

anger of such work into his sculptures: assemblages of inutely welded metal grids on which realistically sculpted male figures are precariously arched. In a number of cases, including *Perfect Imbalance* (1991), *By Any Means* (1993) and *Sliding Scale* (1996), the works are suspended from the ceiling, further underscoring an air of delicate balance.

But practical dangers are not Robinson's sole subject. Caught in midair and relatively minutive, his figures, which vary from 1 to 3 feet in height, focus the viewer's attention on the existential plight of the individual in a complex society. In *By Any Means*, a white figure embraces his own shoulders as he gazes downward. He seems to be caught on a landing between stairways ascending and descending to nowhere in particular. *Sliding Scale* is a less elaborate work. Here, Robinson has simply crossed two miniature I-beams and positioned a small figure on top of them. It is clear that a step in either direction would destroy the balance and send the figure falling.



David Robinson: *Artifice & Edifice*, 1993-96, steel, polymer/gypsum, oil tempera, 45 by 18 by 3 inches; at Diane Farris.



John Greer: *Prehistory*, 1996, marble with steel base; at Wynick/Black. (Review on p. 131.)

The 1996 sculpture titled *Sisyphus (Study on Inclination)*, which is apparently a study for a larger work, presents a tiny crawling figure inside a large upright open circle. This circle is set in grooves cut into a supporting structure that curves up on two sides. Lacking the impassive dignity of the other works in the show, this depiction of futility unfortunately comes across as anecdotal and cartoonish.

In *Artifice & Edifice* (1993-96), the humanity/technology dialectic is compressed as the figure is absorbed into a machinelike system. A long horizontal crane structure almost 12 feet long is attached around the waist of the polyester-gypsum effigy standing in as a petty Colossus. This figure is also pinioned at the neck and shoulders by wires that help support the crane. Static and impassive like all Robinson's sculptures, *Artifice & Edifice* seems to depict a man inextricably entangled in some massive undertaking. One wonders what conclusions to draw from the fact that Robinson's figures always seems to be quietly accepting of their fate.

—Matthew Kangas

## LONDON

### Callum Innes at Frith Street

Over the past few years Callum Innes has gained a following in Europe for his rigorous, process-oriented abstractions that sound a note of gravity amid the mayhem of the current British scene. A 35-year-old Scotsman based in Edinburgh, Innes approaches painting as a technical act that exploits the medium's inherent properties. This diverse group of recent works offered a good summary of his ongoing modes and methods. In the 65-by-63-inch canvas *Exposed Painting, Cadmium Orange*, a sharply defined orange square in the upper right leaks a vertical trail of pigment from its inside corner. The area directly below the orange square is white, while the remainder of the canvas is stained a faint orange. The vertical trail, which is the key to how the painting was made, resulted when the orange paint which initially covered the

entire canvas was partially dissolved with turpentine. This technique of using turpentine to strip away areas of monochrome paintings is Innes's signature method. It is also what sets his postmodernist work apart from the earlier abstractions which his canvases frequently evoke.

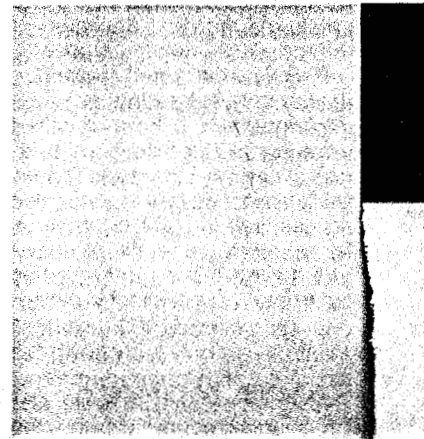
In a painting titled *Monologue VII*, solvent has been poured across the whole painting, leaving an arc of striated gray paint clinging to the sides and bottom in a composition reminiscent of Morris Louis's striped corner canvases. As well as referencing Color Field painting, *Monologue VII* evokes natural phenomena such as falling rain, alluvial plains and the effect of tidal waters on sandy beaches. More calculatedly deceptive were a series of small canvases whose shellacked surfaces appear to have been splattered with paint. It's impossible to tell by just looking, but these swarms of red, blue and black "splatters" have been individually applied to the still-wet shellac so that they fuse with the surface.

