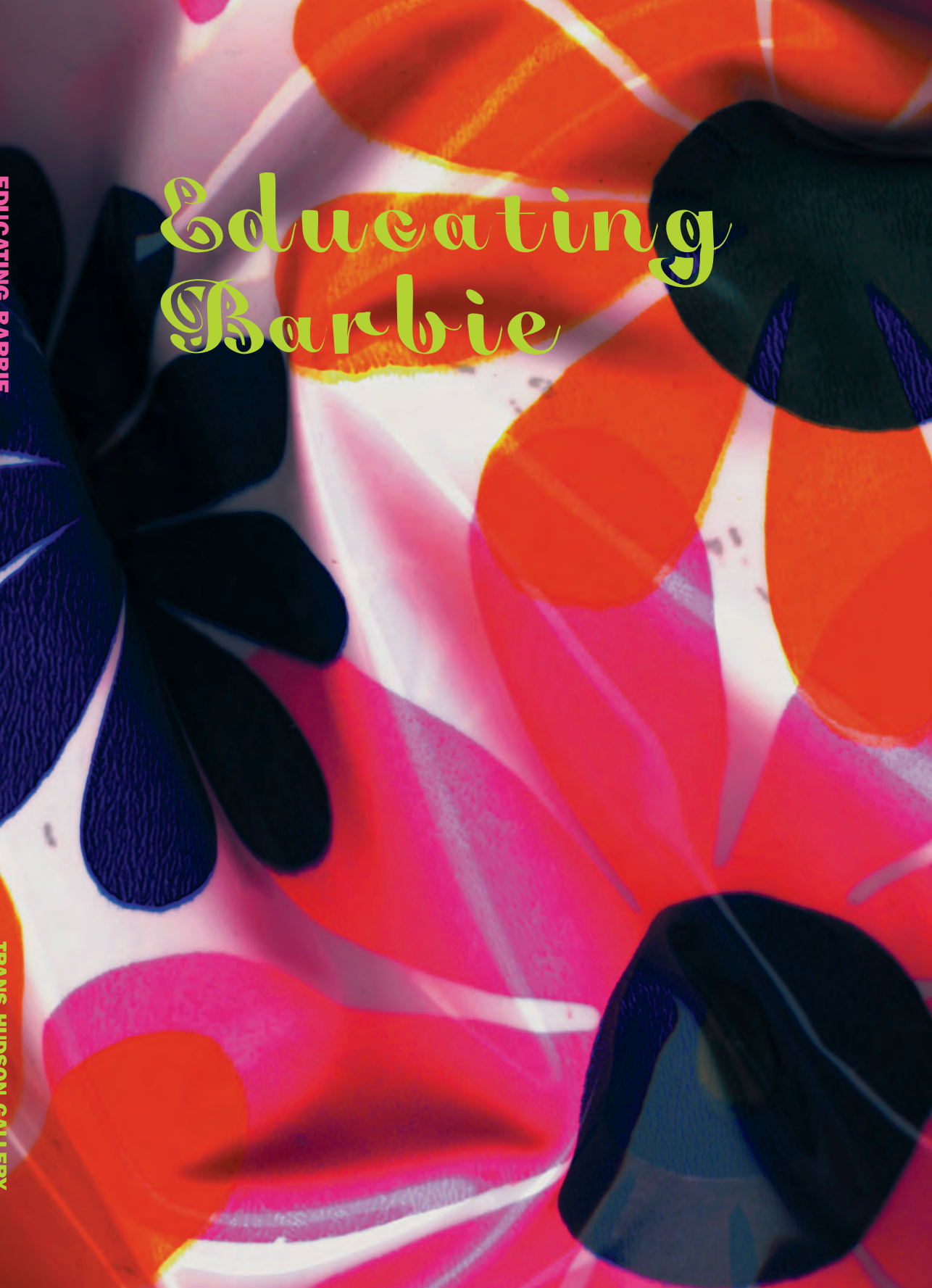

EDUCATING BARBIE
TRANS HUDSON GALLERY


Educating Barbie
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Paul Beauchamp
Kate Belton
Mary Ellen Carroll
Cheryl Donegan
Graham Durward
Mark Harris
Beom Kim
Louise Lawler
Peter Lloyd Lewis
Kirsten Mosher
Jonathan Parsons &
Tracey Rowledge
Simon Patterson
Jim Shaw
Jemima Stehli

Trans Hudson Gallery
September 3 –
October 3, 1998

Barbie or not Barbie

David Burrows

I met Barbie Doll and her long time partner Ken Doll at the ICA bar in London on a hot summer's afternoon. Both have smooth, faultless complexions and exquisitely fixed smiles. The perfect couple, obviously made for each other. To be honest, Barbie and Ken Doll viewed from close up are a little disconcerting and, well, unnatural. At the same time they look very cool, very relaxed. While I ordered a coffee, Barbie and Ken Doll gossiped about West Coast artist Lari Pittman (who was showing at the ICA) and British artist Chris Ofili, whose work they thought similar. They were intrigued by Ofili's decorative paintings but were astonished to find out he was a super-macho-heterosexual who drove a lime-green Capri car and listened to super-macho rap music. This topic occupied them for the next thirty minutes.

Barbie Doll looks nineteen or maybe a bit older, maybe early twenties; but her soft, husky voice tells a different story. Yes, Barbie was a child of the sixties, but not the sixties that belonged to the yippies, LSD, Paris '68 and the Grateful Dead. She was a fun person but she never did anything too radical. Frightened of drugs and suspicious of the counter-culture, Barbie only used the word *freak* when talking about natural disasters and animals born with two heads. Beach life was much more her thing. She always said she wanted to be buried on Waikiki Beach, (or Venice Beach or Fire Island) while the Beach Boys sang acappella melodies of their greatest hits. The 60s were good to Barbie and Ken Doll. They lived out the optimism of the era: Ken always managing somehow to escape being conscripted or having a job, Barbie always internationally popular as *super (mo-)doll number one*. Barbie's lifestyle was not without political ideals however. Her plastic life and looks were something Barbie thought profound and important. She was forever quoting Roland Barthes who wrote that plastic "is in essence the stuff of alchemy." To those who also quoted Barthes and said that plastic was a "disgraced substance," hardly a substance at all in fact, and that its reality was a negative one, "neither hard nor deep," and to those other people who described Barbie as a hollow imitation, she just quoted more Barthes. "The hierarchy of substances is abolished: a single one replaces them all: the whole world can be plasticised...," to which she then added her own slogan: *plasticity is everything*. (When it was suggested that she missed the irony of Barthes she pointed out that she was never big on irony).

Fashion was her life but she was not ignorant of contemporary art. She knew what she didn't like. Minimalism was a guy thing and she thought Don Judd creepy. She saw him lecture once and thought he sounded like Robbie the Robot from the Sci-Fi series *Lost in Space*. Barbie didn't much like Andy Warhol's work either though she thought she should. His work was devoid of emotion, too frosty, more robot stuff. (She did like the gold leaf shoe drawings though). If she had any passion for art at all it was for Op Art but she failed to find an artist who epitomized the optimism of *plastic living*.

The early seventies was a period of self-assessment for Barbie Doll. In her own words, "[she] got sick of sitting in the passenger seat waiting for Ken to drive her to this or that beach." She wanted more from life, much more. It wasn't just her own impatience that fired a change in her life – criticism from feminists begun to hurt too. Her answer was her very own red, pink and yellow beach buggy and a complete change of life style. She became a sporting icon, excelling at scuba-diving, horse-riding, roller-skating and dancing (disco and classical). Ken began to live in Barbie's shadow and their relationship went through a tortuous few years until Barbie achieved a lifelong ambition and enrolled at art school in the 80s. Ken enrolled one year later.

