then again, perhaps they're not. We can count on Roberta Smith to give us a dependable classification of the matter.

Chris Burden, *Medusa's Head*, 1990, Steel, wood, concrete, plastics, paint, 168" × 168" × 168". Courtesy Kent Fine Art.

Chris Burden

Chris Burden is certainly a legend in his own time. His performance work of the early 1970s shaped an unforgettable extreme in the contours of radical experimentation. It occupied a terrain that was not merely in advance of where other artists had yet to go, but which was a place most could never visit, let alone envision. In solitary glamour, he occupied untenable positions in the name of art. Yet his work was often iconographically connected to the classical past even while it delineated the logical extreme of the avant-garde position in post-minimal art. Burden's pieces effectively demonstrated the shamanistic power of the Romantic artist's persona: an arrogation of symbolic meaning from the cultural realm into the artist's own person and aura. This granted, one then asks what it all has to do with Burden's recent installation, *Medusa's Head*, in the Brooklyn Museum lobby.

And one is constrained to answer, not much. Twenty years ago, Burden characterized his own work as a form of ritual questioning; Charlotta Kotik writes in her essay for the installation about the "agonizing questions the artist poses." But in fact the piece asks no evident questions. Perhaps the point is rather that the viewer must ask questions, but here again there is uncertainty about the nature of the questioning to be done. In a piece like *Transfixed*, from 1974 (in which Burden was crucified upon a Volkswagen in a garage, which was then pushed out into traffic), many questions suggested themselves: Why? Is he crazy? Where are the limits of pain and fear? How did he persuade his assistants to participate? Is this sacrilege or artistic dedication?

More recently, in formidably accusatory and dangerously funny works like *All of the Submarines of the United States of America* (1987) and *The Reason for the Neutron Bomb* (1981), Burden has considered more widely political, less immediately existential themes. Here, the nature of the questioning became far more explicit, because more clearly oriented toward what are known, in our political discourse, as issues. In these works, he fabricated objects of a more or less traditionally sculptural nature, not dependent upon the artist's live presence. Thus his work of the 1980s marked a transition from performance to installation, and from the theater of fear to the arena of political dissent. But *Medusa's Head* belongs to neither of these groups, and may possibly indicate the beginning of a third manner in Burden's work.

For twenty years Burden has been an artist who, in a horrific way, seemed to be able to do no wrong. Not only did he literally bear a charmed life, surviving all of his own performances, but he constantly found clearer, more beautiful, and more extreme forms for his radical questioning of the means and nature of art and life. It's rare enough for an artist to remain an exemplary figure for so long while yet maintaining productive changes in the focus and methods of his work. All this argues for giving Burden the benefit of the doubt, but in this instance it's hard to do so. For one thing, he's never before been at all cryptic or obscure in his work. Indeed, its brilliance has largely been its lucidity.

In Kotik's words, the *Medusa's Head* is an "artificial asteroid" of five tons in weight and about 14 feet in diameter. Made of concrete and rock and other compressed materials, it is riven and writhing with a skin of toy trains and tracks of many different sizes. It's a formidable object, both in its intriguingly repulsive surface (which suggests an earth scarred by strip mines and scabbed with train lines and edifices) and in its sheer mass. Hanging from the ceiling, it is actually somewhat threatening in a physical sense, and in this faintest vestige of a signature theme is the only discernible connection to Burden's previous work. If this piece deals with environmental concerns and fears, as critics have suggested, then it does so in a curiously indirect way. Where has all the artist's trenchancy gone?

Symbolism as well as more literal content seems to have become increasingly oblique in Burden's hands. The gorgon Medusa, mortal daughter of two sea gods, was a monstrous being with serpents for hair, and eyes that could petrify anyone who gazed into them. The hero Perseus killed Medusa, and later offered her head to Athena, who bound it to her shield. Burden seems to have conflated two aspects of the story in this piece: the snaky locks (here the toy trains) and the petrification, here applied to Medusa's head itself, and not to a spectator. Previously invariably clear about the distinction between a work and its effect on the viewer, he seems now to have confused the two so as to accentuate what is today lacking in his work. It's not that ambiguity can't afford occasions for artistic excursion, but rather that Burden seems to have renounced all of his previous contentions about the basis for artistic questioning. The only questions that suggest themselves to me are: which Gorgon's gaze has so petrified Burden's work today, and is the effect permanent? (*Brooklyn Museum, June 28–September 1*) *Ellen Handy*

Nov. 91

Los Angeles Times

WEDNESDAY
OCTOBER 23, 1991

ART REVIEW

MOMA Enters the '90s

By CHRISTOPHER KNIGHT
TIMES ART CRITIC

NEW YORK—Had it been organized anywhere else, "*Dis*locations" would likely be seen as a generally engaging exhibition of specially commissioned installations by eight American and European artists of disparate critical reputation, but all well known to the contemporary art world.

However, as it has been mounted at the Museum of Modern Art, the show has a very different edge than it would anywhere else. So large does MOMA loom in the modern art consciousness, yet so small and inconsequential has been its regard for the complexity of art made since the 1960s, that this ambitious presentation inevitably is read against the backdrop of the institution that houses it.

In the downstairs galleries for special exhibitions, Bruce Nauman's relentless and weirdly operatic video installation, "Anthro/Socio," echoes through adjacent rooms displaying a mysteriously abandoned meeting hall by Moscow's Ilya Kabakov and an infernal machine by Louise Bourgeois.

Upstairs, in third-floor galleries normally given over to contemporary art in the permanent collection, Chris Burden's devastating "The Other Vietnam Memorial," which delivers the show's knockout punch, is flanked by two diverse critiques of racism against African-Americans, one by David Hammons, the other by Adrian Piper. And in the second-floor rooms that house MOMA's great collection of European Modernism, the French Conceptualist Sophie Calle has inserted written and doodled remembrances of five paintings temporarily removed from display.

The show, which opened Sunday for an 11-week run (through Jan. 7), was clearly conceived with MOMA in the minds of both its curator, Robert Storr (whose debut this is), and its seven artists. In a way, it picks up where the museum left off about 20 years ago with its last notable exhibitions of contemporary art—"Spaces" and "Information"—devoted to the relatively recent phenomena of environmentally scaled installations and Conceptual art. The Conceptually based installations in "*Dis*locations" reaffirm the continuing vitality of the genre, especially at a time when more traditional sculpture and painting seem to have hit some shoals.

Burden's amazing monument is a touchstone for the exhibition, and for sensibilities dominating American life today. Like a gargantuan steel Rolodex tipped on its side, "The Other Vietnam Memorial" features a dozen movable copper pages etched with small representations of the names of some 3 million Vietnamese soldiers, civilians and refugees, all killed during the American episode of the decades-long Indochina war.

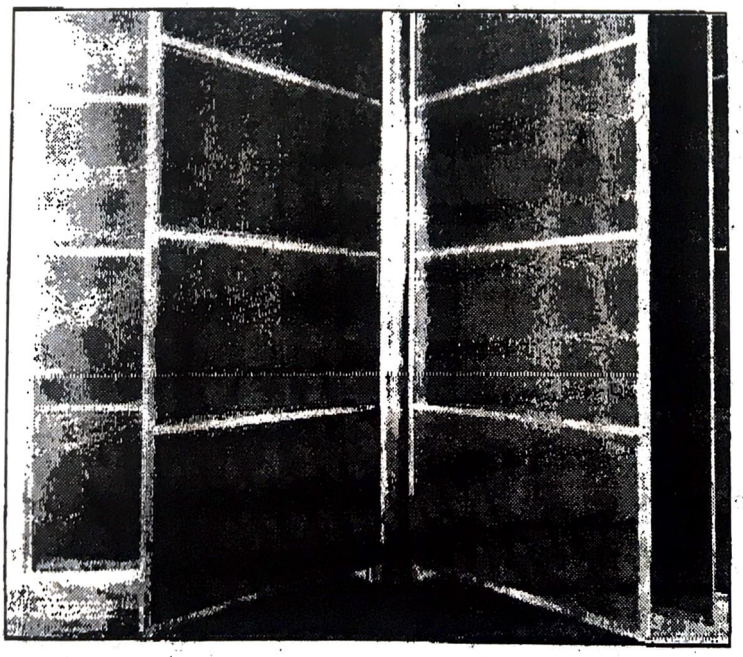
Only about 4,000 actual names are officially recorded or available. To get 3 million, Burden had a computer programmer develop random combinations of these. He also used the word *Liet Si*, or Hero, which is inscribed on thousands of tombs of unknown dead.

Burden's monument couldn't be more different from Maya Lin's famous wall of 57,939 American names in Washington, where cathartic elegy is gently given a space to emerge. "The Other Vietnam Memorial" instead exudes an icy cold beauty, the light falling across its copper leaves transforming metal into mechanized flesh, its finely machined parts recalling the high-tech machinery of war. The vague enormity of the carnage, which the intellect already knows as an abstraction, is here given blunt form. Spectators are left to deal with it as they will.

In assuming no moral position about the fact of death at such enormous scale, Burden's art removes itself from the divisive realm of polemic, while replacing with hard fact any possibility of aggrandizing sentiment. This incisive maneuver symbolically brings into view the victims of war that any opposition must habitually repress, creating an awesome sight that today reverberates against the thousands upon thousands of Iraqi casualties in the recent Gulf War.

Ostensibly, the Vietnam Syndrome was smashed by the Gulf War. But, like the Vietnamese finally commemorated here, dead Iraqis were made utterly invisible last spring through such bureaucratic abstractions as "collateral damage." Burden's haunting monument is a major achievement, and reason alone to claim success for this show.

Desert Storm also makes an



Chris Burden's "Vietnam Memorial" delivers show's knockout punch.

oblique appearance in Hammons' theatrical "Public Enemy," where a battle zone filled with autumn leaves is enlivened by balloons and streamers, as if a parade has just passed by. Real weapons and toy ones take direct aim from behind a sand-bag bunker at a life-size photo-mural. The siege is against a familiar equestrian statue of Teddy Roosevelt, flanked by an American Indian and an African, that stands before New York's Museum of Natural History—monumental white warrior riding with pedestrian "noble savages" at his side.

In Hammons' hands, the presumptions of "natural" history collide with those of cultural history at MOMA, where the art of principally white men is enshrined. The parade that's passed by also can be seen as a declaration that the party is definitely over.

If Hammons' installation suffers a bit from diffuseness, Adrian Piper's couldn't be more pointed. In the center of an amphitheater painted blinding white, video monitors on a white monolith show a black man who repeatedly declares what he is not—"I'm not vulgar, I'm not lazy, I'm not servile, I'm not stupid"—to the assembled faces of those who assume they know what he is. In the background, the Commodores sing "Zoom," as seductive entertainment is interwoven with another kind of black stereotype.

Bravely, Sophie Calle has waded straight into MOMA's celebrated collection, creating five "Ghosts" of paintings by Modigliani, De Chirico, Hopper and others that have been removed from display. Calle interviewed various museum employees, from curators to ticket takers, about the absent art, then wrote excerpts of their replies and hung their drawings of the remembered images over grisaille renderings painted directly on gallery walls.

As she's done before, Calle here projects multiple, even contradictory expressions into museum galleries whose "officialness" suggests that a singular, authoritative reading exists. Perhaps because her chosen form recalls mere captions or labels, however, her "ghosts" grow pale in the company of so much important painting and sculpture. The piece only plays at being subversive.

Kabakov's tilt at officialdom is also thin and disappointing, although it proceeds from an almost opposite situation: The Muscovite isn't operating in the face of a powerful status quo, but in a time of vacuum. His reconstruction of a drab Tenants' Club at a Soviet housing project creates the site of an aborted inquisition about an artist's vanguard work, interrupted mid-stream: Tables, chairs and paintings have been tipped over and shoved against the walls, as if some mad rush to the exits has taken place. In the dim light, and through binoculars placed on a bridge that traverses the room, a strange horde of minuscule white figures floods into view. Sci-fi silliness oscillates with the immaterial presence of an optimistic dream.

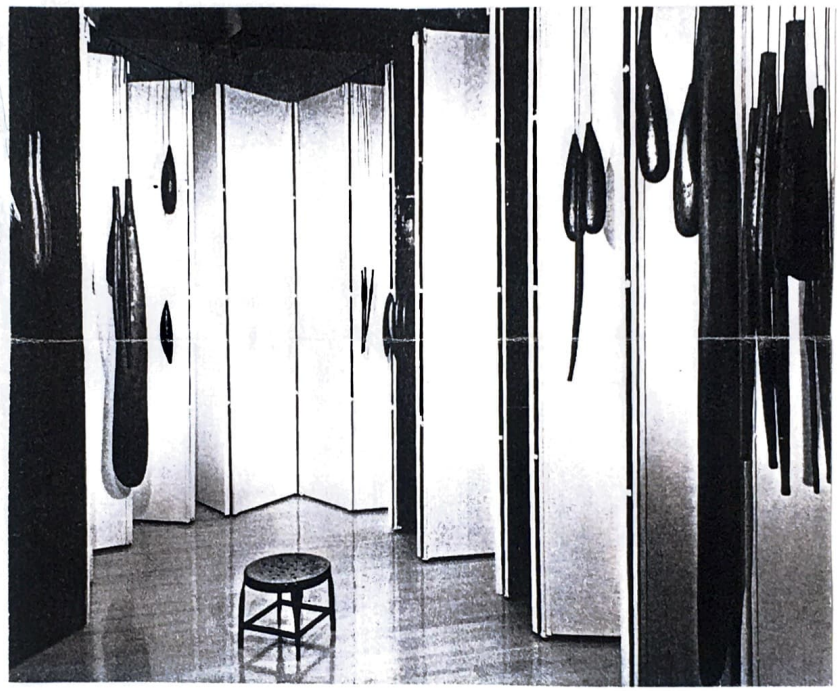
The most straightforwardly sculptural object in the show is Bourgeois' "Twosome," composed from two horizontal gas tanks painted black on the outside, red on the inside, and punctured with doors and windows. One slides in and out of the other on a mechanical track. Violent copulation, brute defecation, ritual re-birth and tortured imprisonment are some of the homey, domestic associations this churning machine evokes, its luridness made dizzying by a flashing red police light secreted deep inside its womb.

