

BUENOS AIRES

Oscar Bony at Federico Klemm

In moments of crisis, artists have been known to tear up, burn, paint over or just dispose of substantial amounts of work. The midcareer Argentine artist Oscar Bony, who lived for several years in Milan and represented Italy in the Aperto '82 section of the Venice Biennale, seems to have been overtaken by the passion to destroy. However he exhibited the results at Klemm, presenting a new and remarkable phase of his work.

The viewer of his recent photographic works was confronted with urban and wilderness landscapes, still lifes and life-size self-portraits. The works were not only beautiful but also seriously defaced. The artist shot them first with his camera and then, after they were framed and behind glass, shot them again with a 9mm police gun. This show was about the conversion of the self-destructive impulse into a positive force of internal growth and creative innovation.

In the bullet-torn landscapes

gallery. On the other hand, the shooting of one's portrait amounts to an alternative suicide which serves the perpetrator well by helping him avoid real, self-inflicted death.

Bony's gesture leaves a trail of violence that hounds the viewer: the bullet-hole orifices (like Lucio Fontana's cuts "in extremis"), the cracks and the pieces of broken glass lodged between the photos and their frames. The strongest result of the experiment is that Bony, even with a hole in his forehead, keeps looking at us, like a superhuman visitor who stays alive no matter what we do to him.

—Laura Buccellato and Eduardo Costa



Oscar Bony: *The Final Judgement—Suicide No. 1*, 1996; at Klemm.

LONDON

Angela Bulloch at Robert Prime

One of that close-knit group of London artists whose careers were boosted by their involvement with Damien Hirst's early curatorial projects such as "Freeze," Angela Bulloch has held to her own distinctive concerns without going to irreverent extremes.

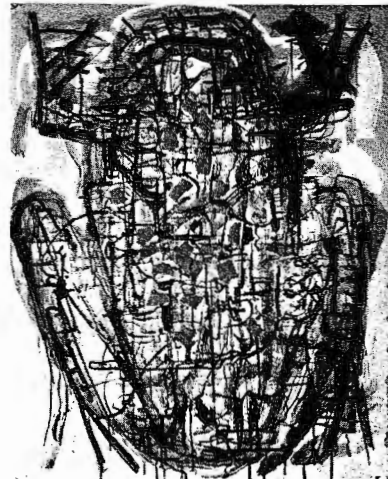
For previous exhibitions in Los Angeles and New York, she made a point of idiomatic diversity, showing audience-manipulated drawing machines, photographs and altered pages of found comic books. In this recent show, the gallery resembled an alienating office lobby with dysfunctional furniture. The visitor stepping across the threshold became a participant: treading on the doormat started the soundtrack of a computerized sibilant voice conveying a discomfiting and largely unintelligible welcome. Beside a telephone covered in brown Plasticine, the chicly styled *Work Bench*, made of welded steel and a padded cushion, pumped out a muddy liquid whenever someone sat down, as if it were a designer enema seat. In *A Choice of Evils*, adjustable reading lights, dimming in synchronization, bent over two circular coffee tables to illuminate disposable plastic containers bulging with something resembling a forgotten TV dinner.

What is particularly interesting about Bulloch's kinetic sculptures is the idea of

devices which disguise their own subversive purposes with the pretext of serving our needs. An obvious context for this work is sculpture from the early 1990s that dwelt on the uncanny aspect of everyday furniture. Jon Kessler's eerie minimalistic sculptures of oscillating lights or Nayland Blake's installations of erotic equipment ground the willed obscurity of Bulloch's works. In this show she combined organic with mechanical processes so that it seemed as if some alarming function might be revealed by peeling back the veneer of urbanity in neo-modernist design.

Lacking this sort of complexity was a large, inert, doughnut-shaped sofa with a table in the middle, which looked plucked from a dance club. Several digitized photographs hanging

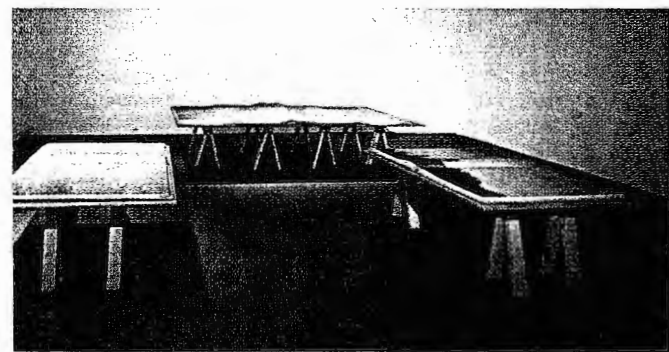
Michael Luchs: *Untitled*, 1995, mixed mediums on board, 28 by 22 inches; at Susanne Hilberry.