Art school was a testing time. Barbie's feet were shaped in such a way that she couldn't stand up without heels and her limbs had no joints, which limited her movements. (It was only later that Barbie got articulated legs and arms and she was often found propped against a wall or easel, quietly sobbing to herself). The teachers and students didn't take her seriously; that was the problem. Barbie lived through months of Blonde Bimbo jokes and lewd suggestions made by tutors of both sexes. Things changed when Barbie Doll's *Still Life,* a display of her entire summer wardrobe and a series of soft pencil drawings depicting autumnal walks in England, was seen by Joseph Kosuth. Kosuth waxed lyrical about the critique of representation and brown espadrilles and invited Barbie to exhibit in his latest project, *Wittgenstein's Notebook*. Barbie Doll found herself exhibiting with rising stars Haim Steinbach, Sherrie Levine and David Salle and she signed up with Tony Shafrazi Gallery in New York, Monika Spruth in Köln, Nicola Jacobs in London and Galerie Metropol in Vienna. For a while she was the *it girl* of the art world.

One bad review was all it took. Ronald Jones singled her out as "complicit with the dominant systems of consumer culture" and "as guilty as a McDonald's hamburger." New York and Köln dumped her. The Hal Foster article, which accused Barbie Doll of "sneaking expressivity through the back door of disinterested, society-of-the-spectacle-loving, Neo-Geo cynicism," didn't help either. A witch hunt ensued as collectors, unhappy at owning works complicit with consumerism, demanded their money back.

At first Barbie Doll was devastated, but she realised it wasn't the end of the world. Anyway, all that talk about *The Death of Modernism* was getting to her. All those broody Critical Post-Modernists, critical of everything, all dressed in black, from head to toe, from New York to Berlin; she was better off without them and their dark thoughts. (To Ken Doll, wearing black as a sign of respect for *The Death of Modernism* made perfect sense but for Barbie it was more proof that the art world was full of wannabes and fashion victims). Barbie continued to make art which she combined with her work as a dentist, pet rescue agent, athlete, teacher and aerobics instructor. Since the eighties she has grown in stature as an artist and a person and her most recent work is a vibrant celebration of the plasticity of everyday life, a vibrancy reflected throughout her interview.

David Burrows: Can I start by saying I think your work poses interesting questions in relation to the major themes of the last two decades, identity and gender politics and modernity. Are you consciously working in relation to these discourses?

Barbie Doll: I've never enjoyed art world jargon. I've always thought that flexing intellectual muscle is way too macho, for both men and women. Point scoring, its a real turn off. Its not that I'm into dumbing things down, far from it, I get that 'dumb bitch' stuff all the time so I can't afford the luxury of acting dumb, I leave that to the guys who have yet to leave their adolescence. Its just that meaningful isn't the same as clever and…so I approach the big themes from a more everyday place, like the beach or places closer to home.

DB: You mean that your art has become more domesticated.

BD: Yeah, I believe most interesting art of the last ten years, in response to this or that crisis of god knows what…that the most interesting stuff has been more domestic in focus though not necessarily small in ambition. In Europe and I think in the American West Coast scene too, this approach was a way of dealing with all the intellectualizing and institutional power of New York Post-Modern Art. Like Kruger with her "enjoy yourself and become a fascist" attitude.

DB: You don't like Barbara Kruger's work?

BD: No, it's dishonest. You can be profound and still have a good time you know, or you can act a little stupid, party and still be meaningful and communicate. No one's going to make me feel guilty.

DB: But what about the way you are seen as promoting a specific body-shape ideal?

BD: Yeah, well I understand that and maybe I'm part of that problem. I'm a male fantasy, I know all that. But I don't eat or drink, I don't have any orifices, so my body shape can only be changed by high temperatures and I'm not going to be crucified for that!

DB: But you are seen as presenting some reactionary lifestyles which are consumed by young people?

BD: Well, you know, if you believe in oedipal theory, which I do, then I guess I am some kind of phallic object, some kind of substitute for the mother's undying love and attention. The price to be paid for accepting that you are not the mother's entire world is to chase desire forever through substitute objects. And girls know they can never have the phallus but they might become it one day. Don't you think that my life serves as a great allegory for all that.

DB: Now I don't know whether you're being ironic or not?

BD: I'm never ironic, that really is reactionary, to be ironic. You can take an ironic position, be the joker and say hey "I'm doing this but I don't really believe in it." Like all those Ironic Post-Modern-Modernists. You can say "I critique the system by being ironic," but hey, you still work the system all the same, like Hawkeye in M*A*S*H. He keeps the military machine functioning. Irony is something though that falls on you from above, sometimes it can't be helped as irony is all around you. That's a kind of objective irony rather than subjective irony. That's where I'm at. I'm never ironic myself but I'm aware of objective irony all the time.

DB: Like your strong response to the discourses about Modernism. That would be ironic for some. It's not part of their concept of Barbie Doll.

BD: But I've always felt I was as much part of modernity, or post-modernity or whatever…of the post-war era…I'm an important part of that experience. I've played a role in that cultural shift and I'm as much a part of the story as Greenberg, Nauman, the Cold War, Gender Studies courses and the end of

European colonial power. When I was younger, Barbie Doll was a universal, plastic international life style. Now I think, Barbie, you are different in different people's hands...

DB: Isn't that just what your critics accuse you of though, promoting a pluralism which is just an encouragement to consume?

BD: No, that's not where I'm at, not for one minute. I'm glad you raised this question. Maybe when I first started out, sure, I believed in Plasticity as a world changing phenomenon, every woman living the same affluent, fun-filled and fulfilled life. Life with two capital Fs. I was modernist and totally internationalist in outlook and beliefs. I bought into the whole deal. I was like the Bauhaus but with more leisure-time and brighter colours. Now, of course, that particular ideology has been revealed for what it was. Now, my concept of Plasticity is more radical, I try not to impose values on others. I know that a certain element of relativism or context plays a part, I understand the politics of difference. It's just that as I'm plastic I can become any shape, anything, anyone.

DB: Can you really though?

BD: Yeah. Or at least I can pretend to be, which is almost the same. I'm plastic and all substances seem the same to me. It's not that they are, it's just that I can't tell them apart. I have no hierarchy of substances or things. Of course I can tell the difference between art and life, between Beethoven and Boogie Wonderland, but really I have no sense of what might be kitsch or not, what might be valuable or not. Sometimes I can't even distinguish between people and objects. So what am I to do? Cry my eyes out or see if I can turn this to my advantage?

DB: But where does that get you?

BD: Well when I look at art I never ask what's that person trying to say. I ask myself where does that person position themselves in relation to things. Do they love what they're dealing with, do they hate it or is it a bit of both? I'm interested in positionality, you know.

DB: Um, yeah, well what about imitators...er can you tell when someone's fooling, what about your imitators?

Ken Doll: **(While he is speaking I ask him to take off his mirrored sunglasses and I realise Ken looks exactly like Keanu Reeves).** All of them, Sindy, Tressa, Bobby [Sox], and Cindy [Sherman], Mariko [Mori], Jeff [Koons], Lari [Pittman], Haim [Steinbach], they're all Barbie. You just can't have an imitation of Barbie, there is no original Barbie to imitate. It's not what you are, its how you do your thing. You can't be Barbie, you do Barbie. I do Barbie sometimes. And sometimes I don't know who I am.