Nauman's contribution is a large environment of six video monitors and three video projections of a bald, disembodied head, all simultaneously shouting and singing in endless, high-pitched repetition: "Feed Me, Eat Me, Anthropology," and "Help Me, Hurt Me, Sociology." Being surrounded in a darkened room by the cognitive dissonance of such wild wailing is like being trapped inside a brain about to burst from grinding frustration. Nauman's art has the uncanny capacity to embed ephemeral psychological states deep inside your bones and viscera, and this example is first-rate.

Oddly, "*Dis*locations" might be described as an autobiographical show, in the sense that its organizer—an artist and critic who assumed his curatorial position at MOMA just a year ago—has found himself on the inside of an institution whose imperatives he was obliged to challenge in his prior roles of artist and critic. As curator, Storr has perceptively made his own sense of dislocation a subject, and he's invited seven kindred spirits along to light the darkened path.

Finally, it is this faith in living artists and living art that comes through most forcefully in the show, regardless of the success or failure of individual installations. The personal and social "dislocations" that operate in the work of all eight (Storr included) conspire to create the biggest dislocation of all: Being in the Kansas of this engaging display of new work, you can't quite believe you're also in the Oz of the Museum of Modern Art.

ART & TEXT
Sydney, Australia
September 1991



●After a decade in which painting and sculpture as self-contained mediums have been the focus of artistic activity, site-specific installations are once again the centre of widespread activity and renewed recognition.

"*Dis*locations" at The Museum of Modern Art, New York (16 October 1991 - 7 January 1992) focuses on the work of seven artists: Louise Bourgeois, Chris Burden, Sophie Calle, David Hammons, Ilya Kabakov, Bruce Nauman and Adrian Piper.

Occupying various spaces in the Museum, the works range from freestanding sculptures to large-scale interiors to video environments.

Louise Bourgeois, *Articulated Lair* 1986
painted steel and rubber
335 cm in height

NEW YORK
23 September 1991

THE MUSEUM OF Modern Art has a new curator of contemporary art, Robert Storr, who gives his assessment of seven artists in **"*Dis*locations,"** filling odd spaces in the museum with installations by the indomitable Louise Bourgeois, Chris Burden, French conceptualist Sophie Calle, David Hammons, Soviet exile Ilya Kabakov, Bruce Nauman, and Adrian Piper. (11 West 53rd Street; October 20 through January 7, 1992.) . . . **"Hines V: Tadao Ando"** examines the career of the Japanese architect. (October 3 through December 31.)

THE JOURNAL OF ART
New York
October 1991

"Dislocations" Rejuvenates MoMA's Image

Adrian Piper, *Cornered*, 1988. Piper will have an as-yet-unseen work in "Dislocations."

NEW YORK. Long accused of holding a moribund view of Modernism, the Museum of Modern Art is making its most aggressive attempt in years to update its image by unveiling "Dislocations" (Oct. 16-Jan. 7, 1992), an exhibition of site-specific works by seven highly regarded contemporary artists. Organized by recently appointed curator Robert Storr, the show will occupy various spaces throughout the museum and is intended to change people's minds about what the Modern can do. "People tend to associate the museum with the basic canon of modern art," Storr told *The Journal of Art*. "What we now realize is that a canon also exists in people's heads and is informed by memories and impressions of the collection—what people feel about and project onto the work."

Most illustrative of this concept is an installation by Sophie Calle in which works from the permanent collection will be temporarily displaced by pieces incorporating written accounts of reactions to those masterworks. Commentary on paintings will be provided by such observers as museum maintenance workers and security guards. Storr calls the piece a "Proustian exercise."

The museum's third floor will feature a Chris Burden sculpture called "The Other Vietnam Memorial," for which the names of some three million Vietnamese dead will be inscribed on copper sheets; an Adrian Piper-built room for the showing of a video installation regarding topics ranging from Minimalism to race relations; and a space by Ilya Kabakov suggesting an unofficial artists' club.

The lower level galleries will contain Louise Bourgeois sculptures; a series of projections by Bruce Nauman; and an as-yet-unknown piece by David Hammons. Storr hopes the show will illustrate that "the permanent collection is actually in a constant state of flux."

SCULPTURE
New York
March - April 1992

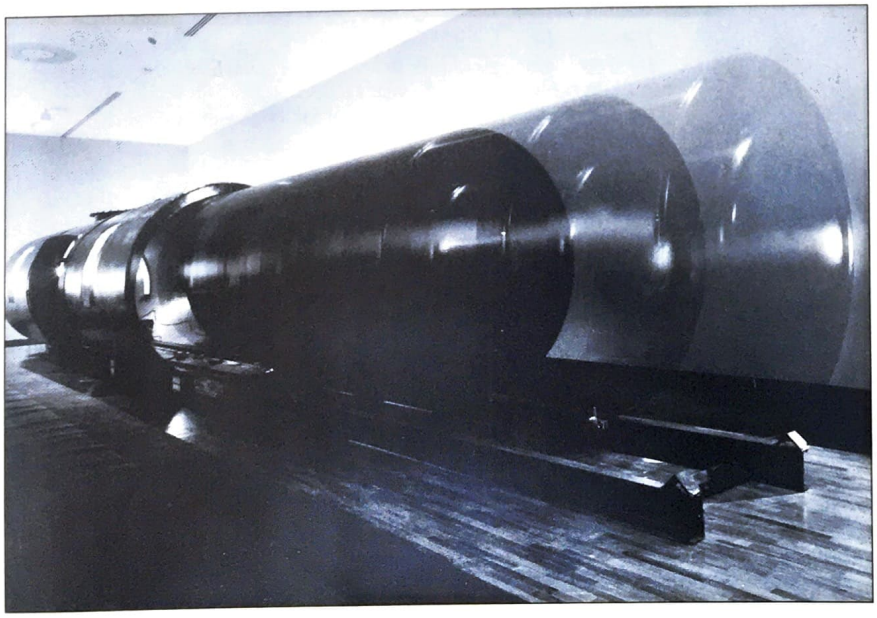
"Dislocations"
Museum of Modern Art, New York

"Dislocations" was Robert Storr's first major exhibition as curator in the department of painting and sculpture at the Museum of Modern Art (MoMA). Representing a range of ages, backgrounds, styles and agendas, the artists—Louise Bourgeois, Chris Burden, Sophie Calle, David Hammons, Bruce Nauman, Ilya Kabakov and Adrian Piper—each designed an installation for this impressive show. Located not in one contiguous space but on three floors of the museum, the exhibition was intended to trigger a variety of artistic, social and psychological "dislocations."

The show's three most engaging pieces shared adjoining darkened spaces on the museum's lower level. For Nauman's *Anthro/Socio* (1991), bald performance artist Rinde Eckert appeared on three pairs of monitors and three projectors in a dim, cavernous gallery. Eckert's obsessive voice repeated in rounds, "anthropology feed me/eat me" and "sociology help me/hurt me," a solo choir conjuring the realms of nightmare, fear, pathology.

Escaping the barrage of "sound bites," one crossed a narrow walkway equipped with several pairs of binoculars for Ilya Kabakov's *The Bridge* (1991). Through the binoculars viewers could keep guard over the horde of minuscule white figures, scattered on the floor below, who seemed to represent an absurdist, imaginary threat to order. It was as if these Lilliputians might disrupt a critique of bourgeois tendencies in art, such as those suggested by the paintings propped against shabby, dark walls in this reconstruction of Kabakov's *Tenant's Club of Moscow's Housing Project No. 8* (1991).

Also in the darkened lower galleries was Louise Bourgeois's *Twosome* (1991), featuring a pair of large black oil tanks. One of the tanks had windows and a door through which red light glowed. The two tanks slid on tracks, one into the other, richly resonant of sexuality and childhood hideaways.



A trio of works with social agendas was clustered in MoMA's upper galleries. Strongest of these was *The Other Vietnam Memorial* (1991), Chris Burden's response to Maya Lin's Vietnam Veterans Memorial listing the more than 58,000 American dead. From a steel pole *The Other Vietnam Memorial* radiated movable copper sheets etched with three million names, an estimate of Vietnamese military personnel and civilians killed during the years of U.S. combat.

David Hammons reconstructed, through life-sized photographic views, an equestrian statue of Teddy Roosevelt, flanked by an Indian and an African-American. Despite the surrounding trappings of a parade, *Public Enemy* (1991) suggested a war zone where the adventurer-turned-president was the target.

In Adrian Piper's *What It's Like. What It Is No. 3* (1991) bright white bleachers surrounded a white column inset with video monitors. The monitors displayed the head of a black man who repeated, "I'm not sneaky. I'm not lazy. I'm not noisy. I'm not vulgar. I'm not crazy," etc. A response? A statement? A performance? Piper's and Hammons's pieces seemed too self-evident, too thin in their commentary, while Burden's work pointedly continued a dialogue about war.

Visitors had to scout second-floor galleries of MoMA's permanent collection to find Calle's *Ghosts* (1991). On walls that were empty because works had been removed for repair or loan, the artist asked staff members to recall their memories of the works and to record these in a sentence or two and a tiny drawing. In stark contrast to the political trio above and the more psychological one below, Calle's project focused on the shifts in viewers' perceptions and memories of art.

In the end, perhaps the "dislocations" theme worked best in simple ways, forcing the viewer to move around the museum's spaces, looking at seven new works not ordinarily seen in this treasure house of classical modernism. As far as questioning assumptions, genuinely disorienting the viewer in profound ways, one would have to say that "Dislocations" didn't reach quite that far. But if Storr's exhibition does mark a beginning, an opening up of an aged and established institution, then that is dislocation enough. —*Regina Cornwell*

CANADIAN ART
Toronto
Spring 1992

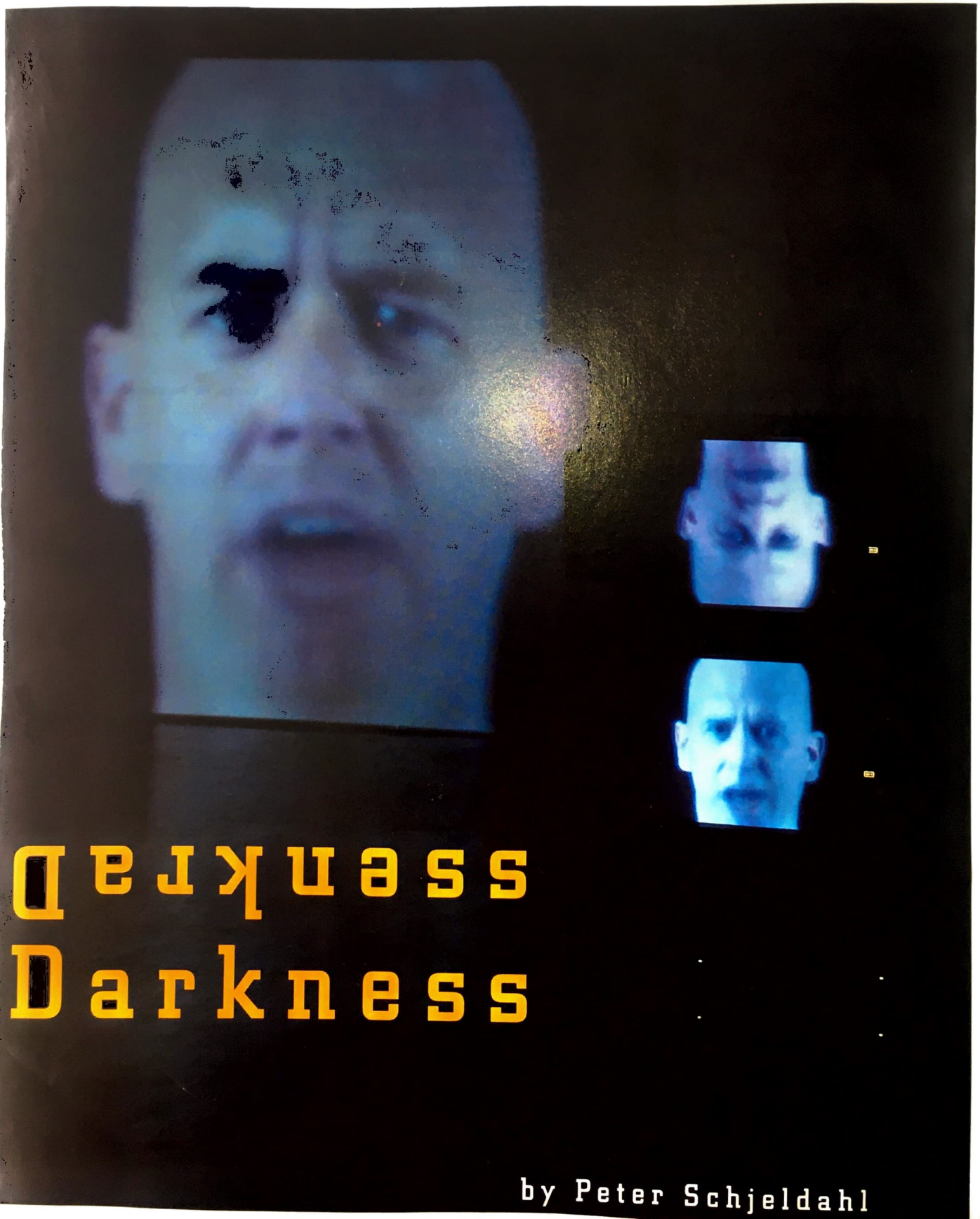
Heart of Heart

Bruce Nauman charts passage into the turbulent human soul

The most consistently astonishing American artist of the last two decades, Bruce Nauman has always remained outside the ambit of the mainstream art world (he's lived in New Mexico since 1979) while regularly invading the major art centres with works of sharp originality and often daunting difficulty. This winter, as part of The Museum of Modern Art's exhibition of installation art, *Dislocations*, Nauman's new video environment *Anthro/Socio* raised a ruckus in a semi-darkened, cavernous basement gallery. The piece was disconcerting, even by Nauman's standards. Three stacked pairs of video monitors near the entrance broadcast six separate looped tapes of trained tenor Rinde Eckert (his head appearing alternately upside-down and right side up) as he chants Nauman's brutal poetry: "Feed me, eat me, anthropology", "Help me, hurt me, sociology," or a scrambled sequence of those phrases. Each pair of monitors shares one of its images with a video projector. Projected, the images are about twelve feet high, and overwhelming. The sound, *very* loud, drenches consciousness, less something you hear than a medium you move through as if walking underwater. *Anthro/Socio* is scored to a few recurring notes. Randomly synchronised, the tapes produce an intricate antiphony with the guttural pungence unique to the human voice. Shattering clashes of sound alternate and combine with reverberant drones, the mix kaleidoscopic and variable depending on the viewer's position in the room.

