



Art in America

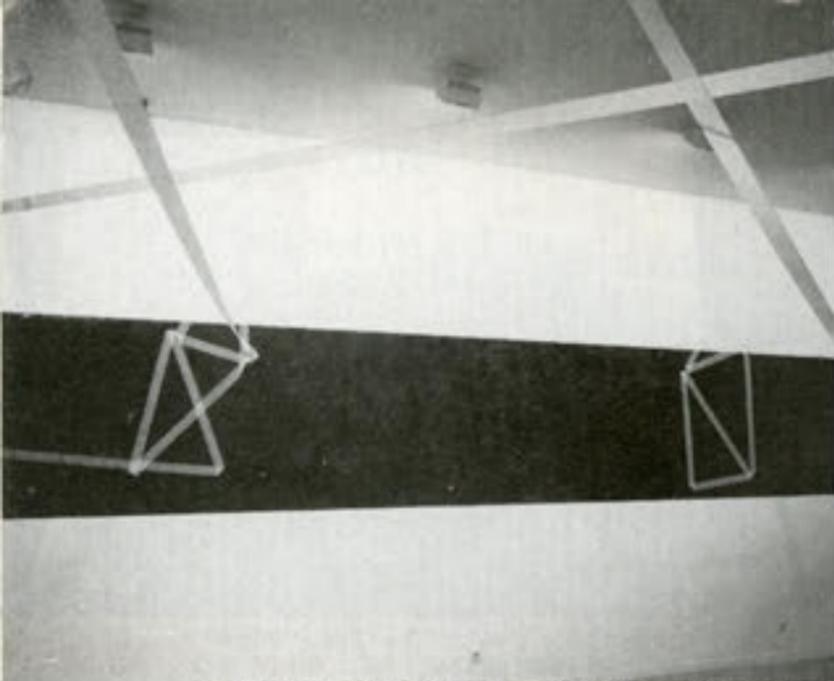
JULY 1996

TONY CRAGG
MORIMURA'S
"ACTRESSES"

ABSTRACTION AT
THE GUGGENHEIM

DE CHIRICO'S
AMERICAN SHADOW

\$5.00 USA
\$6.50 CAN £3.50 UK



Noël Dolla: Installation view of "Tableaux d'école et Leurres de Noël," 1996; at Météo.

Miriam Beerman's haunted expressionist oils, Michele Russo's sexually charged cartoons and Sherman Drexler's ghostly paintings of nudes on found stones and concrete.

The exhibition's catalogue provides valuable information about the artists but is burdened by hectoring criticism of the contemporary art world's youth-cult. As recent museum surveys of work by Jess, Florine Stettheimer, the San Francisco Abstract Expressionists and Claude Cahun demonstrate, the 1990s seem particularly open to art-historical reevaluations. This show would have served a better purpose by simply celebrating the fresh achievement of its art. As Louise Bourgeois, Beatrice Wood, Leonora Carrington and Enrico Donati remind us, artists over 80 can continue to make bold, gutsy work that is completely contemporary. —Michael Duncan

SANTA MONICA

Susan Hauptman at Tatistcheff/Rogers

Susan Hauptman's exhibition of self-portraits and still lifes in charcoal and pastel traveled to

Fritz Balhaus: *Pigment Window*, 1996, part of a project for Kunst-Werke; at Schinkel Pavilion.



Tatistcheff Gallery in New York, where she lives, after its showing in Santa Monica. The two still lifes in the show, both about 40 inches square, are quirky blends of realism and stylization in which a few lonely objects—a candy dish, a fruit bowl, a bottle or a figurine—make a sparse arrangement that can scarcely be described as "com-

posed." The objects seem to be waiting for a unifying will. The 1995 *Still Life* has perspective distortions (a pedestal dish is seen partly from the side and partly from above), and a few naturalistically colored items are surprises in the finely toned black and white works. The 1994 *Still Life* presents a bottle filled with flowers that are nearly trompe l'oeil, while a backdrop of graphically simplified daisies offers an entirely different style of representation.