BD: Yeah, and some days I'm Ken, you know.

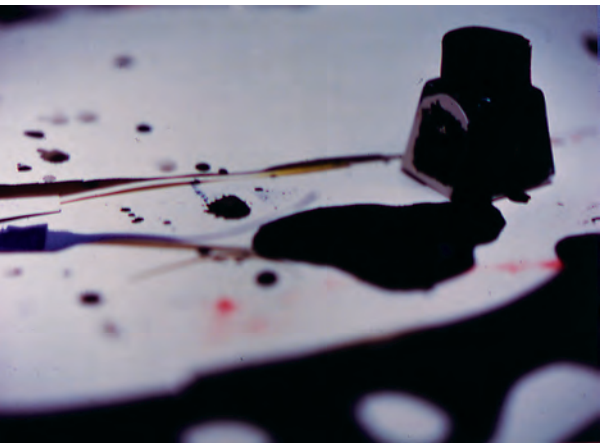
DB: I don't follow this at all. I'm sorry but it just sounds like that scene in the film Spartacus where Kirk Douglas stands up and then Tony Curtis says – no, I'm Barbie, I mean Sparctacus – and then...screwy Post-Modernism.

BD: Look, what we're saying is yes, it's all about performing in one sense, and how to make things up, construct things. Well, it can't change your social circumstances, your place in the scheme of things perhaps, but I can do Barbie in such a way that's fun, maybe do it a little wrong or perversely or do it completely straight, enjoy it and, you know, sometimes you see just how constructed everything around you is without making dumb comments like, "hey, this is just all representation."

DB: This all sounds a little like life as performance or like something I've heard others theorize?

KD: Yeah, well maybe it is, but Barbie Doll got there first, in a manner of speaking.

Paul Beauchamp
A Short History of Painting (1-5) 1993-95
c-prints, each 24"x30"



Kate Belton
Untitled 1998
c-print, 30"x24"

principle

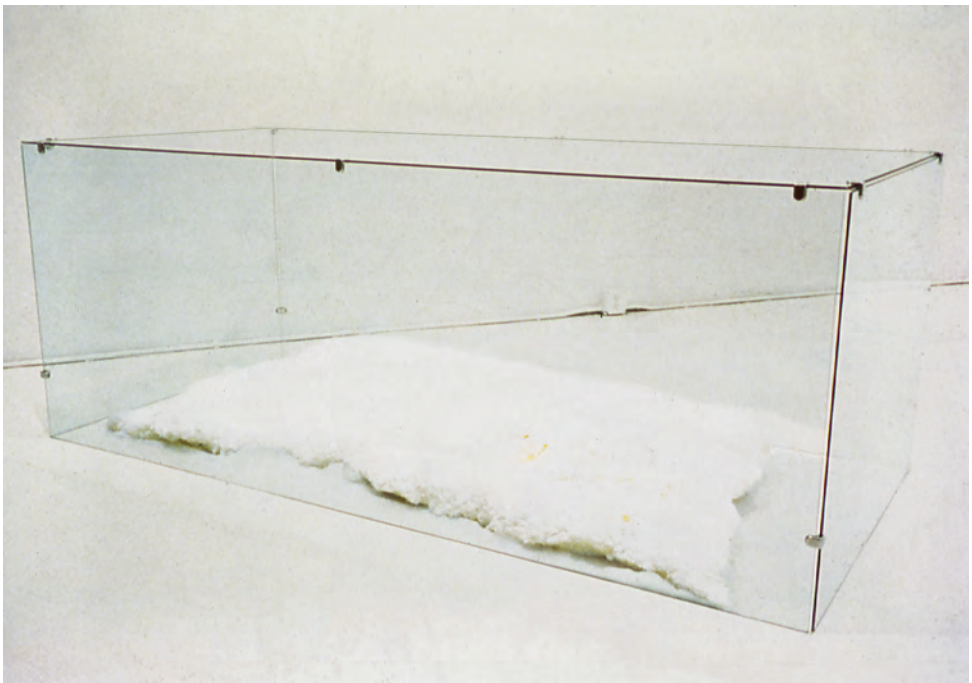
tsewaweht

esforevery

rehtootni

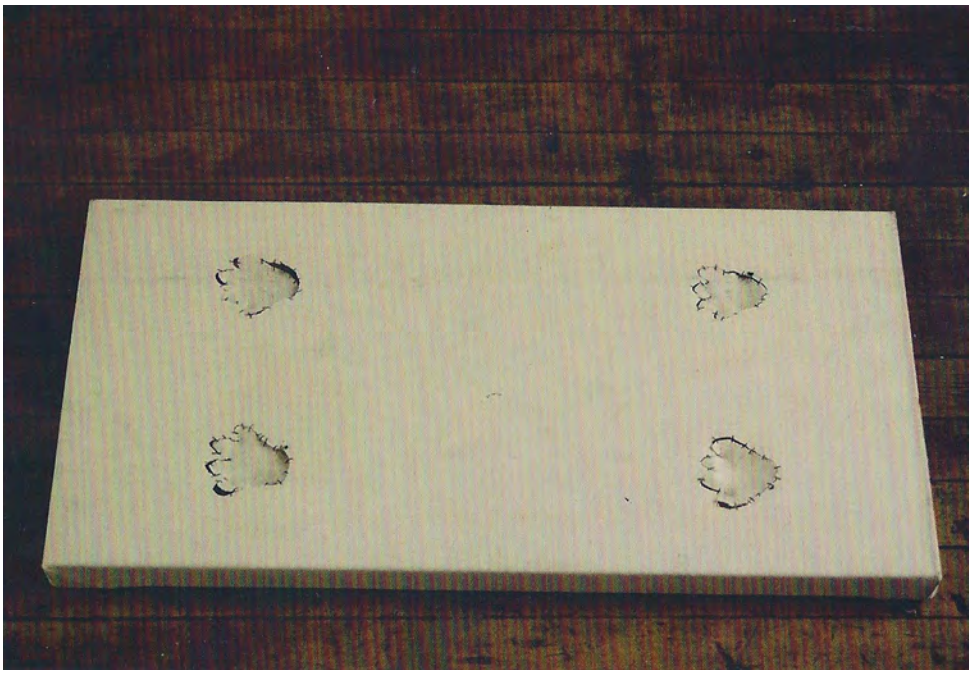
Mary Ellen Carroll
After Calvino 1998
pattern for vacuum formed plastic, actual size detail
full size 5‘6"x3‘10" *(opposite)*

Cheryl Donegan
Sunflower 1993
video



Graham Durward
Snowdrift 1993
fake snow, ink, glass, 48"x48"x96"

Mark Harris
Pre-punk personality crisis 1998
suede trousers, cotton braid,
acrylic paint, 34"x17"