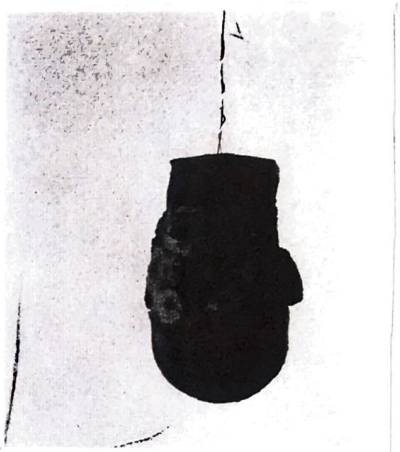
Like many of Nauman's works, *Anthro/Socio*'s first impression is one of assault. Apart from the din, there is Eckert's mien: huge, fleshy, grimacing, totally bald, a monstrous homunculus. Unadorned Sony equipment with heaped cables evokes a banal electronics workplace. Whiffs of slightly acrid new-TV-set smell ride the air. The shadowy far reaches of the room, unused, harbour a melancholy sense of displacement, like the abandoned space outside a stadium while crowds roar within. Nauman once said that he wanted art to be like sleeping on a too-short bed: the sensation of the mattress' edge under one's feet. He has also said he wanted art to be like climbing stairs in the dark when you think there is one more step and there isn't. Each of these metaphors — the missed step, the annoying edge of the bed — suggests an insignificant phenomenon that nonetheless rivets consciousness, driving out any rival object of thought. The effect is that of a bland

Anthro/Socio (installation view, detail) 1991
Photo: ©Scott Frances/Esto
Courtesy: The Museum of Modern Art, New York
Collection: Ydessa Hendeles Art Foundation, Toronto

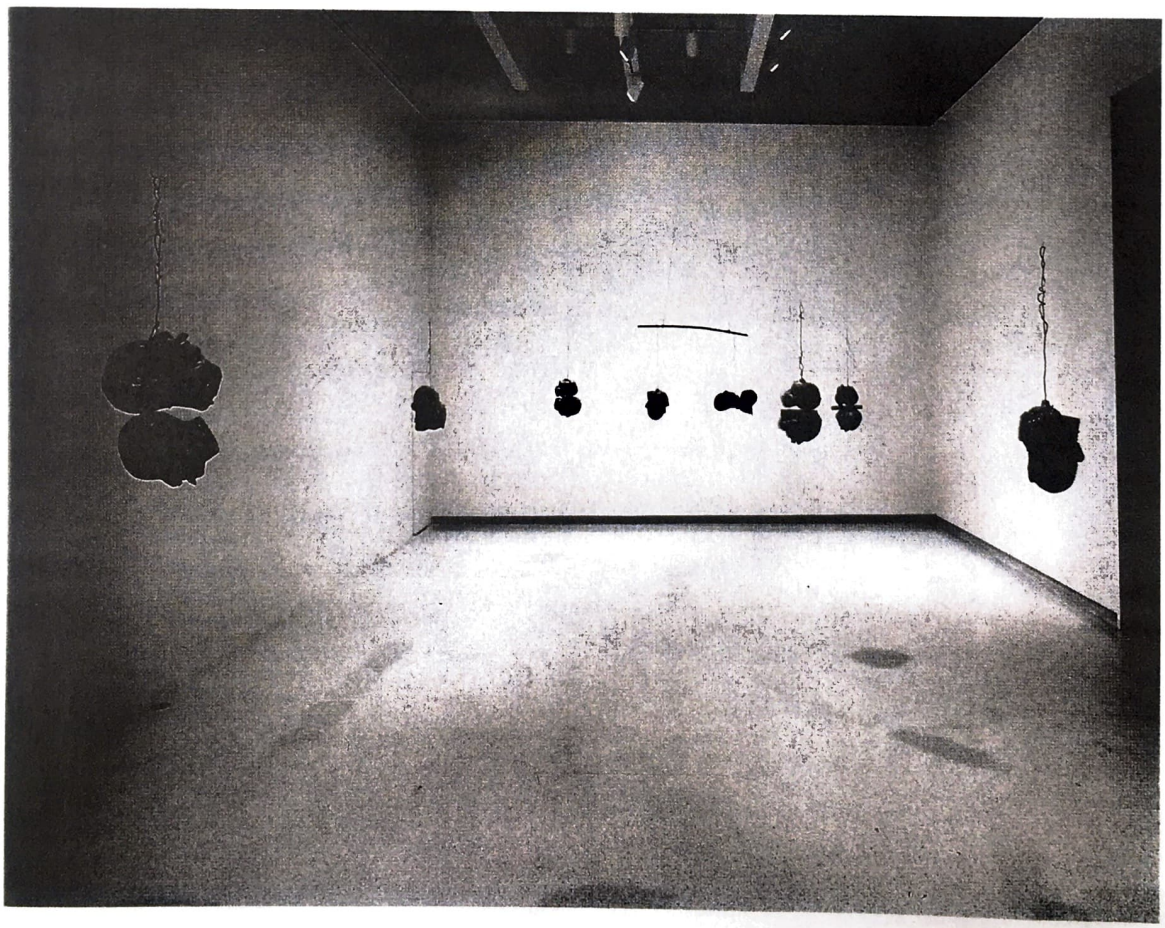


but overwhelming irritant that induces an acute self-awareness. Nauman has maintained this unpretentious model of his aesthetic for more than twenty years, as unvarying in his willfulness as he has been various in his means. He has made distinctive bodies of work in every traditional artistic medium except paint on canvas. Foreshadowing *Anthro/Socio*, Nauman created a number of video works in which clowns or mimes are put through gruelling paces, as well as wax or bronze casts of heads suspended in upside-down and right-side-up configurations. Among modern artist types, Nauman might be seen as a Duchampian trickster, but with a darker gravity — akin to Jasper Johns in his melancholy elegance, and to Joseph Beuys in shamanistic appeal. In other ways, Nauman is akin to no one but himself.

"I felt safe in there," a friend said to me, smiling bemusedly at the thought of associating security with the howling maw of *Anthro/Socio*. I knew what she meant. My equivalent of that feeling dawned gradually when I recognised Eckert's grimaces as expressions of effort rather than emotion. Nauman obviously demanded from Eckert volume and intensity at the absolute limit of the singer's ability to stay on key. Nauman's art often gives the impression of inexplicable energy, of beleaguered effort arbitrarily disciplined. Surrendering to that energy as a neutral phenomenon, the true experience of the work of art begins.



Above: *Head* 1990
Cast bronze
Courtesy: The New Museum of Contemporary Art, New York



Untitled
Installation view, Carnegie International 1991
Bronze, wax, resin, wire, cardboard, wood
Dimensions variable
Courtesy: Leo Castelli Gallery and Sperone Westwater, New York

One Hundred Live and Die 1984
Neon tubing with clear-glass tubing, suspension frame, mounted on four panels
118 x 132¼ x 21 in.
Courtesy: Sperone Westwater, New York

Incurring such a state, in which your own sense of self may be similarly neutralised, requires a suspension of natural distrust. The reward is a voluptuous letting go, a feeling of safety, as of riding in an airplane expertly piloted (though by a test pilot given to violent manoeuvres). At such a moment, the viewer's sense of physical space melts first into disembodying sensation and then into a reverie that whipsaws between the primitive depths and the over-educated superstructures of the brain.

Feed me, eat me. Give me life, give me death. "Me"? Who's that? Not Eckert, whose features contort with the technical ordeal of his singing. Nauman's messages seem framed in the mind of nobody, or everybody. Can I deny that I know the feeling? I can't. I won't. Some pink pulp of my being reverberates to the stupid bleat of pure, savage, baby need. *Anthropology.* Oh yes, the so-called higher faculties of intellect are piping up helpfully (haplessly). The effect is satirical of those higher faculties, so complacently numb to the fearsome, crazy reality of human nature that they presume to comprehend. *Help me, hurt me.* Let's have a relationship. An entity — nobody, everybody — comes out to play, couching its baser drives in an algebra of interpersonal craving. "Feed" and "eat" were easy. A dog could understand. "Help"? "Hurt"? How? Never mind how, cries the greedy pink pulp. The relationship promises to be troublesome. *Sociology.* Thank you, professor.

The task of installation art is dauntingly double: to use fully, but also to destabilise fully the jewel-box ambience of institutional museum space. At MoMA, Nauman's challenge was compounded by the proximity of so much great art of the modern past. The context set harrowing standards for integrity. Nauman uniquely succeeded in activating his space as a zone powerfully discrete — entering it, one passed from one world into another, as if stepping through Alice's looking-glass — and at the same time as an art work able to hold its own in the most august creative company. Nauman avoided installation art's twin perils of seeming either the innocuous pet of its setting or a surly pet that is content merely to growl. *Anthro/Socio* keeps alive the possibility, which has been seeming dubious, that installation art is no mere passing sideshow, but an authentic medium for the rejuvenation of art in our time. ■

Bruce Nauman's work may be seen in Toronto this spring in a major exhibition at the Ydessa Hendeles Art Foundation. The show opens on May 23.

New York Newsday
18 October 1991

Artful Assault on Sensibilities

***DIS*LOCATIONS.** Seven socially engaged artists challenge establishment verities, including the Museum of Modern Art, at the Modern, 11 W. 53rd St., through Jan. 7. (212) 708-9400.

By Amei Wallach
STAFF WRITER

FOR DECADES, the Museum of Modern Art has served as a haven of haute-taste calm, shielding all who enter from Harlem nights, napalm nightmares and even the ancient homeless woman who has been camping in a succession of cardboard boxes just outside the Modern's door.

With "*Dis*locations," its big fall show, the Modern has invited in the noisy, noxious, anxiety-provoking outside world. Seven artists — three of them women, two of them black, all of them actively engaged in undermining cherished beliefs — have been given license to do what they wanted on three of the Modern's floors.

The result is a raucous, demanding — dislocating — exhibition that may send some viewers fleeing into the Monet "Waterlily" gallery for R&R. Denizens of Downtown may be familiar with the work of Bruce Nauman, Ilya Kabakov, Louise Bourgeois, Sophie Calle, David Hammons, Chris Burden and Adrian Piper. Bourgeois was the first woman artist the Modern ever honored with a retrospective, nearly a decade ago. But much of this work, created specifically for this context, reads as a refreshingly welcome declaration of war on what the museum stands for.

Not all of it. The Modern is, after all, the prime example of what the critic Brian O'Doherty once called a "White Cube," and Robert Storr, the curator of "*Dis*locations" defines as an "uncluttered shrine for art's contemplation." The one eventuality the 41-year-old Storr could not have foreseen for his debut Modern exhibition was how the institution itself would alter the artists' intent. Both Burden and Piper chose to clothe their explosive messages in a far more formal, minimal container than has been the habit of either one.

Burden actually blunts the impact of an action so brazen it required a special dispensation from the board of trustees: He printed names representing the more than 3 million Vietnamese who died in the Vietnam War on floor-to-ceiling, steel-framed panels of copper, which can be turned like cards on the ultimate Rolodex. But the exquisiteness of execution bleeds the piece of meaning. Precisely because of their number, the names are too small, the surface too smooth for anyone to feel them out with their fingers, to weep and remember, to bring the war home as did the 57,939 names on Maya Lin's Vietnam Memorial, to which this one makes both respectful and ironic reference.

Piper's flawless white-on-white room lined with white bleachers on white floor, fails to inflame in her usual manner, because, like the best of minimalism, it soaks up so much ambient meaning from its surroundings. Piper's subject for some time has been the way white prejudice, particularly liberal white stereotyping, cripples both blacks and whites.

The chanting head in Bruce Nauman's 'Anthro / Socio' installation at the Museum of Modern Art

Her confrontational situations are choreographed to give her usually all-white gallery audiences maximum discomfort and, as a result, maximum insight. In this case, in the all-white column in the center of the room, a black man on a video screen faces front, back, left and right and refutes a litany of stereotypes: "I'm not horny. I'm not scary. I'm not crazy. I'm not servile. I'm not stupid."

His delivery is as stolid, his anger as palpable as Clarence Thomas' was last week. Since the emotions the piece is meant to arouse were endlessly experienced by most of us all last weekend in front of our own television sets, it just takes that much more effort not to leave the room.

Leave it to David Hammons, though, to make magic of the realities of the real world — and also of the "*Dis*locations" exhibition. The whole thing didn't actually take fire until Hammons had completed his piece at 5 a.m. the day of the opening, taking advantage of missteps and delays by the museum staff to improvise and jive up to the last moment.

Hammons, who recycles the detritus of the Lower East Side and Harlem streets into metaphors for the black experience, has recyled last summer's Soviet coup into a celebration of the cultural coup that

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Page 2

makes possible his appearance at the Modern.

It's not Lenin's statue that's being toppled at the Modern; it's the rather racist statue of Theodore Roosevelt on a charger flanked by noble savages on foot — one Native American and one African — on the steps of the Museum of Natural History. The "statue" consists of huge black-and-white photographs pasted to a column, complete with black-and-white trees echoing the trees to be seen through the window in the Modern's sculpture garden. Dynamite is taped to the "statue"; sandbags surround it, along with wonderfully aromatic fallen leaves. On the sandbags are lifesize machine guns pointing at the statue, also toy cannons and helicopters, and a toy helicopter flies overhead. The police barriers are protecting the attack on the "statue," just as the Modern is officially sanctioning these attacks on its orthodoxies. Beyond the barricades — and within it — are party streamers and balloons for viewers to walk through. The walls are tenement green, despite the name "Roosevelt Gallery" printed upon them.

What's most subversive about all this is that viewers are going to drag leaves and confetti into the other galleries when they walk in, thus collaborating in Hammons' sly infiltration.

The Frenchwoman Sophie Calle, who is equally sly, also has been successful in her guerrilla incursions on the galleries. She has replaced favorite paintings by Magritte, Modigliani, Seurat and Hopper with hilarious text recording the opinions and memories of people who pass them every day.