usters of hundreds of dots, representing some unfathomable heavenly body zillions of years away. These orbs on as Benday dots forming that represent the galaxyspiralling or swathlike as. Crotty introduces each y with a page that continually repeats its name in lettered script. On other s, grids of galaxies wildly ify the cosmic spectacle.

comparison, the territories ted in the *Atlas of Lunar rings* seem downright y. Craters of the moon are ed in detail, with nuanced es and colorings. In this loosely structured book, y includes examples of he calls "poetic diatribes," ative odes to the Los es night sky and laments the coastline littered with ng condos."

last book, *Five Nocs*, is perhaps the most ng, with its five drawings folding out to a length of 10 feet. These drawings from a depiction of galactsters to a landscape that ns an array of surveillance ment monitoring a comet oves across the night sky.

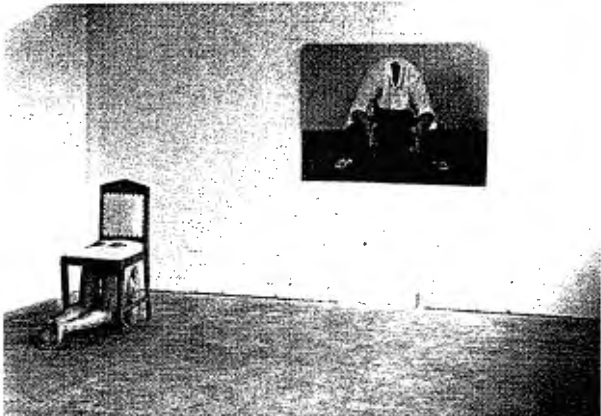


Crotty: Installation view of "Three Large Atlases," 1996; at Dan Bernier.

rky humor permeates s vision of the cosmos. In dscape drawing that s a starry sky, he fills the ound with a transcription logue from the James film *On Her Majesty's Service*. Playing off the setting in the Swiss Alps, contours the text to con- the mountainous terrain. ng the gap between sci- nd art, Crotty's subjective is by no means strictly ational; it measures and s the emotive power of scape.

—Michael Duncan

and still lifes we can see Thanatos channeled into an art object in which brute force interestingly disrupts the merely pleasant. However, when it comes to shooting self-portraits, there is a shift in meaning. Photographs of people can be said to act as psychological highways that connect the person in the photo to the viewer. Even in our rational age, many believe that the destruction of a portrait will hurt the person portrayed. Thus, the frightening suspicion that these self-portraits may be premonitory of the artist's suicide floated in the



Yael Davids: View of exhibition, 1995-96; at Akinci.

nearby featured a similar sofa being enjoyed at a party, where its use as crash pad or voluptuary's couch brought it to life. These exhilarating photos with their good-time imagery of disco lights, out-of-focus crowds and close-ups of Bulloch's friends perfectly evoke the expenditure of driving energy that characterizes contemporary London's blurring of nightlife into art. Nevertheless, it seems a long way from the restrained coprophilia of *Work Bench* to the hedonistic imagery of the parties, and this show could have drawn such an intriguing dichotomy into more productive contrast.

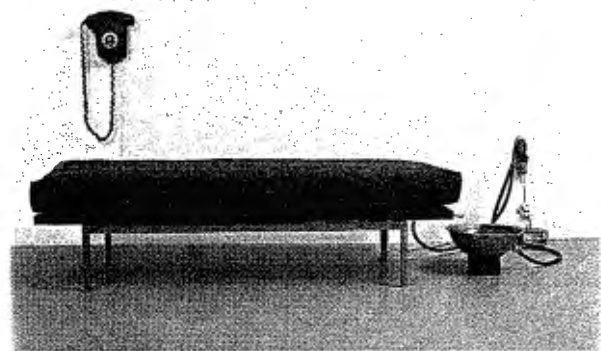
—Mark Harris

AMSTERDAM

Yael Davids at Akinci

Those who came to Yael Davids's opening or who stopped by the show at scheduled times encountered three people holding poses. At the opening, a young man with a shaved head, wearing black lace-up shoes and a knee-length black bodysuit, sat impassively in a simple armchair upholstered in black leather. He