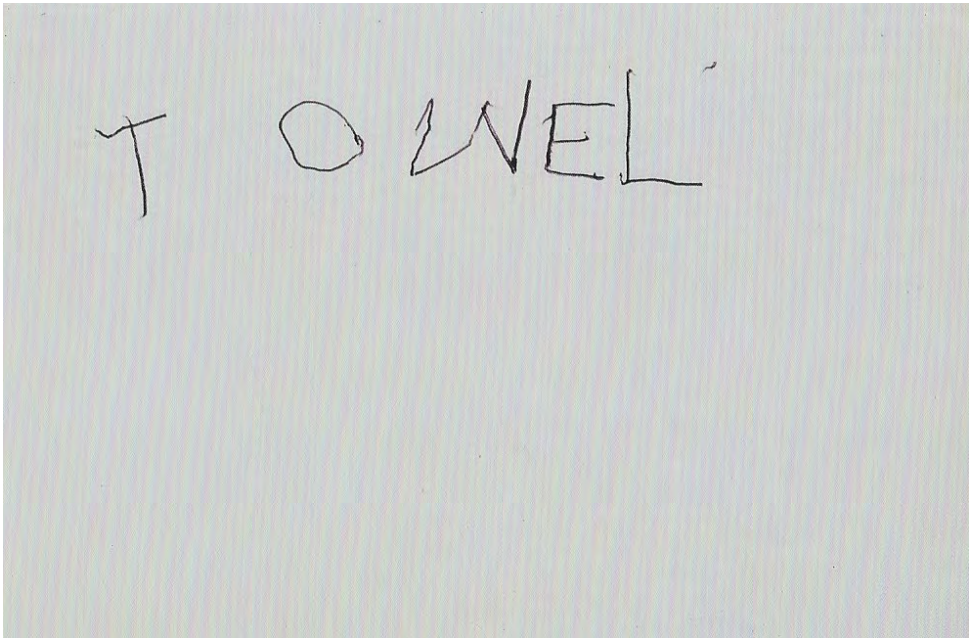


Beom Kim
Dog Standing 1994
thread and canvas, 13"x26"

Louise Lawler
To Scale 1991/92
cibachrome, 49"x49"

Peter Lloyd Lewis
Untitled 1998
jacket, hooks, canvasses, ink, coat hanger
119x69 cms

Kirsten Mosher
Parking, Space, Tent 1994
tent parked in parking space,
with lamp and radio



Jonathan Parsons and Tracey Rowledge
(Source material for *Towel*
black biro on paper, 15x10 cms.)
Towel 1998, bound in alum-tawed goatskin,
alum-tawed pigskin doublures, black and blue
Nigerian goatskin inlays
30.3x10.2 cms, edition of 5

Simon Patterson
Color Match 1997
CD, duration 12 mins
edition of 50

Jim Shaw, *Dream Object (A Comic Story I was Working on that was Entirely Abstract Brushmarks)*
1997
pencil on paper, 12"x9"

Jemima Stehli, *Black no. 2*
1998, color photograph, 54"x 94"

Educating Barbie

Mark Harris

If Barbie wanted to learn about painting how should she go about it? What artists should she turn to for elucidation and to what art? Is it possible that she would learn more from objects that weren't painting, from artists who weren't painters?

In 1965 Beuys tried explaining pictures to a dead hare. It's likely in this performance that pictures served as a generic artwork, rather than a category requiring special clarification. It's less likely that Beuys was explaining the specific death of painting, however appealing this thought might be. He was probably telling the hare how great pictures were, or could be, if they were taken as a total work that embodies and is exemplary for society – the paramount objective for him. Since Beuys didn't really differentiate between thought, speech and object-making, he probably envisaged the performance as a painting, as an action becoming concrete.

How would he have explained pictures to Barbie? Beuys spoke once of wanting to find "the dumbest person on the lowest possible level," a clean slate, free of that useless intelligence that mars creativity, yet with the potential to become the most inventive, most intelligent person. He could work with someone like that, although it's uncertain whether Barbie would have put up with his 7-hour lectures.

Since 1965 Beuys' 'pictures' became 'painting,' as artists sought to diminish their alienation from a disembodied object, aiming for a total work that held process and idea in an ontologically authentic form. Of course this had started before 1965 with Klein's *Anthropometries* or Murakami's *Screens*, or even with Fontana's *Tagli*, but it was in the late 1970s that a form of painting was conceived whose premises are still influential. 'Radical Painting' started to codify the idiom in terms of its stripped down concrete attributes, defining a practice that made an inseparable unity of conceptual initiatives, production techniques and materials. Even if it was a commodity that resulted from this matrix, it was a truthful one whose manufacture revealed the properties of the materials, the process and the ideas that had generated the work.

Beuys might have explained to Barbie that, although this painting correctly emphasized how a work's content was as much its process, materials, and structure as its ideas, the exclusion of subjectivity from those components amounted to an inappropriate purification of the work and thus to an emphasis on craft, neither of which were routes to "new artistic concepts."

Fair enough, this work was not at all like "the psychedelic belches that well up without being reflected upon…" (and heaven knows what kind of painting he had in mind there), yet Beuys would have explained that it was important for all artists, including painters of course, to take responsibility for relocating an aesthetics of reception, where the effects of artworks are felt from afar, into one of participation and action; into an aesthetics, that is, of production. He would have explained to Barbie how we must move from Kant to Adorno (though it's possible Adorno learned a thing or two from Beuys), where we find the subject/spectator standing not outside the work, but deeply embedded within it, and therefore as incapable of a detached emotional response to the work as artists are of producing it in a detached way. To demonstrate to Barbie how urgent it was for painting to engage with an aesthetics of production, Beuys would have proferred one of his favorite quotes from Adorno: "The unsolved antagonisms of reality return in artworks as immanent problems of form." Work on understanding the issues affecting the making of artworks, he might have added, and you will reinvent society. (Sadly, It's around this time that Beuys died, but the organisers of *Educating Barbie* will try to pick up the threads at this point).

Of course the radical painters had focused on a productionist aesthetic, but at the same time they had tried hard to remove subjectivity from the equation. This left the field open for disenchanted, post-modernist painters who took these now-disengaged devices of production and floated them free of their earlier significations. These skilful painters were very successful in resurrecting painting's traditional mimetic function, transferring it from figuration to the painting of devices. Painting ended up mimicking painting, devices mimicked devices. The syntax of gestures, of spatial organization, of factura, form, signature, and mood, ended up so thoroughly jumbled that it was impossible to discern any trace of metaphysical intention or of subjective expression, even though it was widely suspected to be still occurring.

Echoing the initiatives of critical theory, painting's obsession with redefining its devices became justified as a form of reflection on what painting is. We learnt that in the process of defining what it is, painting determines what it is important for painting to be doing. The argument continued, quite plausibly, that this determination of what was important for painting perpetuated its ability to reveal aspects of the non-painting world in a new way. These claims sounded so reasonable that everyone supported them. How right it was, we exclaimed, that painting should reveal the world by self-critically examining what is important for painting. Yet we ignored the importance of a negative aesthetics, one that violently resists

Peter Lloyd Lewis, *Prêt à Porter* 1997
jacket, acrylic, canvas, coat hanger, variable dimensions *(opposite)*

Al Green Greatest Hits 1973
record cover

mimicry of nature or of painting, and we forgot what Beuys and Adorno had demonstrated, that the imprint of the world is strong enough on any of its artistic practices to determine beforehand exactly what, and exactly how much of the world, will be revealed. After all, it was because the imprint of the world had been so indelible on painting that twentieth-century artists either left the idiom altogether (Duchamp) or locked it onto social agendas as if it were an applied art (Malevich, Mondrian, Rauschenberg, Warhol). Luckily for us, It sometimes happens that history gets reopened by the most unexpected events. L.A. MOCA's *Out of Actions* exhibition has started the most interesting reappraisal of the recent histories of painting and sculpture, where the canonical has ejected so much of interest. More than from regular painters themselves, we can now see that a negative aesthetics in painting has derived momentum from performance, whether from Yves Klein, Günter Brus, Nam June Paik, or Paul McCarthy.