Down in the basement, Louise Bourgeois plays marvelously wicked games with childhood terrors of birth, death and copulation. She has rescued phallic-shaped gasoline storage tanks from the side of a road, painted them black, lined them in red (as in womb, as in hell, as in danger) complete with flashing red light. And she has mechanized them so that one slides ponderously in and out of the other, threatening to crush whomever might be cowering in that far-from-protective womb.

Next door, Soviet artist Ilya Kabakov has painted hallway and large room drab Moscow brown and green, lined the walls with a retrospective of his own paintings, piled old chairs and benches in one side of the room, bridged the whole thing for us to cross and focused the tiny bit of light and also some handy binoculars on cockroach-sized white figures. A text on a bulletin board tells us the story that Kabakov has staged here: the tiny white horde has disrupted an official meeting in March, 1984, held to warn about the horrors of nonconformist art like his. The white figures are lost souls, survivors of catastrophe. In rich

An Artful Assault On Sensibilities

contradiction, they symbolize the Soviet tragedy and also prefigure the current upheavals, which for Kabakov still could end in another failed utopia. Kabakov fears big, absolute statements, so everything here is either hard to see or tiny, which may blunt the initial impact but enriches the meaning.

It is Bruce Nauman who plays the bully and fairly steals the show. The sounds from his installation echo in both the Bourgeois and the Kabakov rooms. They are the repetitive sounds of a Gregorian chant from hell. They issue from the face of a man projected on the walls and on video screens. His head has been shaved the better to emphasize his infantilism. "Feed Me / Eat Me," yells / chants the face. "Help Me / Hurt Me." As the homeless on the street yell it. As bosses and workers silently yell it. Husbands and wives. Me and you. Horrible, endless, primal, everyday contradictory demands.

There's no escape. You exit the museum singing Nauman's song. The world seems slightly different after all this provocation, just as the exhibition intended it should. Now that it has begun, cacophonous as it is, you can only hope the museum will not again stop the music. / II

GALERIES MAGAZINE
Paris
December/January 1992

DISLOCATIONS

KAY LARSON

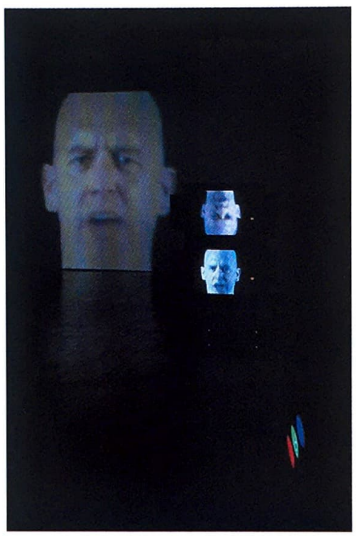
Sept artistes invités par Robert Storr à investir librement le MoMA, font d'une exposition éclatée l'événement le plus attachant et le plus inattendu de la saison.

MoMA curator Robert Storr gave seven artists an open ticket to the museum. They made this fragmented exhibition into the most riveting event of the year.

Les meilleures expositions font toujours l'effet d'un choc, mais le choc lui-même rappelle nécessairement quelque chose de connu. Rien ne laissait prévoir que *Dislocations* — sept installations dispersées sur trois niveaux du MoMA — allait être autre chose que l'habituel assortiment quasi aléatoire d'œuvres prises çà et là. Le nouveau conservateur du département de peinture et de sculpture, Robert Storr, a simplement invité sept de ses artistes préférés à « faire quelque chose » dans les espaces du musée. Il en résulte une exposition qui fixe, le temps d'un éclair, la condition humaine.

Vous pressentez que quelque chose d'étrange et de prodigieux vous attend au moment où vous empruntez l'escalier roulant qui conduit aux galeries du niveau inférieur — des salles qui donnent une réelle impression de sous-sol, n'en déplaise aux architectes. A mesure que vous vous enfoncez dans ces profondeurs, un chant bizarre parvient à vos oreilles. Impossible à identifier, il demeure ainsi, mystérieux, tandis que vous suivez le couloir et que le volume s'amplifie. Dans une salle obscure, vide, seulement encombrée d'écrans vidéo et d'appareils de projection, Bruce Nauman a déployé une de ses installations vidéo. Sur six bandes différentes apparaît, sur les écrans et projetées sur trois des murs, la tête chauve de Rinde Eckert, artiste de performance et chanteur de formation classique qui braille, dans une sorte d'antienne, des variations sur NOURRIS-MOI, MANGE-MOI, ANTHROPOLOGIE, et AIDE-MOI, BLESSE-MOI, SOCIOLOGIE, à un niveau de décibels qui rivalise avec les hurlements des rames de métro.

Le chant, tel un canon classique, vient heurter, avec la régularité du ressac, vos oreilles et votre cerveau. L'insatisfaction et la douleur martèlent les murs et réclament bruyamment qu'on leur prête attention. L'esprit primal de l'homme exprime ses désirs dans des tonalités d'une puissance à peine supportable. Cette extraordinaire intensité éveille une multiplicité d'interprétations : Rinde Eckert représente les multitudes hurlantes de la terre, il est le corps politique, il est l'enfant archétype et les



Bruce Nauman, *Anthro/Socio*, 1991, détail.

Courtesy MoMA/Scott Frances

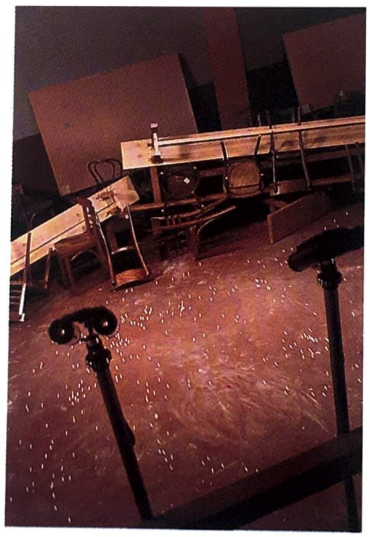
The best exhibitions always seem to come as a shock, but the shock itself is vitally reminiscent of something familiar. There was no way to anticipate that the Dislocations *show — seven installations spread out through three levels of the Museum of Modern Art — would be anything more than another nearly random assortment of scattered work. The Modern's new curator in the Painting and Sculpture Department, Robert Storr, simply invited seven of his favorite artists to "do something" in MoMA's spaces. They responded with a show that flash-freezes the human condition at this instant.*

The first indication of something strange and marvelous comes on the escalator that descends into the lower galleries at MoMA — spaces that feel like a basement, no matter what the architects intended. As you slowly sink into the earth, a bizarre song rises to meet you. It is at first indecipherable, and it remains so even as you walk down the hall and the volume mounts. In a dark, empty room filled only with stacks of video monitors and their projection machines, Bruce Nauman has set up one of his video installations. On six separate tape loops on the monitors, and projected onto three walls, in antiphonal harmonies sung at a decibel level that rivals the screech of subways, the bald head of performance artist and classically trained singer Rinde Eckert belts out variations on: FEED ME, EAT ME, ANTHROPOLOGY, and HELP ME, HURT ME, SOCIOLOGY.

The song, akin to a classical round, beats in a physical tide against your ears and brain. Need and pain hammer at the walls and clamor for attention. The primal human mind cries out its desires in barely tolerable tonalities. There is no one explanation for this extraordinary intensity: Rinde Eckert is the screaming multitudes of the earth, and the body politic; he's the infantile, archetypal child, and the insatiable expectations of adulthood. He's as obnoxious as the homeless who demand money, rattling their

attentes insatiables de la maturité. Il est aussi insupportable que les sans-abri quémandant une pièce de monnaie, en secouant leur gobelet en carton et gémissant sur les crescendo de *Dies Irae*. Vous éprouvez un irrésistible besoin de partir. Mais, pour peu que vous y résistiez, vous percevez progressivement les accents mélodieux et séduisants d'un chœur grégorien chanté en sourdine par des moines — la souffrance trouve son salut dans la connaissance de soi-même. Mais vient un moment, pourtant, où la fuite est la seule réponse.

Une fuite qui vous conduit dans une autre salle (tandis que la voix de Rinde Eckert vous poursuit, atténuée, mais encore audible). Ici, Ilya Kabakov a monté une parabole de l'Etat soviétique depuis la Révolution. Vous prenez un pont qui traverse une « salle de récréation » où l'on débattait naguère d'art, de philosophie et de droit. La parabole se déploie comme une histoire, racontée sur une feuille imprimée, agrafée à un tableau noir au milieu du pont. Tout, autour de nous, et vu du pont, nous « prouve » qu'il s'agit d'une histoire vraie. Une exposition d'art dissident s'est obligatoirement tenue dans cette salle. Mais un cataclysme a projeté les œuvres d'art, les chaises et les tables sur les quatre murs, les a retournées et renversées avec la violence d'un cyclone. Sur la portion de sol couleur terre ainsi dégagée près du pont, de minuscules silhouettes humaines, blanches, plus petites que l'ongle, ont surgi en hordes innombrables. Pour mieux les voir sans doute, des jumelles, accrochées au pont, visent ces multitudes silencieuses.



Comme Nauman, Kabakov a produit un mythe de création à strates multiples, qui n'a pas de réponse unique, mais une quantité d'interprétations virtuellement résonantes. C'est d'abord l'image d'un peuple fragile jouant dans les champs des divinités. C'est aussi, avec plus d'insistance, une métaphore de la Révolution russe, où la crise de l'idéologie écarta brutalement l'art, la philosophie et le droit et figea toute politique au moment de ces bouleversements, instituant la surveillance permanente de ses citoyens. (En fait, on voit moins bien les gens avec ces odieuses jumelles, mais allez dire ça à l'Etat soviétique.) Mais, surtout, c'est une superbe représentation du sort misérable qu'infligent les gouvernements à l'humanité qui gémit à leur porte. Quand les citoyens font trop de vacarme, on appelle la police.

Passé le pont, puis une porte, vous butez contre le troisième volet du paradoxe humain. Avec *Twosome*, Louise Bourgeois résume et réunit tout ce qui a retenu son attention pendant sa longue carrière. Un long cylindre noir (un ancien fût d'essence) est niché à l'intérieur d'un autre cylindre noir. Lumière rouge brillant par intermittence, moteur tournant, le plus petit cylindre effectue un mouvement de piston à l'intérieur de son homologue. Ce jeu secondaire, malhabile, tire au clair toutes les associations possibles avec le grand IN/OUT : excrétion, ingestion : ce que font les bébés. Sexe et pouvoir : ce que font les hommes et les femmes. L'alternance de retrait dans l'intimité et de poussée vers la liberté : ce que font les familles. Le grand moteur/machine qui nous conduit à former un couple et à vivre ensemble en emportant nos spectres freudiens dans nos bagages. Bourgeois a ajouté

paper cups and crying in a surging Dies Irae. *The pressure to leave is irresistible. But if you momentarily fight it, you begin to hear an undertone of the mellifluous and seductive, of monks joining voices in a Gregorian chorus — pain redeemed through self-recognition. The point comes, though, when flight is the only answer.*

But escape leads you into another room (with Rinde Eckert's voice surging more faintly but still audibly). Here, Ilya Kabakov has mounted a parable of the Soviet state since the Revolution. You traverse a bridge through a "recreation room" where art, philosophy, and law were once debated. The parable unfolds as a story, told on a typed sheet tacked to a blackboard in the middle of the bridge. The "evidence" that the story is true is visible all around you, from the bridge. This room was to have been the site of a dissident art exhibition. But some cataclysmic event has happened here to scatter the art, the chairs, and tables to the four walls, overturning and upending them as though by cyclone. In the cleared space on the earth-red floor near the bridge have emerged tiny white human figures, smaller than a fingernail — unnumbered hordes of them. Presumably to see them better, there are binoculars fixed to the bridge and aimed at these silent multitudes.

As with Nauman, Kabakov has produced a many-layered creation myth with no single answer, yet any number of potentially resonant interpretations. At one level, it's a picture of frail people at play in the fields of the gods. Rather more insistently, it's a metaphor of the Russian Revolution, which swept aside art, philosophy, and law in the throes of ideology, and froze all politics at the moment of upheaval, instituting perpetual surveillance of its citizens. (Those obnoxious binoculars actually make it harder to view the people, but try telling that to the Soviet state.) Even more urgently, this is a superb parallel of the miseries that governments inflict on the humanity wailing next door. When citizens cry out, governments send in the police.

Off the bridge, through a door, and you confront the third aspect of the human paradox. In Twosome, *Louise Bourgeois has produced a piece that summarizes and coalesces all the preoccupations of her long career. A long black tube (a former gasoline tank) nests inside another black tube. Flashing a red light and grinding its motor, the inside tube rolls in and out of its larger counterpart. This rumbling by-play elicits all possible associations with the great IN/OUT: excretion, ingestion — what babies do. Sex and power — what men and women do. The alternating pull of intimacy and the push for escape — what families do. The great motor/engine/machine that drives us to couple, and to live together, bringing our Freudian phantoms along with us. Bourgeois has added windows and a door in the configuration of her parents' house, so that overlaid on it all is the archaic mind of childhood.*

Nauman, Kabakov, and Bourgeois inhabit the

Ilya Kabakov, *The Bridge*, 1991, détail.

des fenêtres et une porte à la configuration de sa maison parentale, plaquant ainsi sur le tout la mentalité archaïque de l'enfance.

Nauman, Kabakov et Bourgeois habitent les galeries en sous-sol comme pour répondre en bloc à la lamentation de Rinde Eckert, SOCIOLOGIE... ANTHROPOLOGIE. Le triple passage à travers le cerveau primal s'achève ici, et vous amorcez votre remontée à la surface de la terre vers des niveaux d'expérience plus « normaux ». Dans les galeries contemporaines du second étage, là où finissent les collections permanentes du MoMA, trois artistes soulèvent de douloureux problèmes de race, de politique et d'identité.