The show also introduced a new set of "exposed" paintings executed on towering rectangles of brown waxed paper. The horizontally split compositions and bare edges of these paintings immediately invoke Rothko. In one, a square section at the top of the paper is thickly covered with lipstick-red pigment that has been applied in faintly visible horizontal strokes. The thickness of the paint is exaggerated by the fact that the lower section of the paper has been stripped not only of paint but also of its wax coating. In these works, where opticality and physical fact collide in trumping the eye, the latent illusionism of Innes's work seems to be coming to the fore.

—Melissa E. Feldman

### Dinos and Jake Chapman at the ICA

Underlying the Chapman brothers' violent and sexual works is a conventionally avant-garde aim of offending the public—but a public now inured to nearly all forms of offensiveness. The artists seek to drive a wedge into the side of humanist tolerance with bleak projections of future life forms and atrocities.



Callum Innes: *Exposed Painting, Olive Green*, 1996, oil on canvas, 33 1/2 by 31 1/2 inches; at Frith Street.

Their earlier altered fiberglass mannequins based on Goya's "Disasters of War" etchings or, in this exhibition, the *Cyber-ionic Man* modeled in part on a Renaissance St. Sebastian, perpetuate an avant-garde tradition of adapting art-historical models for contemporary impact.

In *Tragic Anatomies* a dozen Siamese-twin prepubescent girls, sprouting a variety of genitalia from unlikely locations on their bodies, were scattered around an intentionally tacky setting of artificial grass and shrubs. This represented a hallucinated future, where genetically altered sex models await our pleasure behind the bushes. Yet the work felt uninviting and passionless compared with the compelling installation last year at Victoria Miro, where a ring of similar mannequins stood isolated in a bare room. By comparison these new works were ineffectual markers informing us only that we were in the artists' territory, the "Chapmanworld" of the show's title.

As a departure, the Chapmans installed a group of large scatological drawings in the corridor of the building. An unreflective record of daily obsessions, these used a lazy cartoon style to summarize old and future projects, including plans for a mushroom-cloud sculpture.

In a separate gallery, a crudely recycled red liquid poured from mutilations on the silver body of *Cyber-ionic Man* and into a tub below him as he

hung, inverted, from the ceiling, his long hair trailing down. This lurid *mise-en-scène* was derived from images of Christian martyrdom and photographs of a prerevolutionary Chinese execution which were published by the French theorist Georges Bataille as a series showing the dismembering of an assassin. Only the initial stages were reproduced in the theatrical sculpture, which uncharacteristically pulled back from the full horror of the original.

The Chapman brothers seem to be repeating empty significations of transgression. With only an ironic veneer of effrontery, their work is bound to collapse into ludicrous and self-demeaning pornography; with no evidence of lucid thought behind these installations, their ominousness turns into vacuous histrionics.

—Mark Harris

## AMSTERDAM

### Marjolijn van den Assem at Anneke Oele

Every five years, it seems, the Dutch painter Marjolijn van den Assem (b. 1947) loses her old fans and gains new ones. Just as her admirers start to appreciate a specific style and theme, her work changes. In this exhibition, 10 out of the 11 paintings shown carry the same German title: *Milde Luft, Spaziergänge, dunkle Zimmer* (Mild Air, Hikes, Dark Rooms). These words, taken from a letter Friedrich Nietzsche sent home from Sorrento, Italy, point to one of the artist's themes:

Marjolijn van den Assem: *Mild Air, Hikes, Dark Rooms*, 1994, oil on linen, 39 3/4 by 47 1/2 inches; at Anneke Oele.



the need to wander and to find shelter. (Another is the need to draw and paint at the same time.) Van den Assem has a passion for philosophy, and specifically for Nietzsche because of his absolutely independent way of thinking. His motto, "Become who you really are," has become her aim as well. And like Nietzsche she regards art as "a way to survive life." This has made her into an uncompromising artist who follows her own intuition.