It's at this point, as a bright dawn emerges for reconsideration of the meanings of painting, that we would lead Barbie into the exhibition. Here is a modest selection we might say, of work that may not be painting but which will provoke new ways of imagining possibilities for painting in the future.

Curating

As curators, Peter Lloyd Lewis and myself come to this enquiry through our own work. *Educating Barbie* concerns our practices and it would be disingenuous to skirt around discussion of them. After all, it was as painters that we were both skeptical of the idiom's claims to continuous reinvention. Moreover, the last ten years in London, where *Educating Barbie* originates, have experienced a phenomenal

Tracey Rowledge
Binding for *Ulysses* by James Joyce 1996
goatskin, palladium, gold, 19.9x11.9 cms

Jonathan Parsons, *Achrome* 1994
sewn polyester flag

growth in artist-curated shows, for which there has been increasingly serious critical response. These shows have formed the debates around contemporary art, to some extent filling a commercial vacuum, but more importantly taking the initiative away from the larger public spaces which have been slow to react to changing concerns within the art community.

Pre-Punk Personality Crisis replicates the trousers worn by Al Green on the cover of his 1973 *Greatest Hits* record. I made this piece for *I'm Still in Love with You*, the Los Angeles show that Stephen Hull curated last February as a homage to Al Green's first album. Made of suede, these trousers are extensively embroidered with braid and painted in acrylic to reproduce the flower and butterfly motifs of the original. They were tailored to fit me and were worn at Canary Wharf for a London photo shoot, where I mimicked Al Green's record cover pose. They use an applied painting practice to enact rituals of fan adulation and to reference the insecurities indicated by the title.

Jim Shaw, *Dream Drawings*
1992–1998
pencil on paper, 12"x9"

For Peter Lloyd Lewis, clothing has also been a way to reconsider the functions of painting. His assemblages use men's suits like painting gestures, wrapping arms around legs until the original form is lost in a knotted mass. Always incorporated with these assemblages is a monochrome canvas, sometimes a small tondo, really an 'off-the-peg' painting, since they are made on pre-assembled stretcher-canvasses. The clothing is usually thrift store generic, cheap and undistinguished; the whole effect is against presence, and against notions of pictorial value derived from facture or expressivity. In *Kunst und Papier auf dem Laufsteg*, a recent fashion show of artists' clothing at the Deutsche Guggenheim Berlin, Lloyd Lewis's standard suits were catwalked with a single monochrome on the back of each. Once the apogee of painting's intellectual resilience and its formal autonomy, the monochrome is here given over to the service of fashion. As little more than an accessory however, this surrender is enough to get painting out of the repertoire of actions and concepts that inadvertently lock it into an unreflective stasis. Gestures reappear in the piece for *Educating Barbie* whlch suspends three readymade white monochromes from meathooks attached to a jacket. Red ink drips from each hook onto the canvasses in schlock Halloween style. This pays ambivalent homage to a number of art models, not least the cinematic cliché of fashionably tormented young artists such as (Schnabel's) Basquiat. It also recalls Beuys's grey suits and their place in his agonized memorabilia of stuka crashes, with

their attendant fat and felt rescue teams. Most incisively, the suit is a kind of *vanitas* for fashionable syntax painting, the mode of abstraction that ironically and emptily plays on the formal devices of painting.

Gesture

In a show on painting a fair amount of the work is going to engage with gesture. Gesture has been the signifier in painters' efforts to emphasize or conceal subjectivity, to expose the components of painting, or to reflect on the gap between concept and realisation. For *Educating Barbie*, Jonathan Parsons and Tracey Rowledge have collaborated to produce a book cover. The piece replicates a scrawled word and image from scraps of paper that Parsons found in a phone booth. Using tooled leather inlay, Rowledge has accurately reproduced the images using, for example, gradations of blue leather for the original biro marks. Rowledge moved into high-end book production after studying fine art at Goldsmiths College with Parsons. As the motif for her covers she has concentrated on the painstaking replication of rapid graphic gestures, often using goldtooling. By this process gesture and ground become one flat surface. In a related way, Parsons questions the visual clues of painting and the interpretation of emblems, such as street signs and flags. A series of monochrome flags appear to be drained of territorial iconicity and brought into the field of planar abstraction. The double watercolour *Where Art Exists* twice replictates graffiti found on a tombstone. The cue is Rauschenberg's *Factum* paintings, though here Parsons' doubling is to be identical and deliberated. Working with found objects in *Pathology* Parsons has simply cleaned up a fiberglass tabletop turning the cigarette burns into painterly lookalikes while *Autopsy*, from 1996, takes a map of Britain and cuts away everything that is not a road or a town, leaving an enigmatic, fragile mesh of paper.

Jim Shaw's reinterpretation of the gestural legacy enters from a cultural vantage point safely outside the conventions of twentieth-century painting. Skilled at combining a great range of visual languages in wildly

imaginative figurative narratives, Shaw here turns to the ostensible complexity of Abstract Expressionism and codifies it in explanatory cartoon style. The images proceed from frame to frame as if there was a sequential narrative. This hilariously deflects the signifiers of gestural painting and takes a shot at the notion of dogged serial production as well as at claims of autonomy for individual paintings. Shaw's drawing practice has developed out of his deep interest in popular graphic idioms. His 1993 show of thrift store paintings at Metro Pictures juxtaposed passionately eccentric works which had nothing in common other than their provenance. His ongoing series of dream drawings, each including a written account of the dream, combine heterogeneous graphic styles rendered in an earnest, deadpan manner.

Cheryl Donegan and Graham Durward have, in very different ways, brought identity to their revisits of iconic painting. From 1993 Donegan has been making videos about gestural practice. As if in response to the standard assertion that Abstract Expressionism brought physicality to painting, she is giving the kind of 'body,' sometimes sexualized, sometimes pathetically humorous, that was never meant by Rosenberg. A precedent for this form of aesthetic negation might be Paul McCarthy's 1972 performance *Face Painting – Floor, White Line* where he moves his body along the ground behind an emptying can of paint. In *Head*, Donegan parodies a fellatio routine with a spurting jug of milk, spitting the liquid back into container or against the wall. In *Sunflower*, shown here, she walks on camera, filmed from high above, whirls around a few times before collapsing as a can of yellow paint suspended from her waist sprays an aureole across the ground. After a minute lying there she gets up and walks off camera the way she came on. These witty nihilistic diatribes on gestural painting defuse its rhetoric while paying it uncomfortable homage. One ends up wondering if this diagrammatic recapitulation is all that is left. As if these blithe shorthand vignettes might be the distilled truth of all that effortful work.

Durward works like an errant painter, coming back into the idiom where you least expect it. His recent show at Marianne Boesky was entirely of paintings, a kind of gestural realism revisited as paranoiac realism. This was preceded by a series of self-portraits based on polaroids taken at arm's length, his mouth disfigured with cold sores. Their reading was complicated by bravura technique jarring with the poor quality of the original polaroids. Interspersed with this work were performances replicating the aftermath

Graham Durward, *Untitled (Balloon video)* 1994
video still *(opposite)*

Cheryl Donegan, *Guide* 1993
video still

Paul Beauchamp
A Short History of Painting (1-5)
1993-95
color photograph, 24"x30"

of terrorist attacks, conceptual pieces addressing masquerades of male sexuality, and the video piece where Durward blows up balloons to fill the screen with color until it bursts, revealing his startled face. The 1993 *Snowdrift* is a floor-based glass case containing fake snow discolored with a line of pee. This negative monument to the male signature spray is a (piss-) take on minimalist sculpture. As a seductive object, it also establishes an unusual tension between the esteemed immediacy of gestural painting and the scatological gestures of a winter's meander home after the bars have closed.