Tous ont pris des risques. Chris Burden a conçu un « livre » qui va du sol au plafond, constitué de plaques de cuivre, dont les pages tournent autour d'un mât. Sur ces plaques sont gravés les noms des trois millions de Vietnamiens du Nord et du Sud qui ont péri dans une guerre que les Américains estiment être « la leur ». La pièce forme un contraste délibéré et direct avec le mémorial vietnamien réalisé par Maya Lin à Washington : sur celui-là, 56 000 noms américains sont inscrits sur du granit noir. Dans le livre de Burden, les noms sont de la taille d'une fourmi, et presque impossibles à déchiffrer. La plupart de ces noms restent approximatifs, puisque l'Etat vietnamien n'a officiellement recensé, documents à l'appui, que 100 000 victimes, mais l'estimation des pertes formulée par l'artiste, est aussi précise que possible. Pour Burden, ces chiffres représentent « le tiers d'un holocauste ».

Dans une salle adjacente, Adrian Piper a construit un amphithéâtre entièrement peint en blanc et cerné de miroirs dans sa partie supérieure. La salle évoque, au niveau subliminal, un lieu où l'on s'affronte, n'importe lequel, une salle de vente (de bétail, ou encore d'esclaves), ou une salle d'interrogatoire. Piper, artiste noir dont les installations remettent habituellement en question les comportements « colonisateurs » des Blancs, a ajouté, au centre de sa pièce, une tour qui contient l'image de la tête d'un Noir sur écran vidéo. L'homme tourne lentement sur lui-même pour se présenter à nous sous quatre côtés, là encore comme un esclave sur l'estrade. Dans ce décor entièrement blanc, il est montré comme un spécimen de laboratoire ou un sujet étudié dans un cours de médecine. Il proteste en vain, avec véhémence : il n'est ni sale, ni idiot, ni fainéant, ni minable. Mais il a beau s'en prendre directement — autant que faire se peut — aux stéréotypes raciaux, le décor l'empêche d'échapper à son identité de spécimen. Dans cette situation, ses protestations font simplement partie du spectacle. Dans l'arène immaculée, ce qu'il dira ne changera rien.

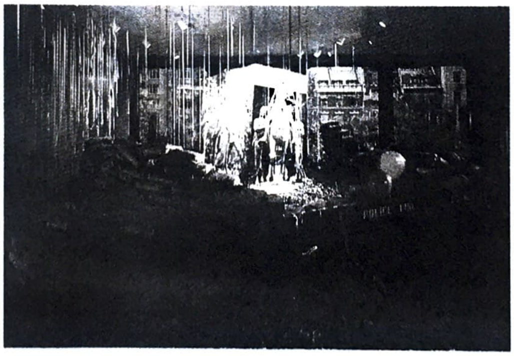
Exposer dans une institution comme le MoMA pose naturellement un dilemme à ces deux artistes noirs. David Hammons, que ses prises de position contre le cadre institutionnel et son habitude de vivre dans les rues de Harlem et de construire ses œuvres avec les détritus qu'il y trouve, exprime dans son installation, une partie de sa colère anticonformiste contre le grand establishment blanc. Il donne sa propre version amère d'une parade de Columbus Day. Dans une salle dont les hautes baies vitrées don-

lower galleries together as though they had collaborated on a general answer to Rinde Eckert's wailing song: SOCIOLOGY... ANTHROPOLOGY. The triple passage through the primal brain stem ends here, and your climb back to the surface of the earth and more "normal" levels of experience begins with your ascent up the escalators. In the third floor contemporary galleries at the end of MoMA's permanent collections are three artists who raise painful questions of race, politics, and identity.

Each picked a dangerous limb. Chris Burden has a floor-to-ceiling "book" made of copper plates with pages that rotate around a pole. The plates are etched with the names of three million North and South Vietnamese killed in the war that Americans think of as "ours." The contrast with the Vietnam memorial by Maya Lin in Washington is deliberate and direct: there, 56,000 American names are inscribed on black granite. In Burden's book, the names are as tiny as ants, and nearly indecipherable. Most of the names are approximations, since the Vietnamese government had documentation only on about 100,000, but the estimate of casualties is as precise as the artist could make it. Burden calls the numbers, "one third of a holocaust."

In an adjacent room, Adrian Piper has built an amphitheater painted entirely white, and surrounded at its top edge with mirrors. The room subliminally recalls any number of confrontational settings, including an auction pit (for cattle, or perhaps for slaves), or an interrogation chamber. Piper, a black artist whose installations generally challenge white "colonizing" attitudes, has added a tower in the room's center that contains a video monitor image of the head of a black man. He slowly turns around to show all four sides of himself, again like a slave on the block. In this all-white setting, he is presented like a laboratory specimen of a subject in a medical-school operating theater. Futilely, he protests out loud: he's not dirty, not stupid, not lazy, not sleazy. But though he confronts racial stereotypes directly — as directly as it's possible to do — the setting prevents him from escaping his specimen-like identity. Under the circumstances, his protestations are just part of the performance. Within the all-white arena, nothing he can say will make a difference.

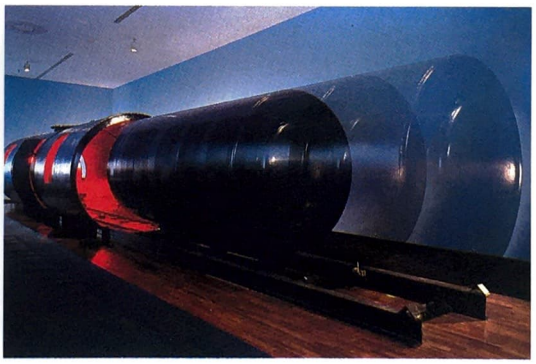
Naturally, the two black artists must confront the dilemma of showing their work in a major institution like MoMA. David Hammons, who is legendary for his anti-institutional attitudes and his habit of living in the Harlem streets and making art out of the refuse he finds there, directs some of this maverick anger at the great white Establishment in his installation. Hammons does his own resentful version of a Columbus Day parade. In a room with floor-to-ceiling glass windows that look out over the sculpture garden to brownstone Manhattan, Hammons has set up police barricades and sandbags manned with machine guns, and balloons bobbing from the ceiling. At the center of this oddly argumentative celebration



David Hammons, *Public Enemy.*

nent sur le jardin de sculptures et les immeubles bruns de Manhattan, Hammons a installé des barrages de police et des sacs équipés de mitrailleuses, ainsi que des ballons remplis d'air qui pendent du plafond. Au centre de cette fête ambiguë, il a placé une reproduction photographique de la statue équestre érigée devant le musée d'Histoire naturelle, vue sous ses quatre côtés. Cette statue exaspère Hammons qui passe tous les jours à Central Park West. Teddy Roosevelt se dresse sur sa selle avec une arrogance de macho. A côté de lui, sans montures, un Indien et un Africain agrippent ses étriers et se laissent conduire vers leur « destin manifeste ». Il fallait être Roosevelt pour voir un hommage dans cette effigie. Hammons, qui ne fait pas dans le velours, a placé de la dynamite sous la statue.

Esprit primal au sous-sol, analyse politique au second : il est normal que l'œuvre de Sophie Calle, qui a trait à l'art, se situe au niveau intermédiaire. A la requête de l'artiste, une demi-douzaine d'œuvres — un Seurat, un Magritte, etc. — ont été provisoirement décrochées des galeries du premier étage qui abritent les collections permanentes (pour créer des « fantômes », dit-elle). Calle a ensuite demandé au personnel du musée — commissaires, conservateurs et autres gens de métier, bref, aux personnes bien informées — de décrire l'œuvre d'art ainsi escamotée. Elle a ensuite mis sur les murs, à l'emplacement des originaux, les mots qu'ils ont employés et les petits dessins qu'elle les a priés d'exécuter. Il en résulte une pièce subtile, brillante, sur l'œil et l'esprit, ou la mémoire et ses confusions. Faut-il le dire, même les spécialistes ne gardent pas le même souvenir d'une même œuvre. Certains sont précis, d'autres non. Quelques-uns ont dessiné les œuvres avec exactitude, mais la plupart ne se rappellent d'abord que quelques détails frappants, qu'ils placent habituellement au mauvais endroit. En revanche, *tous* se souviennent des *sentiments* que leur inspire l'œuvre en question, mêmes s'ils sont incapables d'en reconstituer l'image. Les opinions ont les priorités, au sens épistémologique du terme, sur la précision du regard. Même l'art le plus neutre visuellement est apprécié en fonction du contexte humain.



La vie moderne hurle sa peine et implore qu'on la délivre. Le résumé de l'état du monde qu'établit Nauman entraîne tous les autres constats à sa suite. Par miracle, il ne s'y mêle ni plaisanterie légère ni jeu compliqué. C'est un domaine hanté par l'urgence en une période où les politiciens vaquent avec obstination aux affaires de routine, tandis qu'autour d'eux s'élève un chœur de voix angoissées. Aux Etats-Unis, les fondamentalistes polarisent la nation ; béats d'orgueil, ils affirment que Dieu parle leur seul langage. Washington ne demande qu'à exacerber les schismes, à dresser les gens les uns contre les autres et à renvoyer ses citoyens au monde des sans-abri et des paumés pour mieux imposer leur idéologie. La plainte funèbre de Rinde Eckert nous parle en ces temps d'humeur maussade. □

Traduit par Marie-France de Paloméra

Dislocations, au MoMA, New York, jusqu'au 7 janvier.

With primal mind below, and politics above, it's appropriate that Sophie Calle's piece about art should be in the middle. On the second floor permanent collections galleries, Calle asked that about half a dozen art works — a Seurat, a Magritte, and so on — be temporarily removed (to create, in the French phrase, "ghosts"). She then asked museum professionals — curators, conservators, and others who should know — to describe the art in absentia. *Their words and the small pictures they drew at her request have been put on the wall in place of the originals. This is a subtle but brilliant piece about eye and mind, or memory and its confusions. Needless to say, even the experts don't remember the same work in the same way. Some are precise, some aren't. A few people draw the works accurately, but most can't begin to remember more than a few salient details, usually wrongly placed. But* everybody *remembers what they* feel *about the work, even when they can't exactly reconstruct the image. Opinions take priority, in the epistemological sense, over the precision of sight. Even the most visually neutral art is value-loaded with human context.*

Modern life cries out in pain and begs for deliverance. Nauman's summary of the state of the world draws all the other work along behind him. Miraculously, there are no trivial jokes or convoluted games here. The urgency resonates in this era when politicians persist in going about their business while the chorus of anguish rises around them. In the United States, the fundamentalists are polarizing the nation; reveling in pride, they claim that God speaks only their language. Washington is willing to aggravate the schisms, to pit people against people, and to send its citizens out into homelessness and decline, in order to ram ideology down all those crying throats. Rinde Eckert's wailing voice speaks to the bitter temper of the moment. □

Dislocations *at MoMA, New York, through January 7.*

Louise Bourgeois, *Twosome*, 1991.

Courtesy MoMA/Scott Frances

ART NOW GALLERY GUIDE
OCTOBER 1991

(Ilya Kabakov, *The Collector*, 1981-88, from "10 Characters," installation at Ronald Feldman Gallery)

(David Hammons, *Installation view, Exit Art, May 13-June 10, 1989*)

Site-specific installations by Louise Bourgeois, Chris Burden, Sophie Calle, David Hammons, Ilya Kabakov, Bruce Nauman, and Adrian Piper are presented in "*Dis*locations" at The Museum of Modern Art from October 16 to January 7.

STUDIO
Tel Aviv, Israel
June 1992

מיקומים שגויים

תערוכת "דיסלוקיישן" במוזיאון לאמנות מודרנית

"אני חושבת שאיננו נמצאים יותר בטקסאס", אמרה דורותי לכלבה טוטו ב"הקוסם מארץ עוץ". טקסט אמריקאי קלאסי זה משמש לרוברט סטור (Storr) נקודת משען בקטלוג המלווה את התערוכה "דיסלוקיישן" (Dislocation). תערוכתו – הראשונה כאוצר החדש של המחלקה לציור ופיסול – מיוחדת, ללא ספק. סטור מגיע את תפיסת המוזיאון כ"קוביה לבנה" ואטומה, המשמשת מקום מפלט מתלאות היומיום. הוא מעניק ל־7 אמנים יד חופשית, בתצוגה שאינה פועלת על פי הכללים המוזיאליים המקובלים ומעמידה לדיון פתוח את הדיאלוג בין צופה לבין יצירת אמנות.

המושג Dislocation – בתרגום עברי חופשי "לא־אתרים", או "מיקומים שגויים" – מצביע על תמורות והיסטים מכוונים בנקודת התצפית והעמדת הדברים מזווית התבוננות שונה. יעדה של התערוכה הוא ליצור שיתוף פעולה בין האמן לבין הצופה, על מנת למפות מחדש חללים שלא באו בחשבון קודם, או חללים שהיו עד כה מובנים מאליהם. היצירות "מתקיפות" מכל אזורי המוזיאון. הן פוזרו בקומות שונות, בחללים מפתיעים, אפילו חדרו לתוך האוסף הקבוע. מסלול ההליכה דומה יותר למשחק סימוני דרך ב"צופים" מאשר לדרך השגורה והזאירה של עקב בצד אגוד. גם התכנים מבקשים במופגן לצמצם ככל האפשר את שטח ההפקר שבין אמנות לחיים: מלחמה, קולוניאליזם, דעות קדומות וגזענות, זיכרון וקיום אנושי. זהו רצון לחצות את הקווים אל מעבר למוצג אמנותי נייד שנתלה בגובה העיניים, לנוחיות כל הצדדים.

במיצג הווידיאו של ברוס נאומן (Nauman), הנושא את השם *Anthro/Socio*, נראה ראש קרח וקטוע מזמר או צווח בסגנון אופראי. הוא מופיע בהיפוכים שונים ומשכפל את עצמו מעל אקרני ענק באמצעות מלים מתגבבות. זוהי מקהלה יוונית של איש אחד: "עזור לי/פגע בי/האכל אותי/אכול אותי". הטקסט, המבוסס על רישום מוקדם של נאומן, מעמת קונפליקט פנימי – הרצון להשתחרר מכבלים מול השאיפה להיות מוגן, הזעקה לעזרה מול ההודאה באפסותך – יחד עם העצמת הכוח שבמעשה ההכפלה האלקטרוני.