After graduating from art school, van den Assem primarily made reductive drawings, ending up with nothing but a white sheet of paper. She started all over again, making black-and-white drawings with her eyes closed, using her pencil as if it were a seismographic instrument. Always taking a specific place, for example a mountain village where Nietzsche used to stay, as her point of departure, she just let herself go, giving form to a stream of thoughts, following imaginary walks through the mountains. Big sheets were covered from top to bottom with tender, thin, abstract lines (standing for actual footpaths) to which she added miniature images of recognizable places along the road. When her mood changed from tenderness to passion, the lines became heavy and the pencil broke. Sometimes you recognized imprints of her body on the paper, because she worked on the floor, on her hands and knees.

Since 1986 she has also been painting with oil, once again using philosophy (or poems) to get in the right mood and an actual place as a starting point for her imaginary walks (or soul searching). She again moves on hands and knees around the canvas, always from left to right, applying paint directly from the tubes with her palms and fingers instead of brushes. She likes colors that "feel" soft, such as Indian Yellow. Sometimes the composition and style are very

fierce, then again very clear and tender. You recognize details from previous works: a little house, a view over a lake, a favorite lane with trees she has caressingly laid down on the ground.

—Riet van der Linden

## BOLOGNA

### Luigi Carboni at Galleria Spazia

After years of making rigorously abstract paintings, Luigi Carboni here presented a group of very different works: paintings filled with drawn images of clearly recognizable objects. The new works do however connect with his paintings of 1985-87 where he explored gesture, albeit with a clear desire to betray the conventions of gestural abstraction. Carboni has continually sought to combine his preeminent interest in painting with a conceptual approach to art-making, a quest which continued in this show.

In the new paintings, which generally measure 5 by 6 feet, the images are made by lines and marks nervously scratched into a dark, often black, surface. As these lines score the surface, they reveal a layer of white underpainting. Through the open drawing style of this two-tone method, Carboni moves away from the cold, mechanical language of his immediately preceding work. His new expressivity is accompanied by references to such elemental subjects as skeletons and sex. The 1995 painting *Con Un Sorriso* (With a Smile) is filled with sketches of human skeletons in various poses. Interspersed with the skeletons are disembodied skulls and schematic depictions of female genitalia. In another work, *Paesaggio* (Landscape), a skull and skeleton motif is combined with a densely drawn floral pattern. In these works, as in others, Carboni uses the surface of the painting to explore the tension between impulse and order, between distinct gestures and all-over composition. Looking carefully at these blackened, tarnished canvases one becomes keenly aware of the multiple layers of image and of meaning.



Dinos and Jake Chapman: Installation view of *Tragic Anatomies*, 1996; at the ICA.



Luigi Carboni: *With a Smile*, 1995, acrylic on canvas, 59 by 70 1/2 inches; at Galleria Spazia.

This show suggests that even when it was most abstract, Carboni's artistic discourse was never centered on the subject of painting itself. He is more interested in what Demetrio Paparoni, speaking about Carboni, has called "sacrality." As Carboni's painting has turned toward more "primitive" content, this sacred aspect has become more evident. At the same time, the stratified surfaces of his canvases have taken on an uncertain physicality that seems appropriate to our time.

—Antonella Micalo

## CORRECTION

June '96, p. 107: In the review of Jim McHugh's exhibition, the venue was mistakenly listed as the High Museum in Atlanta. The author saw the exhibition at the Directors Guild in Los Angeles. The show did travel to the High Museum but the works were not on public view there; they were hung for a private function and screening of *Andersonville*.