Photography

Paul Beauchamp's *A Short History of Painting* finds its examples in the environment. Five photographs taken from the same location over a few years, chart the changes to a building in Cardiff's much-hyped dockland redevelopment area. With characteristic thoroughness, original industrial and maritime buildings have been replaced by generic contemporary architecture yet somehow this shed cafe survived. This is functional painting, protecting and drawing attention to the structure; a monochrome subject to a region's laws of development and its economic fortunes. For his recent mural-sized photographs Beauchamp builds pinhole cameras that reproduce the room in which they are situated. Suffused with photographic chiaroscuro, containing multiple images of interiors, and showing traces of the rapidly applied processing chemicals, these large pieces return an atmospheric painterliness to photography.

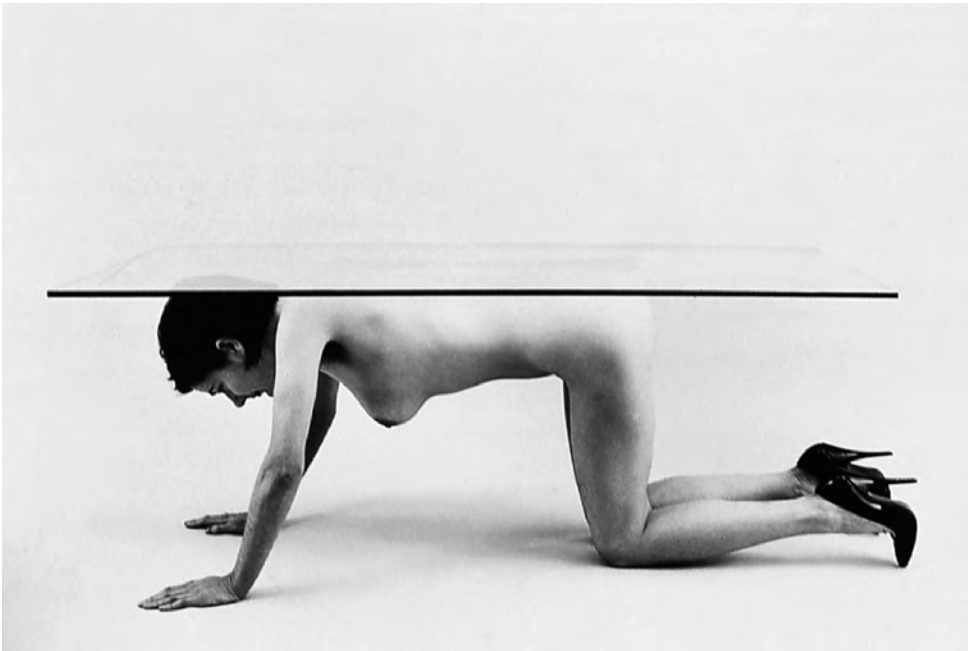
Kate Belton, *Indelible* 1997
c-print, 50.5x69 cms

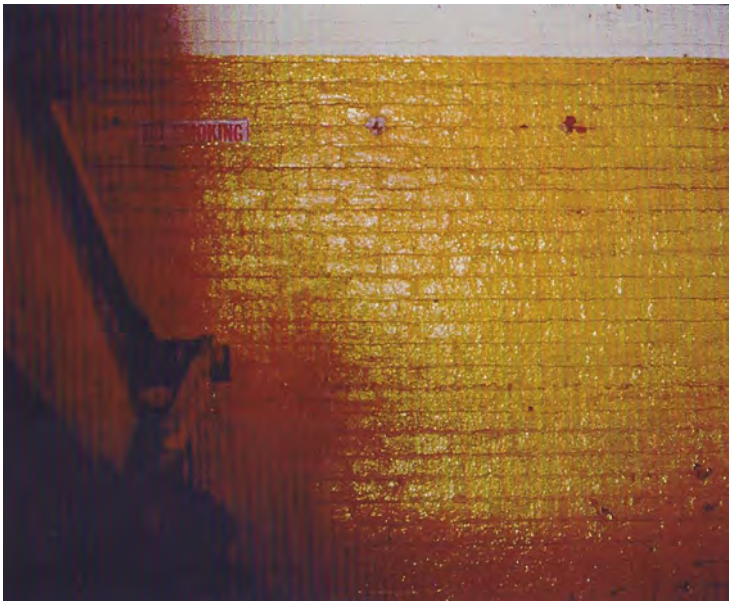
Jemima Stehli, *Table 2* 1997-98
b&w photograph, 54"x94" *(opposite)*

Kate Belton constructs her 'found' environment out of cardboard, paint and wire, afterwards photographing it. These miniature rooms, often like abandoned interiors themselves, are laboratories for fictions of painterly experiments. The illusion is imperfect and it can be hard to remain convinced one way or the other as to the scale of the originals. They are like cinematic exaggerations of crime scenes, in the case of the piece in the show, looking like Barbie's room has been trashed in a dope bust. As scenes of painterly activity, including paint spills, art debris, elements like a Morris Louis poured backcloth or a set of Buren stripes, they resemble a doll's house studio. Props get reused much like components in abstract paintings, yet here they have neither lexical nor ontological significance. They are notational elements, displaying a casual assembly that is just enough to achieve the necessary illusionism.

Louise Lawler's recent photographs document the interiors of abandoned industrial buildings, to which she gives titles such as *Salty Fish*, or *Spearmint*, linking the colors to the tastes they arouse in a grotesque extension of painterly meaning. The photograph sets up a spurious painterliness to these monochrome compositions, as if exposing the rehearsed, but supposedly instinctual, layouts of late color-field painting (Hoyland would be the British example). In her earlier work, such as *To Scale*, paintings are seen in their unsympathetic natural habitats, lobbies, living rooms and auction racks. The discourse is with autonomy as the attempts of owners and dealers at enhancing paintings by detaching them from any context actually achieves the opposite. The pathos of these photographs is their reminder that all aesthetic objects encounter this false autonomy, engendered not just by fine art commerce but by the narratives of metaphysics, history, subjectivity and connoisseurship serving that trade.

The fourth photographer in *Educating Barbie*, Jemima Stehli, clashes disparate references together such that her homage to Ad Reinhardt and Allen Jones comes at great cost to both painters. The Jones pieces turn to a much-reviled pop artist whose infamous furniture surfed the effervescence of 60s' sexual experimentation. These bondage dolls supporting tables and cushions were excused as just another manifestation of the unreflective liberalism of the period. Jones never relented on the sexism of his representations. Laura Mulvey in the 80s accused him not merely of the offense of sexism but of the





incapability even of grasping the nature of the offense. Stehli takes the role of the sex doll in her life-size images reenacting Jones' pieces, on one level displacing the exploitative image by taking command of the representation. Yet this isn't your usual paradigm of reappropration since Jones's original is still potent here, like an embarrassing residue that never goes away and which no one really wants to deal with. Stehli's displacement of the table piece is not easily accommodated, since it succeeds in being a sexualized image, whereas the original was only a caricature. Here is a real woman playing a powerlessly subservient role, to the extent of asking of the original why it should stop at just using a mannequin.