לעומת הקקופוניה של נאומן, שוררת דומייה מוחלטת בחלל שעיצב האמן הרוסי איליה קבאקוב (Kabakov), כהמשך לסביבות המשגיות שבעטיין התפרסם. הצופה מובל מעל גשר עץ, חצה אולם אסיפות נטוש הזרוע כסאות הפוכים וספסלים שהוטחו הצידה בבהלה ועל רצפתו דמויות אדם עזירות, נעוצות כסיכות בשדה קרב. באולם שוררת אפלולית, למעט לוח ממוסמר שעליו ארבעה דפים כתובים, המסבירים שזהו מועדון דיירים מוסקוואי בטרם התרחש בו אירוע חשוב, בחודש מרץ 1984. לכאורה, היתה אמורה להיות מוצגת בו תערוכת ציורים אסורים, שהוגדרו אז "בורגניים" ו"מסוכנים לציבור הסובייטי"; אולם לפתע בוטל האירוע. הסיפור, שנראה בתחילה ריאליסטי לחלוטין, תופס תאוצה מסתורית והופך להיות אגדה בנוסח האחים גרים. מה היה האירוע שבעקבותיו בוטל האירוע הקודם? קבאקוב משאיר את התשובה לצופה.

גם עבודתה של לואיז בורז׳וא (Bourgeois) יכולה, לכאורה, להסתפח לאיקונוגרפיית הילדות. Twosome הוא מין קליע ענק, נע על מסילה ויוצר מנהרה מתכתית שבה מרצד אור אדום, כאותם מתקנים בגני שעשועים. ואולם במכונה הממלכדת הזו מהדהד תנור מוזיע במפעל תחמושת.

כריס ברדן (Burden) מנסה, מאז ראשית שנות ה־70, למצוא דרכי ביטוי קונקרטיות לתפיסות מופשטות, במיוחד פוליטיות וחברתיות. לתערוכה תרם את *אנדרטת וייטנאם האחרת* – אנטיתיזה לזו הניצבת בוושינגטון והמנציחה את החללים האמריקאים – 58,000 במספר. באנדרטה של ברדן – ספר ענק מלוחות מתכת – נחרטו שמותיהם של שלושה מיליון וייטנאמים שמצאו את מותם במלחמה; רוברט סטור, האוצר, מעיר בקטלוג: "אין כאן הטלת אשמה, אלא דין וחשבון על ממדיו העצומים של הקטל".

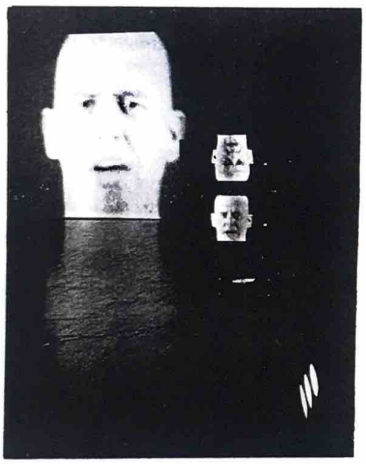
המיצג *אוי־ב הציבור* של דיויד המונס (Hammons) תופס חדר שלם. עלי שלכת, בלונים וסרטים צבעוניים משתלשלים מהתקרה, כמו אחרי מסיבה או אסיפת בחירות. זירת פעילותו האמנותית של המונס מזה 20 שנה היא רחובות ניו־יורק, והוא נוהג להקים מיצבים בפארקים, במקומות ציבוריים ובאתרים נטושים. האקראיות היא מרכיב חיוני בעבודתו, הנבנית מחפצים שהוא מלקט במקום והמשקפים, לדבריו, את המציאות העירונית ואת מורשתו האפריקנית. מחסומי משטרה יוצרים מעגל פנימי המכיל שקי חול של שוחות. במרכזו העתק צילומי של פסלו של תיאודור רוזוולט הרכוב על סוס (שניצב מול הכניסה של המוזיאון לטבע והיסטוריה בניו־יורק), מלווה באינדיאני ובאפריקני. הדמות ההיסטורית, המסמלת את כובש הישבת הלבן, נמצאת במצור, שכן קנים של תת־מקלעים, תותחי צעצוע ורובים מופנים פנימה. גם שני הנציגים האחרים ייפגעו בסופו של דבר, אומר המונס. כולנו נרמסים פה והחגיגה נגמרה. בעלי השלכת יש יותר מרמז לבחירות הצפויות בסתיו.

איך זה/מה זה של אדריאן פייפר (Piper) אף הוא אולם התכנסות, שבו מתמקד האמן בסוגיות של גזענות והגדרה עצמית. החדר דמוי קוביה מושלמת, אך פועל בניגוד לתפיסה המוזיאלית של "הקוביה הלבנה", שכן הוא יוצר סביבת אמפיתיאטרון צחה אליה נכנס הצופה בגומן, מזדהם ברפש מילולי. ממסך וידיאו שבראש עמוד מדקלם גבר אפריקני הכחשות של כל התכונות הסטריאוטיפיות הגזעניות המיוחסות לבני הגזע השחור. "אינני טיפש, אינני חרמן, אינני מסריח, אינני ילדותי, אני לא ערמומי, לא קולני, לא וולגרי, אינני משוגע".

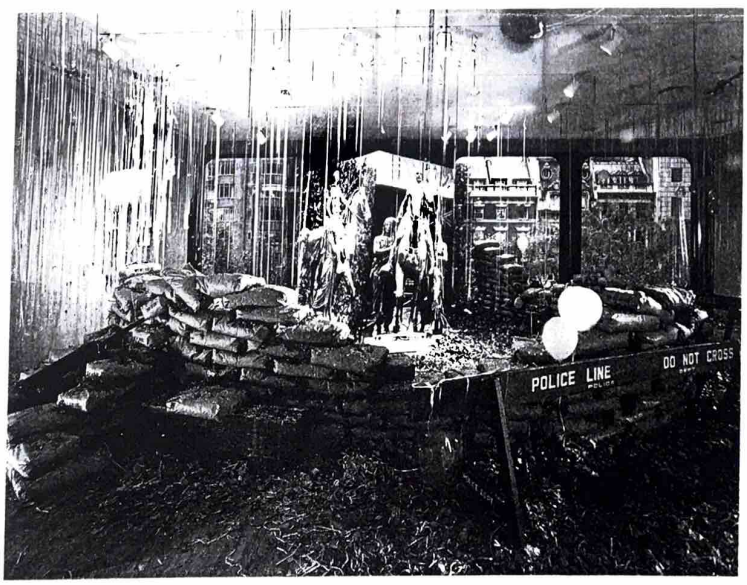
את ההיסטיז הרחב ביותר מצפייה מוזיאלית מקובלת מציעה האמנית הצרפתיה סופי קאל (Calle) ביצירתה *רוחות רפאים*. קאל ביקשה מעובדי המוזיאון לתאר בפניה מה הם זוכרים מיצירות אמנות מסוימות אשר הוסרו ממקומן הקבוע. מהתגובות המילוליות ומן הסקיצות שאספה יצרה קאל דימויים של היצירות החסרות והציבה אותן במקום העבודות גופן. מלאכת האיתור דומה לחיפוש של מחט בערימת שחת, בניסיון להמריד את העין וללכוד את הבלתי צפוי שנחבא בתוך הצפוי. מרתק להיווכח כיצד מהבהבת יצירת האמנות מתוך הזיכרון, בלולה כבר בפרשנותו של הצופה ובמטען האישי שהוא יוצק לתוכה.

טביעת אצבעותיה של האמנות ניכרת על הצופה. אינך יכול להצהיר בשוויון נפש אנין, "ביקרתי היום במוזיאון". אולי מוטב לומר, "המוזיאון ביקר אותי". זו תערוכה שכולה אי־נחת, במובן החיובי של המושג – בין אם בתוכן ובין אם באופן ההגשה. המוזיאון לאמנות מודרנית הרחיב את שעריו לאמנים ולתפיסות אמנות שונים זה מזה, ועשה זאת בטווח צר. כאן ממקשים במפגיע את הרגלי הצפייה ודוחקים בך **לא** להיות זהיר.

במקום בו מוצגת בדרך כלל יצירתו של אדוארד הופר *הבית שליד המסילה*, רשמה סופי קאל על הקיר: "זהו ציור אדיר. בית ריק, מחכה לאנשים שישובו אליו, אבל הרכבת רק עברה ולא עצרה". יש מי שסבר שבמלים האלה ערערה על קונוונציית היסוד המוזיאלית והשמיעה קריאה לשוב הביתה. איפה הבית? לא בטקסאס של הקוסם מארץ עוץ, כמובן. ■



ברוס נאומן, *אומרו/סוציו*, 1991. מיצב. פרט. וידיאו. צילום: סקוט פרנסס
Bruce Nauman, *Anthro / Socio* 1991, Installation View (detail), Video. Photo: Scott Frances



דיויד המונס, *אוי־ב הציבור*, 1991. מיצב. טכניקה מעורבת. צילום: סקוט פרנסס
David Hammons, *Public Enemy*, 1991, Installation View, Mixed Media, Photo: Scott Frances

PARABOLA
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The Art of Dislocation

Daniella Dooling

Dislocations
Organized by Robert Storr, curator, Department of Painting and Sculpture. An exhibition featuring new installations by seven artists: Louise Bourgeois, Chris Burden, Sophie Calle, David Hammons, Ilya Kabakov, Bruce Nauman, and Adrian Piper. Museum of Modern Art, New York, October 20, 1991-January 7, 1992.

To the hard of hearing you shout, and for the almost-blind you draw large and startling figures.
—*Flannery O'Connor*

THE CONTEMPORARY artist is often an outsider—partly by choice, but largely because of being cast in that role by the rest of modern society. This position is often one of solitude, and it is a position both desired and despised. The seclusion of the artist is much like that necessary in the lives and work of the monk, shaman, and blacksmith; indeed, there are obvious similarities. These individuals, like the artist, require isolation in order to achieve a purified state of mind and spirit that will enable them to "create." Because of their ability to transform, they are also the members of the society that are most feared and venerated, and therefore must be separated from other people. As Mircea Eliade states in *The Forge and the Crucible*, "Metal workers, al-

David Hammons' Public Enemy

most everywhere, form groups apart; they are mysterious beings who must be isolated from the rest of the community."[1]

In practical ways, the artist may feel forced into isolation by a lack of financial support, intellectual camaraderie, and tolerance for difference. Yet, in another way, the artist may consciously seek the solitude needed for inner growth and the distancing that is often a part of the creative process. Whether he or she feels embittered and rejected by the community or revered and respected, one element remains true: the artist, and consequently the creative process and its subsequent outcome, maintain a position which is outside the rest of the society.

From this position of isolation, a natural and obvious distancing occurs between the artist and the community. How great or small this distance is depends upon the nature of the art that is produced and the ability of the society to respond to it. Closed in upon itself, the community is unable to see itself clearly, and it is the contemporary artist who attempts to criticize, challenge, and describe it. The current exhibition, "*Dis*locations," at the Museum of Modern Art, shows how the work of seven artists relates directly to the community to which they address their art. Each has created an installation that is specifically designed to challenge the accepted point of view of the audience—to create an unfamiliar circumstance that might generate a question about something taken for granted or something long forgotten. Each space is in some way disquieting, discomfiting, *dislocating*. The installations by Louise Bourgeois, Chris Burden, Sophie Calle, David Hammons, Ilya Kabakov, Bruce Nauman, and Adrian Piper open up a dialogue with the viewer that in some way enables their work to be accessible to the community to which they speak.

THE IDEA that contemporary art is in any way accessible or understandable may seem contradictory to the outer community that has challenged, threatened, and questioned its very validity throughout most of this century. As art moved away from accepted traditional styles with such revolutionary works as Pablo Picasso's *Les Demoiselles d'Avignon* of 1907, the concept of what art is, or should be, changed, and consequently, the art "product" changed. As we approach the twenty-first century, these changes have become so severe and differ so much from traditional art that, in fact, many of us might say that contemporary art is no longer art. Installation, video, and performance art are some of the new modes of expression in the last twenty-five years, and by their very nature, these forms are often not recognizable immediately as "art" by *either* the art community or the outer community. These methods often utilize the body as a medium—that of the artist, the viewer, or an anonymous figure. This kind of art often evokes a theatrical presence, and upon entering the installation the viewer unwittingly becomes a member of the cast and therefore an active participant in the work of art. As contemporary art has become more and more exclusive and demands are made for a highly specialized and educated audience, installation, video, and performance often offer much needed entryways through which the viewer can gain access to an otherwise inaccessible and specialized activity.

While today's viewer must be trained in both art history and contemporary art theory in order to fully understand the meaning of most contemporary painting or sculpture, installation work usually directly confronts, assaults, and demands a certain level of participation in a very visceral way from its audience. For instance, in Bruce Nauman's powerful work,

Anthro/Socio, we are immediately immersed in a disturbing, almost chilling, video installation as we enter the room. On each wall a large video image of a bald white man is projected. The same image appears on smaller television monitors stacked on top of each other, creating a mirror reflection with one head right-side-up and one head upside-down. The man chants the phrases: "Feed me/Eat me, Help me/Hurt me" and on some monitors, the word "anthropology" is added to the first phrase and "sociology" is added to the second phrase. While the effect of this chorus of repeated words is in many ways troubling and irritating, there is also a sense of a beautiful harmonizing reminiscent of Gregorian chant. As Roberta Smith said in her review of the exhibition, Nauman's work "can send one running from the room or force an inner confrontation with one's own conflicted desires to be independent but also protected."[2] In this very emotional and physical way, Nauman is able to get beyond the too often inaccessible dialogue that surrounds so much of contemporary art today.

It is interesting to note that although often excluding the very audience to which it is directed, most contemporary art is specifically about the outer community. Recent contemporary art has become much more content-oriented, and this content is derived from and reflects the society and culture. Content and meaning have become the most important aspects of the work of art, while aesthetic beauty has often become less important, if important at all. This lack of beauty in contemporary art and the differing concept of what is beautiful is another factor that has pushed the contemporary artist and the community even farther apart. The very definition of beauty becomes altered by the artist who is able to manipulate the content of the work of art through the use of unconventional materials.