Angela Bulloch: *Work Bench*, 1996, mixed mediums; at Robert Prime.



was clearly a real person, but the other two figures I mistook for mannequins because of their stillness and the oddity of their positions. A woman dressed in black stood on a white chair, bent over at the hips, pressing her head through a hole cut to accommodate it in a temporary plasterboard wall; the top of her head, hair neatly parted, poked

through the cutout center of a mirror on the other side. And beneath a chair facing that mirror, a naked young woman (in fact the artist) was folded up like a gymnast in mid-roll, upside down, with her buttocks fitted into two oval holes cut from the white leather seat.

Davids, a 28-year-old Israeli who has lived and worked in Amsterdam since 1990, also appeared in a large color photograph called *No body at home*. In this deceptive image the clothing is right-side up while the figure occupying it is upside down. From a distance I saw it as a squatting figure in a white shirt, black trousers and white sneakers. But the figure has no head. Then I realized that a person (Davids again) is upside down with her head emerging from the crotch of the trousers; her feet protrude from the sleeves of the shirt and her arms are inside the pants. The shirt's collar centers precisely on her exposed genitals.

In all these works, Davids contrasts public and private aspects of the body, inverting the expected relationships. The seated man faced the (clothed) buttocks of the bent-over woman. To viewers, the scalp where this woman's hair was parted seemed strikingly bare as framed in the temporary wall; it made another focal point. Davids herself, displaying her naked buttocks from under a chair, offered another "parted" aspect of human anatomy. The public/private distinction was reinforced when Davids turned her back to the audience as she emerged

from under the chair to don the leather coat that she wore between performances. The leather of the coat and chairs seemed acutely skinlike here.

In other works, Davids heightened consciousness of the body in different ways: a spider web in the corner of the gallery was delicately constructed of her own hair, a wall-mounted price list consisted of letters and numbers sewn with her hair, and several eerie black-and-white photos depicted someone's hands stitched together with black thread passing through round holes in the tips of the fingernails. Not so sexual as Carolee Schneeman, not so self-abusive as Chris Burden, not so political as Karen Finley, Davids has mapped out an equally affecting territory of her own.

—Janet Koplos

ROTTERDAM

Klaas Zwijnenburg at MK Expositieruimte

Klaas Zwijnenburg plays out his obsessions and fantasies in photographs. The 24-year-old artist—described by those who know him as a hopeless romantic who is totally unsuccessful with women—seems to have raised his wish level in each series he has produced. First he took photos, from behind, of women whose hair looked like that of a French film star who fascinated him. In 1995 he began a series in which each photo shows him kissing a different attractive young woman. In *Zomer 96*, on view here, he extended the series with nine additional photos, shown in a grid arrangement. With each girl he enacts an amorous scene in public (standing on a bridge over a canal) or private (reclining on a daybed). The theme is kissing, and the action, which he records with the aid of a timer on his camera, never goes beyond that, although more is suggested when he or the girl is partly undressed. Zwijnenburg is more director-of-dreams than true Lothario: he hires models to pose with him. The result is both poetic and amusing. The works are concertedly sentimental, yet there's something faintly ridiculous about the relentlessness of the artist's osculatory efforts.

The show also included melancholy pieces. A headset

allowed visitors to listen love songs Zwijnenburg posed and sang in his lost love, a woman reprised in a large blurry image arated from him by a window or as if fading tance or in time. Si tugging at the heartstrin *Weekje Vlieland*, a 12 story of a couple's roma to the north of Holland. the black-and-white ima which the protagonists ar visible, is accompanie handwritten first-person Dutch). The first few scer sweet—a tree where he their initials, a ferry whe compared themselves fa



Klaas Zwijnenburg: Detail from *Zomer 96*, 1996, photograph, 23½ inches square; at MK Expositieruimte.

to other couples, a place they played ball but agree love was a better game something apparently wrong, for the captions shift to a forlorn description being alone. The unpop images feel all the more for being set in densely packed Holland, where it's hard alone even if you want to

Zwijnenburg's work r more than individual psy gy. His themes and ac bring to mind Dutch vir who undercut masterly mances with comedy, s the jazz artist Willem Bre the balladeer Herman van pretending to be simpler or showing their underw an egalitarian countr famously "doesn't like h Zwijnenburg is actually c on an established tradit highlighting his amoures.

—Janet