In the recent 'black' photos, Stehli builds on her response to Reinhardt's paintings which in her words was a deeply emotional aesthetic pleasure. By setting this image of herself in a Reinhardt penumbra, wearing eroticized leather clothing, lying with her head in darkness, the shutter cable looking like it's a whip, she brings the full power of subjective aesthetic response to intrude on detached interpretations of Reinhardt's formal concerns. This is an important interpretation of 'formalist' where she proposes that the emotional reaction provoked by a work's formal properties be related to sexual response.

Concept

Kirsten Mosher and Simon Patterson work conceptually, using whatever materials seem most appropriate for a particular idea. Mosher has made drawings of satellite neighborhoods, like utopian suburbs in space. Inhabiting these communities are part-car/part-human entities of a related series of drawings. Mosher focuses sharply on the street environment, on its cautionary and territorial markings. A group of videos speculate on the dysfunctional interaction between these mechanized 'visitors' and an inhospitable Earth. Battery operated soldiers are filmed crawling across a busy Manhattan street until they are run over. The same soldiers parachute in, as if from outer space, seen on monitors over an installation of carpets marked up as street segments. In 1994, Mosher's *Ground Floor Forest* installed fifteen video monitors in windows

Louise Lawler, *Pineapple, Butterscotch, Buddhist*
1996
cibachrome, 61"x48"

Kirsten Mosher, *Local Park Express* 1998
track, park benches, planters, cast iron wheels
and Middle Eastern carpets *(opposite)*

along all sides of an East Village block. Each showed the same image of trees growing on the block, cutting steadily from tree to tree at the pace at which a pedestrian walks past. *Walk in Parking*, the installation for *Educating Barbie*, was first shown at PS1 and later at Sandra Gering Gallery. As a painting found in the environment it is reminiscent of Beauchamp's and Lawler's approach, but it is also the conception of a drive-in painting, one that might even be encountered inadvertently. Continuing to intermingle the signs designating how public spaces are to be used, Mosher has recently overlaid ballpark markings onto a New York traffic intersection. This conflation of play and utilitarian markers is taken further with her installation at Sweden's Wanås Foundation, where park benches and potted shrubs ride from interior to outdoors on customized railway tracks.

Simon Patterson's *Color Match* is a recording of the football results. Each match though is between a recognizable team and a Pantone colour. The results are read out by Tim Gudgin, a familiar British radio commentator, whose voice is immediately associated with late Saturday afternoons listening to the scores. This interpenetrability of diverse systems of nomenclature is characteristic of Patterson's work. On a large painted wall, installed for the 1996 Turner Prize, he linked chimerical destinations (Oz, Xanadu) to the color spectrum and to planetary orbits. A diagram of the night sky had also served in 1992 for locating the names of American Vice presidents, where puns and allusions, intentional and accidental, allowed reflection on the political contest then underway. In the 1993 *Roadworks* in Givors, France, Patterson, like Mosher, took painting onto the street. The starting grid and finishing checkerboard pattern were painted directly onto the road in the center of town and racing flags hung along the route. The *Color Match* installation here is equally rich in allusions to painting, drawing attention to the significance of team colors (not least the Romanian side's fashion statement during the World Cup when the entire team dyed their hair yellow). It also recalls the use of Pantone colors in exhibition catalogues, advertisements and invitations, a reminder of the competitive importance of such publicity. It draws attention to the bias of painters towards

certain colors (often the most expensive, such as vermilion, or those with superior tinting strength, such as the cadmiums) and to the historical associations of colors, such as lapiz lazuli's connotations of purity.

A year ago Mary Ellen Carroll removed all 5,376 leaves from a small tree that obstructed the view of a field. Referring to related poems by Brecht and Celan that use the metaphor of a leafed/leafless tree to question explicitness in political and aesthetic expression, Carroll brings that explicitness to the actualization of their image.

Carroll likewise uses text to set up unusual conceptual and narrative connections. She has printed all of Lawrence Sterne's *Tristram Shandy* onto one page, ending up with what looks very like Sterne's own black pages. What Carroll calls the first monochrome, is meant by Sterne to be both non-objective and symbolic, as Malevich himself intended for his black square. Sterne says nothing about his abstract black rectangles, so that on one level that is exactly all that they can be. It's up to the reader to construe morbid associations from their location in the book, where they conclude the description of Yorick's grave. This could lead back to Stehli's idiosyncratic reading of Reinhardt's black paintings, which the painter ingenuously asserted were free from meanings external to a formal *reductio ad absurdum* of painting ("no visions or sensations…no symbols or signs…no pleasures or pains"). Reinhardt's exertions at blocking the entrance to meaning ensure that the blockage itself becomes a resource for meaning.

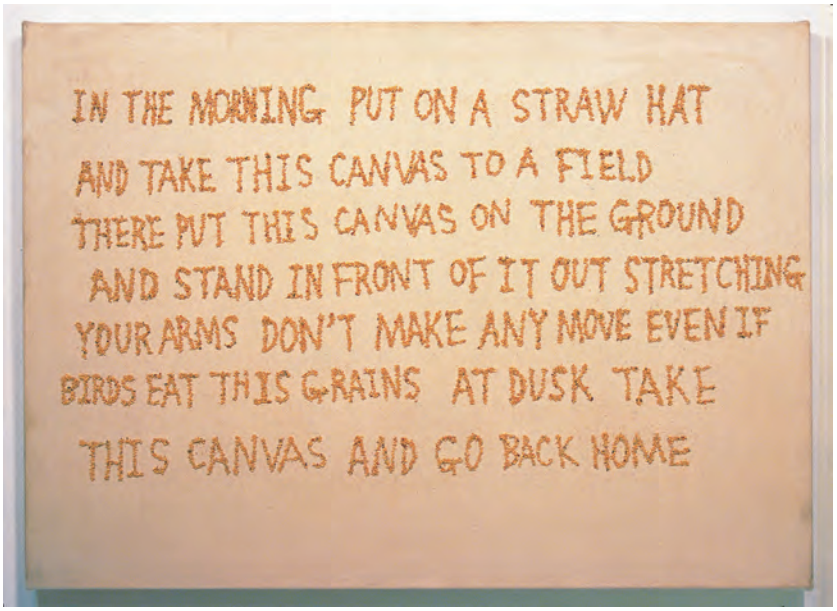
The text embossed onto curved translucent plastic is from Carroll's retelling of Calvino's *Mr Palomar*. The account concerns waves and is laid out in continuous script that reads alternately forwards and backwards. Imperfectly remembered narrative takes on the form it would in the narrator's consciousness, undulating and slipping in and out of memory's grasp.

Mary Ellen Carroll, *A Tree Leafless (for Paul Celan), 5376 leaves* 1997
silver gelatin print 24"x20"

Simon Patterson, *Roadworks*
1993 *(above)*

Beom Kim's work plays with the manner in which we read images. He uses faltering metonymic displacements that become humorously snagged between signifiers. *Dog Standing* lies on the floor where its four reinserted paw marks (leaving slight indentations in the canvas) mix the literal with the illusory and still manage to suggest a tragi-comic canine monument. Embracing a quasi-iconoclastic wariness of representation, Kim manages to invent new rules by which an external world can be represented. The image of a chicken made from eggshells, sections of a canvas cut and resewn into button-down pockets, or the outline of a dog that has supposedly hurtled through the wall, are several of these representations as they have intersected with painting. Kim's interest is with the actions out of which art ensues, or which art induces, to the extent of inveigling the spectator with commands written onto the canvas. *Scarecrow* has us follow his request, written in birdseed, to lay the canvas in a field and stand motionless until the birds have eaten. Such pieces lead into *The Art of Transforming*, an Ovidian self-help guide, setting out instructions for performances on becoming like nature, even though that nature includes ladders and air-conditioners. In becoming a leopard by transferring our hair to our body, sleeping by day in trees and hunting on all fours at night we are still well-advised to "try not to encouner other leopards if possible."