David Hammons' aesthetic is formed by the objects and refuse he finds on the streets of Harlem. While these materials may be seen as waste or surplus, and ultimately as ugly or displeasing to most of us, Hammons can see their beauty, irony, and validity. In the past Hammons has utilized such varied waste products as human hair from the floors of barbershops, discarded liquor bottles found on the streets of Harlem, and elephant dung from the Brooklyn Zoo. This debris becomes illustrative of various aspects of the community that we do not wish to see, resulting in a further disparity between Hammons and ourselves. In another way, however, Hammons is able to manipulate these materials in a ritualistic way that is evocative of his African heritage and speaks directly about the members of the disenfranchised African-American community to a primarily white, privileged audience. By working within the culture of the street, Hammons establishes the city as his workplace. "I like doing stuff better on the street, because art becomes just one of the objects that's in the path of your everyday existence. It's what you move through, and it doesn't have superiority over anything else."[3]

In *Public Enemy*—the title itself perhaps referring to the controversial political rap band of the same name—Hammons literally attacks establishment art's racist imagery, which we are so accustomed to that we no longer see. The installation consists of a barricade of sandbags, machine guns, balloons, and autumn leaves around a four-sided photographic replica of an equestrian statue of Theodore Roosevelt, the original of which is located in front of the American Museum of Natural History. In this traditional sculpture, Roosevelt, seated

grandly atop a majestic horse, is flanked on either side by a sculpture, one of a Native American and the other of an African-American slave. Hammons takes the plywood replica of the statue and its racist connotations hostage by surrounding it in a military maneuver, albeit one with the playful irony of a political convention or birthday party. He creates a new point of view through which to experience the sculpture—he *dis*locates another work of art—enabling us to open our eyes and see the world anew.

Another artist, Adrian Piper, attacks racial stereotypes in an even more direct and serious way. Piper, a light-skinned black woman, has been a victim of racial preconceptions throughout her life and, in fact, in an effort to challenge these attitudes had a business card printed up that she handed to people when they made a racial slur in front of her:

Dear Friend,
I am black.
I am sure you did not realize this when you made/laughed at/agreed with that racist remark. In the past I have attempted to alert white people to my racial identity in advance. Unfortunately, this invariably causes them to react to me as pushy, manipulative or socially inappropriate. Therefore, my policy is to assume that white people do not make these remarks, even when they believe there are no black people present, and to distribute this card when they do. I regret any discomfort my presence is causing you, just as I am sure you regret the discomfort your racism is causing me.
Sincerely yours,
Adrian Margaret Smith Piper[4]

Piper's installation, *What It's Like, What It Is*, consists of a glaring white room with bleacher seats lined along each wall. In the center of the room, a white pillar stands with a video monitor on each side. A black man's face looks out from the video saying over and over: "I'm not pushy. I'm not sneaky. I'm not lazy. I'm not noisy. I'm not stupid. . . ." Piper forces us to confront our stereotypes—in a room where our skin's very pores are visible in the harsh light.

Chris Burden, an artist infamous for an action in 1971, where he had himself shot in the arm in front of a gallery wall, has one of the most aesthetically pleasing works in "*Dis*locations." His installation, entitled *The Other Vietnam Memorial*, is made of enormous copperplates in a hanging file configuration. On each plate is etched the names of the Vietnamese people killed in the Vietnam war. The impact of numbers, three million in all, especially in comparison to the 57,939 American names listed on Maya Lin's Washington memorial, causes the viewer to reflect once again on a familiar topic from a totally unfamiliar and new location. We are forced to acknowledge the other side of the story, unwittingly seduced into the work of art by the warm glow of the copperplates.

Perhaps the most light-hearted artist in "*Dis*locations," Sophie Calle, interacts with her audience in a direct and tangible way. Calle asked certain museum workers to recall from memory several of the paintings that are temporarily out of the museum. Each museum staffer was asked to draw a small picture of the missing painting and also to describe it. This collaboration resulted in drawings and images that Calle used to create a decorative collage in the space that each painting once occupied. Her work is not with the rest of the "*Dis*locations" installations but is interspersed throughout the permanent collection; the viewer has to search for various parts of it throughout the regular works in the second-floor galleries.

Her installation also operates as a fun-filled guerilla tactical plan as it surprises and perplexes unsuspecting visitors to the museum proper who have come to walk through the permanent collection. Coming upon one

of Calle's pieces, these innocent viewers gaze with incomprehension at this seemingly out-of-context work of art. *Ghosts*, the title of the piece, is literally a faded and distant image of something that was once there, and it brings the theoretical dogma of painting off its pedestal and allows the viewer to think once again about the fundamental aspects of art—what it makes you think about, what it makes you feel, and what you remember when it's no longer there.

THE OTHER TWO artists included in the show, Ilya Kabakov and Louise Bourgeois, present installations that are interesting but perhaps less accessible to the general public. Kabakov, somewhat like Hammons, addresses a specific community—in this case the Soviet community. The installation represents the site of a gathering of underground artists which seems to have been interrupted by the police: there are overturned chairs and benches, crumpled pieces of paper, and finished canvases propped against the wall. The viewer must stand on a bridge and view miniature cut-outs of little white men through a pair of binoculars. This adds a dream-like dimension to the installation, but seems self-conscious in comparison to the expressionistic attitude of the rest of the piece. The viewer is not allowed to stray from the path formed by the bridge and feels further intimidated by a museum guard who hovers nearby to make certain that no one moves the carefully placed binoculars. *The Bridge*, the title of the piece, forces the viewer to remain at a specific location and thereby causes the work to become "spectator only" museum art.

Twosome, Louise Bourgeois' work, contrasts remarkably with the silence of its neighbor, *The Bridge*, by its flashing red lights and mechanical whirs and clicks. There are two horizontal oil tanks with small window-like holes which glow with a startling red light in a dimly lit room. As the viewer watches, one tank moves slowly away from the other along a track and then suddenly pulls itself back with a magnetic-like attraction. *Twosome*, although largely remaining allusive and ambiguous in its references, draws the viewer in by its nightmarish kinetic energy, like a toy train set gone mad. Its kinetic capability and emotional quality both engage and repel the viewer, but its message remains unclear.

Ours is a world that is difficult to understand, or to have a visual picture of, and contemporary art is one way we might begin to have a better understanding of it. It is, perhaps, one of the jobs of the artist to open the eyes of the public to the political, racial, and social issues facing our world—and to establish a different place from which to view these issues. However, because art has become so exclusive and specialized, we have often been unable to gain access to this insight. Perhaps this new work, in which intellectual coldness is put aside for a hands-on, visceral, playful, and confrontative style, will begin to break down the barrier between contemporary art and the public it portrays.

Daniella Dooling, sculptor and former editorial assistant of PARABOLA, *is currently teaching sculpture at Montana State University.*

NOTES

1. Mircea Eliade, *The Forge and the Crucible* (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1962), p. 89.
2. Roberta Smith, "At the Modern, Works Unafraid to Ignore Beauty," *The New York Times*, Oct. 18, 1991.
3. Robert Storr, "*Dis*locations" (New York: The Museum of Modern Art, 1991).
4. *Ibid.*

NEXT
Rome
Spring 1992

DISLOCATIONS
The Museum of Modern Art
New York
october 20, 1991 - january 7, 1992

A major exhibition featuring new installations by seven artists: Louise Bourgeois, Chris Burden, Sophie Calle, David Hammons, Ilya Kabakov, Bruce Nauman, and Adrian Piper. Organized by Robert Storr, curator, Department of Painting and Sculpture, *Dislocations* leads us to question some of the familiar mental landmarks by which we orient our thinking. The term dislocation implies calculated shifts of location and point of view. In the exhibition *Dislocations,* artist and audience collaborate in mapping previously unimagined spaces or remapping those taken for granted as self-evident.
Several large-scale interiors are among the installations that have been created especially for this exhibition. They are spread throughout the Museum, including portions of galleries devoted to the painting and sculpture collection, and their elements range from monumental sculpture to found objects. Given the quantity and diversity of installation work being done today, the artists have been selected with the aim of bringing together a broad range of formal, poetic and social practices.

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Political Correctness And Its Discontents

ISSUES OF RACE, CLASS AND GENDER ARE DRIVING THE ART WORLD TO THE BARRICADES. STEVEN VINCENT EXAMINES THE CONTROVERSY—AND DISCOVERS CAUSE FOR CONCERN

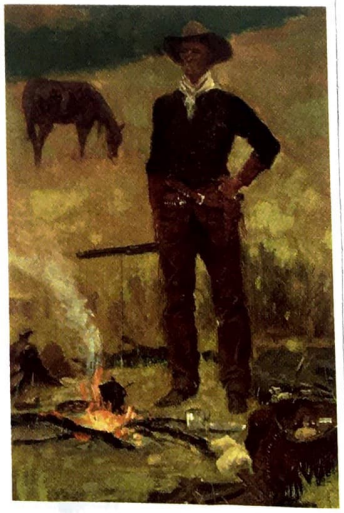
"Politically correct garbage," wrote an irate viewer in the comment book of the Smithsonian's National Museum of American Art in Washington, D.C. "A relentless sermon of condescension," added the well-known Harvard historian Simon Schama. "Perverse, historically inaccurate, destructive," penned former Librarian of Congress Daniel Boorstin.

The reason for this hullabaloo? Last summer's "The West As America" exhibition. Reinterpreting Western paintings, the show asserted that works by such artists as Frederic Remington and Charles Russell were unwitting justifications of America's greedy, racist and ecologically disastrous westward expansion. The exhibition, understandably enough, struck a nerve. Ken Ringle in the *Washington Post* declared that it "trashes...most of our national history," while thundering from Capitol Hill, Alaska Senator Ted Stevens demanded to know why people should visit the museum to "see a history that's so perverted."

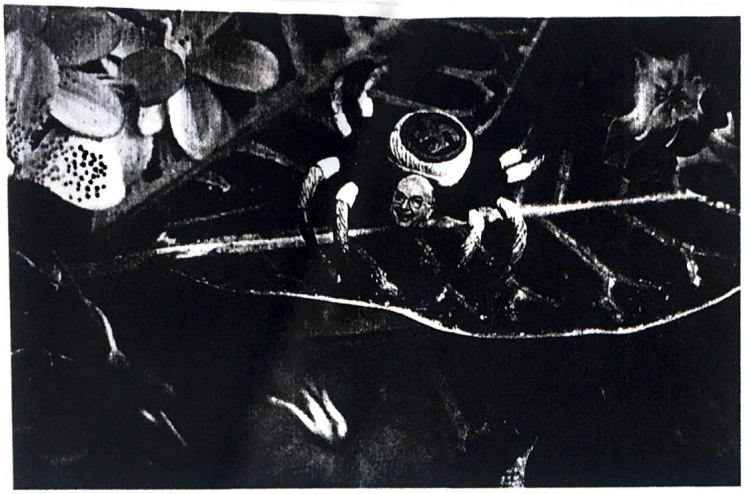
An exercise in so-called political correctness or an overdue reevaluation of Western art? Both—and more. For the furor over "The West As America" is yet another skirmish between two rapidly diverging art world camps: on the one side, critics, curators and artists schooled in politically radical "postmodern" critical theories; on the other, the increasingly besieged defenders of more traditional notions of aesthetic autonomy and value—and, indeed, of the liberal imagination itself.

"Many Western paintings supported an expansionist policy," explains William Truettner, the show's curator. "They're not accurate mirrors of the past." In the show's catalogue he goes further, asserting that 19th-century American history was written by and for the society's dominant class. "I don't hold with formalist theories that give paintings ahistorical or universal meanings," Truettner elaborates. "I'm interested in art's significance, in its historical context." According to the now-infamous wall texts of "The West As America," Western paintings viewed in that historical context are little more than agitprop travel posters for the interests of Eastern money and are riddled with the white man's "fears of miscegenation" or even, in Remington's case, with full-blown racism.

Accurate or not, one thing is clear: political correctness—"p.c."—together with its traveling companion "multiculturalism," has come to the art world. Stoked by the tinder-dry climate



Cowboy or imperialist? As reinterpreted by the politically correct, works such as Frederic Remington's *The Parley* (detail) are little more than apologias for America's "racist" westward expansion.



Heroes and villains: the NEA-bashing North Carolina senator is skewered in David Wojnarowicz's *Subspecies Helms Senatorius* (above), while Pruitt-Early eulogize—or exploit?—the civil rights martyr in *Painting from the Red, Black, Green, Red, White, Blue Project, House of Martin Luther King* (opposite).

in America today—itself the result of more than a decade of the government's malign neglect of widening social inequalities and racial and ethnic tensions, of the AIDS epidemic and of women's issues, plus a raft of cultural controversies including the continuing attacks on the National Endowment for the Arts, the spiritual and economic doldrums of the art world and the increasingly fractious nature of racial and sexual "identity politics"—the contentious p.c. dogma is currently blazing through sizable tracts of today's art world. But while few people deny the seriousness of America's current problems, it remains a vexing question whether art world political correctness usefully addresses them, or whether it simply makes its adherents feel morally elevated and engagé while frequently protecting mediocre, trend-of-the-month art from the cold light of criticism. Whatever the answer, political correctness—however sensationalized by the media—seems certain to change attitudes and institutions for years to come.

In one sense, of course, none of this is terribly new. America has traditionally been chock a block with moralizing reformers. As *Time* magazine art critic Robert Hughes puts its, "Political correctness is the recrudescence of good old-fashioned American puritanism and guilt." Still, today's political correctness has a particular—and particularly troubling—edge: in its more extreme formulations, p.c. tends to locate the root of all evils in the idea of liberal democracy itself. Indeed, many p.c. radicals see democratic institutions and concepts of individual liberty as little more than velvet gloves disguising the iron fist of white, male, heterosexual, Eurocentric power. Racism and sexism, they claim, are central supports of our culture.

The art world—and art itself—is not exempt from the indictment. Casting aside the ideas of aesthetic independence and judgment first espoused by Immanuel Kant, hard-line p.c.-ers believe that art is *never* nonpolitical, and that it has meaning only when it actively serves a social purpose. They would agree with critic Thomas McEvilley when he writes, "Artwork. . .must have an ethical aspect. . .a claimed intention on the part of the artist that the work, however unobviously, is somehow 'about' some issue such as ecology, AIDS, feminism, ethnic identity, homelessness, the media and so on." McEvilley's hedge ("however unobviously") notwithstanding—he is, after all, discussing Julian Schnabel here—many of today's politically engaged artists willfully downplay the formal qualities of their work in favor of its social content. "Your body is a battleground," cries a well-known piece by Barbara Kruger, for instance, using stark magazine advertising techniques to advance a pro–abortion rights stance. Even more in-your-face is a work by Hachivi Edgar Heap of Birds, a Native American artist who shows at Manhattan's cutting-edge nonprofit gallery Exit Art, which states in big white block letters against a black background, "DON'T BELIEVE MISS LIBERTY." "I wanted to show the Chinese students at Tiananmen Square what the Statue of Liberty *really* means," Edgar Heap of Birds explains. "If you showed the statue on an Indian reservation, they'd probably throw eggs at it."