But it's the five *Self Portraits*, from 1994 and '95, that make this show noteworthy. In each, Hauptman depicts the same stony-faced, androgynous head—middle-aged but firm, strong-jawed, without makeup, broad mouth slightly downturned, fair hair in a boy's cut—appended to various bodies, dressed or undressed but all conveying a sense of fantasy and given only a touch (or two) of color. The figure is centered and usually set high on the paper, head touching the top edge in some cases. Backgrounds are nonspecific: variegated like photo-studio portrait backdrops, vertically split into light and dark halves, or scattered with daisylike flower heads that drift down like autumn leaves to fill a dense floral border. In this last case, the artist stands in a sleeveless wrap-around house dress of a similar bold flower design. Her right arm is folded behind her and her left, bent at the elbow and held close to her body, lifts a yellow pencil, the only color in the work. Hauptman's stern face and brush cut seem transported from another world into this flowery artifice.

In one work she wears a dark

garment, and her left hand, in a long white glove tinged with yellow, holds a voluminous tulle wrap in place. In another she wears a '50s-style gathered-waist dress of a fabric that looks like an astronomical photo, and some of the stars have splattered into the darkness above her right shoulder. In one drawing she is nude, her smooth young body untouched by injury, gravity or wear. The turban tied around her head yields two full, pointed paintbrushlike ends that echo the sharpness of her elbows as she stands bluntly frontal with her hands held at the small of her back. The impossibility of that face having that body establishes beyond question the role of imagination in these works. Hauptman's sober, factual face in every case looks out at us, daring us to question its wish-fulfillment in these exemplary renderings.

—Janet Koplos

LONDON

Simon Patterson at Lisson

In his first show at Lisson, the gallery that introduced an earlier generation of British sculptors including Cragg, Deacon and Kapoor, Simon Patterson obliquely addressed that past by showing meticulously fabricated work to which he adds an unsettling conceptual twist. The untitled centerpiece, a set of fully rigged racing sails riding a platform of metal tubing, rose dangerously close to the skylight. Each sail was emblazoned with an author's name and dates—Raymond Chandler, Laurence Sterne and Currer Bell (Charlotte Bronte's pseudonym)—precipitating a flow of associations with no prospect of resolution.

If the work might be said to represent racing thoughts, the same might be said of all Patterson's work, with its layered systems of information, most famously his map on which the names of London underground stations are replaced by those of celebrated people. This new installation proposed that the experience of memorable writing be realized as a vision of sails driven by the wind. It humorously combined the absurd thought of posthumous literary competition with a

sense of the exhilaration of reading, and symbolized the imaginative transports of narrative text.

The idea that free invention might constitute a form of escape was developed in a second piece, . . . *words fly up* . . . (a phrase from *Hamlet*). Modular box kites of black, white and primaries hugged the ceiling near the names of inventors and entrepreneurs printed on the walls. Along with Marconi and Franklin was inscribed the name of Kakinoki Kinsuke, a Japanese thief who used a kite that could lift a man to steal gold off roofs. Like all Patterson's works, the kites made their industrial manufacture explicit, displacing signs of authorship in favor of the circulation of ideas.

Particularly compelling, though regrettably only exhibited in part, was a series of silkscreened canvases linking the table of elements with the names of galaxies and stars. Here the primary hues were used again, as if the utopianism once signified by reductive pictorial means might endure in chemistry and astronomy. Less successful was *Sister Ships*, four immense steel-and-plastic abacuses named after ocean liners, which do not inspire much conceptual excitement. More interesting were the giant slide rules, beautifully crafted and functional, inscribed with the names of legendary gunmen such as Billy the Kid and Jesse James. These reveal Patterson's fascination with the preoccupations of childhood. In these enlargements of school-boy obsessions, Patterson uses obviousness as a distancing device, beneath which his humor and light-footed play of ideas can quietly engage.

—Mark Harris

PARIS

Noël Dolla at Météo

At 50, Noël Dolla has yet to settle down into predictability. Since the start of his career in the late 1960s, as a participant in the Support/Surface group, he has continually altered and added to his artistic repertoire. Refusing any suggestion of a signature style, Dolla has made abstractions out of everything from paint-soaked handkerchiefs to soot-stained canvases, as well as venturing