Is there any way In which the works in *Educating Barbie* could be painting? Perhaps at the moment only in terms of their conceptual enquiry of painting's means and their suspicions about its restricted territory. Through their criticism of painting they end up validating the medium in some future, not present form. These pieces don't engage with painting in terms of morphology but act instead on a concept of what painting might become. At the same time, this outsider position is valuable since the works evade painting's historically synthesizing voraciousness which at the moment is inwardly-directed, feeding off the minutiae of its inflections instead of looking outward to the periphery.



Beom Kim, *Scarecrow* 1996
grain on canvas, 36"x26"

Biographies

Paul Beauchamp lives in Cardiff. Selected exhibitions: Alfonso Zirpoli Gallery, Bellinzona, Switzerland; *Llath Yard Bus Shelters*, Cardiff, 1998; *Borders*, Moderna Galerija, Zagreb; *The Welsh Lens*, The Museum of Modern Art, Wales, 1997; *Art in Time*, Howard Gardens Gallery, Cardiff, 1996.

Kate Belton lives in London. Selected exhibitions: solo shows – PPOW, New York; Jason & Rhodes, London, 1998. Group shows – *Within These Walls*, Kettles Yard, Cambridge; *Connected*, Northern Gallery for Contemporary Art, Sunderland; *Cardboard Box and Tape*, Alexandra Mansions, Norwich, 1997.

Mary Ellen Carroll lives in New York. Selected exhibitions: solo shows – Galerie Hubert Winter, Vienna. Galerie Hubert Winter; Kontorhaus Mitte, Berlin. 1997; TZ'Art & Co., New York, 1996. Group shows – Copiacabana, Museo de Arte Extremeño e Iberoamericano, Badajoz, Spain; Curt Marcus Gallery, New York; Thread Waxing Space, New York, 1996.

Cheryl Donegan lives in New York. Selected exhibitions: solo shows – Basilico Fine Arts, New York, 1997. Group shows – *I Love New York*, Ludwig Museum, Cologne; *Video Library*, David Zwirner, New York, 1998; *Rooms With a View - Environments for Video*, Guggenheim Museum Soho, New York, 1997.

Graham Durward lives in New York. Selected exhibitions: solo shows – Marianne Boesky Fine Art, New York, 1998; Patrick Callery, New York, 1995; Sandra Gering, New York, 1993. Group shows – *The Masculine Masquerade*, MIT, List Visual Art Centre, Boston, 1996; *Bodily*, Penine Hart, New York, 1994; Kunsthalle, Zurich, 1993.

Mark Harris is an artist, writer and curator who lives in London. Selected exhibitions: solo shows – Trans Hudson Gallery, Jersey City, 1996. Group shows include – *Host*, The Tramway, Glasgow, 1998; *Craft*, Richard Salmon Gallery, London; *Bad August*, Richard Salmon Gallery; *After the Fall*, Snug Harbour Centre, Staten Island, New York, 1997.

Beom Kim lives in Seoul & New York. Selected exhibitions: solo shows – Trans Hudson Gallery, New York; University of Massachusetts, Dartmouth, 1997. Group shows – '97 Kwangju Biennale, Promenade in Asia, Shiseido Gallery, Tokyo; The Cereijido Summer Film & Video Festival, Grand Salon, New York, 1997.

Louise Lawler lives in New York. Selected exhibitions: solo shows: *Paint, Walls, Pictures: Something Always Follows Something Else. She Wasn't Always a Statue*, Metro Pictures, New York, 1997; *It Could Be Elvis and Other Pictures*, Galerie Six Friedrich, Munich, 1996; *A Spot on the Wall*, Kunstverein, Munich, 1995; Metro Pictures, New York, 1994.

Peter Lloyd Lewis lives in London. Selected exhibitions: solo shows –*The Entire Milk*, Lionheart Gallery, Boston, 1995. Group shows; *The Expanding Universe*, Lionheart Gallery, Boston; *Kunst und Papier auf dem Laufsteg*, Deutsche Guggenheim Berlin, Berlin, 1998; *What*, Trinity Buoy Wharf, London; co-curator with Carmel Buckley and Mark Harris of *Irredeemable Skeletons*, Shillam & Smith 3, London, 1997.

Kirsten Mosher lives in New York. Selected exhibitions: solo shows – *Ball Park Traffic*, Public Art Fund, 9th. Ave. & 22nd. St., New York; Grand Arts, Kansas City, 1998; *Carmen*, AC Project Room, New York, 1994. Group shows – *Home Screen Home*, Witte de With, Rotterdam; Wånas Foundation, Malmo, Sweden, 1998; *Young and Restless*, MOMA, New York; *Blond*, Friedenskirche, Ludwigsburg, Germany, 1997.

Jonathan Parsons lives in Farnham, Surrey. Selected exhibitions: solo shows – Richard Salmon Gallery, London, 1996; Herber-Percer Gallery, Warwickshire, 1994. Group shows – *Anthem*, Milch Gallery, London, 1998; *Sensation: Young British Artists from the Saatchi Collection*, Royal Academy of Arts, London; *Craft*, Richard Salmon Gallery; *Pictura Britannica; Art from Britain*, Museum of Contemporary Art, Sydney, 1997.

Simon Patterson lives in London. Selected exhibitions: solo shows – *Name Paintings*, Kohj I Ogura Gallery, Nagoya; Yamaguchi Gallery, Osaka, 1998; *Wall Drawings*, Kunsthaus, Zurich, 1997; The Museum of Contemporary Art, Chicago, 1996. Group Shows – *Kunst in der Stadt*, Bregenz, Austria, 1998; Modern British Art, Tate Gallery, Liverpool; *Sensation: Young British Artists from the Saatchi Collection*, Royal Academy, London; *Material Culture*, Hayward Gallery, London, 1997.

Tracey Rowledge lives in London. Selected exhibitions: Group shows – Biblioteca Wittockiana, Brussels; *Talente*, Munich, 1998; *Craft*, Richard Salmon Gallery, London; *The Bookbinding Competition*, The British Library, London; *Craftworks*, Barbican Centre, London, 1997; Alistair Gill Gallery, Bristol, 1996.

Jim Shaw lives in Los Angeles. Selected exhibitions: solo shows – Rosamund Felsen Gallery, Los Angeles, 1998; Galerie Praz-Delavallade, Paris, 1997; *Dreams*, Cabinet Gallery, London; *The Sleep of Reason*, Metro Pictures, New York; Galleria Massimo de Carlo, Milan, 1996.

Jemima Stehli lives in London. Selected exhibitions: solo shows – The British Council Window Gallery, Prague, 1995. Group shows – *It Took Ages*, Bricks 'n Kicks, Vienna; *Hilary Lloyd, Jemima Stehli, Brian Dawn Chalkley*, City Racing, London, 1998; *Fish and Chips*, Diverseworks Artspace, Houston; *Peripheral Vision*, De Fabriek, Eindhoven, 1997.

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Jim Shaw and Louise Lawler, courtesy of Metro Pictures
Cheryl Donegan courtesy of Basilico Fine Arts
Jonathan Parsons courtesy of Richard Salmon Gallery
Kate Belton courtesy of P.P.O.W. and Jason & Rhodes
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