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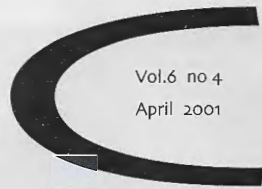
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Mark Harris, *Marijuana in the UK*, two-channel video

Hippy

Oliver Karlin

Mark Harris's exhibition *Hippy* at the Trans Hudson Gallery presents the very enjoyable oxymoron of a diverse show with a tight focus. The works, all produced in the last few years, include sculpture, sound installation, video, an artist book, abstract painting, and found images. Yet Harris keeps his, and our, attention, on the question of time.

Admittedly, time is a broad subject; somewhat like being focussed on the ocean. There probably will never be a shortage of artists who address wide abstractions by being abstracted; the plethora-is-sufficient school. Fortunately, the solution in this show is to let specific -- and seemingly personal -- aspects of time ground the works.

Four Minutes of Funk is a sound piece composed from thirty disco singles from 1975-76 all playing simultaneously from a loudspeaker at the foot of a gridded image of the singles. The resulting compressed music is not quite noise; the ear can almost capture fragments of the familiar songs. This border music serves to amusingly expose sound pieces' temporal nature. But, more important to the success of the piece is the historical time aspect. There is an anti-nostalgic attempt in this and other pieces in the show to recall the fractured, non-decade of the late '60s to mid-70s of which Hunter Thomson wrote "with the right kind of eyes you can see the high-water mark -- that place where the wave finally broke and rolled back."

In the dual-channel video work, *Marijuana in the UK* sections of Charles Baudelaire's 1858 essay "Poem of Hashish" and Walter Benjamin's "Hashish in Marseilles," from 1928, are read to cannabis plants. The reader is the artist filmed in a greenhouse, surrounded by the plants. The two channels are synced so that the readings, like in *Four Minutes of Funk*, obscure each other.

Both texts address the distorted sense of personal time that comes with hashish. Mr. Harris reads Baudelaire's description that "the normal relation between time and the individual has been completely upset by the multitude and intensity of sensations and ideas. You seem to live several men's lives in the space of an hour."

The title piece of the show, *Hippy*, is an elegant example of a style of work Mr. Harris has been exhibiting for a number of years. It is a colorful, abstract, "drip painting." The gestures, drips, splashes of paint, are, in fact, all relief printed onto paper and then cut out so that the drips are a delicate lace of what remains from the printing. This lace is then layered over a second sheet of painted paper which becomes the ground for the drips. *Hippy* is, of course, not a drip painting, neither in execution or aspirations. And yet, there is a common relationship to time. The captured instant of accident in action painting is turned around in these works to be time intensive and prepared. By referencing the instantaneous and the time consuming together, Mr. Harris investigates which aspect of time is being captured in painting.

Hippy is not, however, only about abstract time. It is also, like the other pieces in this show, about historical time. This is clearly seen when it is viewed in relation to the show's other painted work, '68, '69. In the latter, iconic pop culture images -- Ungaro's clothing designs from the end of the 1960s -- are presented within a structure of cut paper. The fashion images are treated as were the drips in *Hippy*. The relationship to Pop Art and Abstraction becomes a reference to the possibilities of painting. Like the Ungaro fashions, these possibilities are often seen as unrecoverable moments. That appears to be a position Mr. Harris wants to overcome by accepting. □