> *"Political correctness is the recrudescence of good old-fashioned American puritanism and guilt"*
> ***Robert Hughes***

Such p.c. pedantry is also creeping into that temple of disinterested modernism, New York's Museum of Modern Art. In last fall's "*DIS*LOCATIONS" show, for example, artist David Hammons's installation *Public Enemy*—in which he "laid siege" with toy guns and dynamite to a photographic replica of the Teddy Roosevelt statue outside New York's Museum of Natural History—seemed to reduce the complexities of TR's legacy to a visual one-line gag. Adrian Piper's interrogation-like room in which a videotaped African-American denounced black stereotypes

Barbara Kruger's 1991 installation at the Mary Boone Gallery bombarded viewers with denunciations of sexism and violence.

stressed the evil of racist thinking to museumgoers—who, one would have hoped, understood this already. And Chris Burden's *The Other Vietnam War Memorial*, commemorating the war's Vietnamese dead, came up with its 3 million "casualties," whose names were etched into copper plates, by electronically recombining in various permutations the names of 4,000 actual Vietnamese victims—an act of condescension so staggering in its implication that Asian names, individuals and personalities are interchangeable to an artist scoring a politically correct point, that it surely rivals the sanitized body counts given by the smug architects of that war.

"Most so-called political artists leave the art—the complexity, the quest for form and originality—out of their work," maintains Gerald Marzorati, deputy editor of *Harper's Magazine* and the author of the PEN-award-winning study of Leon Golub *A Painter of Darkness*. "Instead, they create visual op-ed pieces."

It is not suprising, then, that time can be cruel to p.c. artists. Among those artists whose issue-oriented work is now being reassessed and frequently downgraded by less ideologically tendentious critics are such favorites of recent seasons as Lorna Simpson, Tim Rollins & K. O. S., Donald Moffett, Mike Glier, Jerry Kearns, Sylvia Kolbowski and Robert Morris, among others. On the other hand, a number of politically oriented artists continue to do work that often transcends its p.c.-ness: Kruger, Louise Lawler, Hans Haacke (at times) and, despite their "*DIS*LOCATIONS" misfires, Hammons and Piper, to name but a few.

Installations such as those seen in "*DIS*LOCATIONS" are not the only way p.c. artists attempt to raise the consciousness of the Great Obtuse. More generally, a genre that may be dubbed "investigative art" has become a staple of political engagement, and nowhere more so, perhaps, than in exhibitions mounted at New York's New Museum of Contemporary Art. "We're interested in the ability of art to create a better environment," explains Marcia Tucker, the museum's founder and director, "and to change the way people think." A typical show at the New Museum, for example, uses a collection of vintage television sets to "explore the social impact" of the medium. Another "seek[s] to challenge...biased representations of death," according to museum literature, and "the rampant fear of death that permeates. . .our culture"; among the exhibits: a cryonic suspension tank. And in the accompanying brochure for a recent show by Chilean sculptor Alfredo Jaar—works that "raise troubling questions" about Brazil's 1980s gold rush, Vietnamese refugees and the power of "multinational capitalism"—the museum announces its own ambition to "examine global power struggles." "We like to ask questions," Tucker adds.

But not everyone agrees that such *(continued on page 114)*

POLITICAL CORRECTNESS

questions are appropriate for art. "Art is not the servant of social agendas, nor is it there to improve you morally," states Camille Paglia, humanities professor at the University of the Arts in Philadelphia and controversial author of the best-selling *Sexual Personae: Art and Decadence from Nefertiti to Emily Dickinson*. "In totalitarian societies, art exists for didactic purposes."

Exacerbating this debate, however, are the many politically active artists and critics who believe that America *is* a totalitarian society, ruled by, as Hughes sarcastically jokes, "the pale, patriarchal penis people." And to combat this perniciously omnipotent class, many artists have taken up the cudgels of "multiculturalism."

What is "multiculturalism" in the arts? Simply put, it is the attempt (some would say long overdue) to broaden—or in some cases, supplant—the art world's traditional bias toward white, male, European artists in museums and galleries, with an increased emphasis on women, gays and lesbians and Third World artists, as well as American "artists of color." The perception powering this movement is simple: America is becoming an increasingly politicized, ethnically diverse society, and art and art institutions must reflect these changes—even if it means, in some cases, sacrificing notions of quality and the ideal of a "color-blind" society.

"People want to feel a connection between art and their lives," says Kathy Halbreich, the director of Minneapolis's Walker Arts Center. "Art has real meaning when it helps people to understand themselves, or the world beyond themselves." Toward that end, directors such as Halbreich have plunged their institutions into a ferment of multicultural arts programs, featuring, for example, gay and lesbian videos, Native American music concerts and new-wave African-American films. Even the NEA has gotten into the act by penalizing institutional grant recipients that demonstrate a lack of minority representation. And recently, as the *New York Observer* newspaper reports, two major New York museums were considering hanging a show of Cuban art from a Washington, D.C., artspace whose catalogue for the exhibition trumpeted, "For 45 years, racism and provincialism have been hallmarks of the American museum. Women artists have been marginalized; Blacks 'lacking quality'; Latinos almost invisible; and Afro-Latinos not even existent."

As Whitney Museum Director David Ross—along with Halbreich, a leading advocate for the multicultural, politically correct museum—explains, "The composition of the people who traditionally support museums has been white and upper-middle class. Will that evolve? Yes. And art institutions must reflect the culture around them."

But if these modifications in America's art institutions might be thought of as "good" multiculturalism, there is also "bad." In 1990, to take one hardly unique example, the city of Chicago decided to organize an exhibition reflecting the ethnic and racial diversity of its artists. When only 6 of the 90 works selected by judges for the show were by minority artists (whose entries made up about 7 percent of the total), a fracas developed, resulting in the forced addition of 20 works by artists of color. To compound matters, a statement by Chicago's commissioner of cultural affairs regretted that, prior to judging the artwork, the selection panel had not been informed of the race of each artist. Similarly, if not so egregiously, toting up the number of women and racial and other minorities included in exhibitions, on panels or on rosters of grant recipients and the like has become so much a part of the ordinary practice of the art world that few people stop to think about it, far less to question the assumptions on which it is based.

However, the influential Marxist art historian—and a Ross appointee to the Whitney museum staff—Benjamin Buchloh, for one, is quite clear about what's ultimately at stake in this sort of aesthetic affirmative action. According to Buchloh, the means by which "white, male, Western culture" traditionally excludes "all other cultural practices is the abstract concept of 'quality.'" In other words, as the current motto has it, "Quality is a racist—and sexist—term."

Nonsense, replies Hughes. "The origin of the attack on quality comes from the grossly overpopulated art world," he declares. "We have all these young artists cranked out by academia who maybe aren't that hot to begin with and who wind up resenting the art world's absurd Hollywood-like star system. While 8 or 10 artists are in Frankenstein's laboratory being transformed into stars, the rest are like the angry villagers at the foot of the cliff, waving their torches around in frustration."

But Buchloh's sentiments are only the tip of the ideological iceberg. For example, the Whitney's influential Independent Study Program (where Buchloh teaches) promulgates a doctrine of art so earnestly, even naively, political that one might think this century's ideological killing fields and gulags never existed. "The ISP is a setting where student artists or curators have the occasion to come together to discuss critical theory," says program director Ron Clark. But behind this bland description lies a tendentious blend of "critical theory" derived from several approaches that first vaulted into academic prominence in America in the wake of the frustrated rebellions of the late '60s—radical feminism, the Frankfurt School Marxism of Theodor Adorno and Walter Benjamin and French poststructuralism (the notoriously complex theory that stresses, in part, how a society's dominant class defines that society by determining the meaning of

its signs and representations).

The result: a jargon-laden dogma that repudiates liberal concepts of artistic creativity, originality and authorship while remaining peculiarly obsessed with the purported power of straight, white males to "marginalize" other people and their "discourses." This "alternative methodology," as the ISP calls it, manages to be both dourly pedantic and at times unintentionally amusing. One brochure for an ISP student show on the theme of tourism, for example, portentously describes "the desire to travel" as a "complex register of cultural, political and sociological influences, many of which have been completely repressed by the tourist." And from the ISP's 1990–91 journal comes this high-p.c. description of a heavy-metal concert: "Colonizing the spaces of class discourses through my privileged critical/anthropological microscope, I become at once Dr. Science. . .masking myself in foreign modes of consumption for the purposes of my curious pleasure."

Such linguistic posing—one critic has tagged it "academagoguery"—should come as no surprise, given the academicization of today's art institutions. "For the last 25 years," says Marzorati, "academics have increasingly populated the art world. Almost all artists have college degrees now, and people in galleries and museums are no longer enthusiasts or monied aristocrats but professionals educated, or semi-educated, in the reigning lingo."

Jeanette Ingberman, an ISP graduate and now codirector of Exit Art, agrees. "There's a lot of p.c. jargon out there that people don't understand," she says. "If you don't know Foucault, Derrida, Lacan [the French poststructuralist *maîtres-penseurs*], you're out of the game. But it's all book smart, an intellectually authoritarian position that's not in touch with living artists." Thunders Paglia, "Political correctness is a serious threat to our culture. These bleached-out, dead-assed, sexually repressed art world academics are teaching young artists to use a big, abstract, intellectual machine to smash art. But emotional truth is the heart of our culture—if you want to talk about ideas, go become a philosopher."

Despite the to-the-barricades mentality of the p.c. debate in the U.S., the spectacle of America donning its p.c. hair shirt is greeted overseas with a huge—yawn. When asked whether p.c. exists in England, Nicholas Serota, director of London's Tate Gallery, responded that he could not really comment on what he called an essentially American problem. "We're concerned about social issues such as multiculturalism in England," notes Catherine Lampert, director of London's politically active Whitechapel Art Gallery, "but in a less dogmatic, formulaic way than in the States." And as someone who was, in 1968, on the Parisian barricades himself, French writer and art critic Guy Scarpetta says, "For us, the real question is how to rethink the validity of the aesthetic in contemporary terms. Frankly, there is something a bit crude, and more than a bit worn-out, about a lot of American discussion of these issues."

In fact, for all the current heat they are generating, there is something retro about p.c. attitudes. And for good reason. In museums, foundations, student programs and art magazines, thirty- and fortysomething bureaucrats and ideologues are now snugly ensconced in power—or poised to seize it—many of them hoping to extend their salad days in the radicalized 1960s and '70s into their 1990s professional careers. And this, in turn, could well foster the most important and lasting, if subtle, effects of p.c.—influencing the work and thinking of young artists seeking critical and institutional approval, as well as affecting the character and content of the shows and exhibitions the art public will see. Already, indeed, a number of well-established artists have been chastised and more by the Left for their political (or sexual/political) positions, real or perceived: Ian Hamilton Finlay, David Salle, Martin Kippenberger, Jeff Koons and even Matthew Barney.

"I was heavily influenced by feminism, which I've been involved in since 1968," Tucker remarks, explaining that the antihierarchal "collaborative model" with which she runs the New Museum "comes directly from feminist thinking." For his part, the ISP's Clark speaks of being affected by the anti-Vietnam, feminist and civil rights movements. And the Whitney's Ross, who is considering a future series of exhibitions organized around themes from social history and theory, believes that "the radicalism of the '60s is embedded in the art of today. For me, I've always been distrustful of authority, especially when it's unable to challenge its own assumptions."

But it is precisely such easy confidence that yesterday's rebels can, once in power, remain self-critical and open-minded that worries observers of the p.c. phenomenon. History is not exactly encouraging on the point. Already, many p.c. insurgents who have gained institutional influence have demonstrated the same failure to examine the assumptions of *their* power as those they have deconstructed and denounced. Last fall, for example, Pennsylvania State University removed a reproduction of Goya's *Nude Maja* from a music room after a professor complained that the painting constituted "sexual harassment" of her students (the work was subsequently hung in something called the "TV Reading Room"). And while that incident may be dismissed as isolated and inconsequential—indeed, farcical—there is a substantial body of thought, and of activists to make those ideas a reality, ready to put the boot into art that doesn't sit nicely on the sexual, ethnic, political or moral agenda. Indeed, one of today's most influential legal theorists, University of Michigan Law Professor Catharine A. MacKinnon, who has likened marriage to prostitution and consensual heterosexual intercourse to rape and whose stature was enhanced recently by an adoring *New York Times Magazine* cover story, has argued firmly on behalf of censoring certain forms of art. "If it can be proven that the material harms women or anyone else," she explains, "then I don't see why it should be protected simply because it's a work of art." Farfetched? MacKinnon's principles have already been incorporated into Canadian law and have been taken up by the American feminist antipornography movement.

Wrapped in the radiant mantle of justice, propounded from the lecterns of our most prestigious universities and now parroted by the comfortable and intellectually hip in today's art world, p.c. must seem an undeniably attractive alternative to the policies of inaction and the culture of glitz whose effects everywhere surround us. But art, unlike real politics, is a poor instrument of reform. Art and aesthetic experience are complex, contradictory, mobile, indeterminate, as likely to sup with the imagination's devils and demons as with the better angels of our nature. And, after all, in this century especially, politics and ideology have a shameful, even murderous record of trying to tell us who exactly those better angels are. Art is not wholly beyond politics surely, but it does well to maintain a cautious distance in order to preserve its freedom. The politically correct would scoff at such talk, but in reducing art to a tool of social and communicative combat, they are striking a Faustian bargain. "There's a direct cable linkup between Massachusetts in the 1600s and Berkeley in the 1990s," says Robert Hughes, "and it bypasses the Bill of Rights." Artistic freedom—and art itself—may have just as much to fear from the theory-quoting Left as from the Bible-thumping, NEA-bashing Right. (A&A)

***Steven Vincent is the staff writer of* Art & Auction.**