

Trans Hudson Gallery February 23-April 2, 1995

Material Abuse

Paul Bloodgood

Fabian Cereijido

Drew Dominick

Dominque Figarella

Elana Herzog

James Hyde

Beom Kim

Melissa Kretschmer

Suzanne McClelland

Steven Parrino

Lauren Szold

Sarah Vanderlip

Susan Wilmarth-Rabineau

Beom Kim Brick Wall #4, 1994 72"x 30" Cut and sewn canvas

Material Abuse

Mark Harris

This exhibition is about abusing the materials of art.

The abuse is done to re-propose what the artwork can look like and what content it can address.

This abuse has developed from an idiosyncratic approach to using well-established methods of making art (most of these artists do work classifiable as painting, and a few as sculpture) subverting some aspect of these methods to alter their codes of expression.

In the examples here the subversion is being made by some kind of material abuse. That is, the consistency or integrity of the materials is interfered with so as to register an invasive action.

This invasive action is to open a space for meaning. It must do two intertwined things: first, adding to the expressive vocabulary and second, clearing away prescriptive ways of working (to establish a freedom for thought or action). It isn't possible to achieve the first without altering the conventions that delineate that vocabulary.

The abuse is sometimes like a gesture of refusal; refusing to have received codes of working determine one's art.

What it isn't is a victimization of the artwork since the abusive actions sometimes increase the presence of the object and in each case add to its content.

Although some of the ways of altering the physical nature of the work seen here are new there have been many instances of similar interventions this century. An account of material abuse might start with the collage constructions of Braque and Picasso, include Tatlin's corner reliefs, Ivan Punis tool paintings and Schwitters' collages, before considering Murakami and other Gutai artists as well as European

painters of the 1950's such as Fontana, Burri, and Klein. It would go on to include much of Rauschenberg's early work, including the erased de Kooning drawing, as well as Eva Hesse, Dennis Oppenheim and the piss paintings of Warhol, to list only a few examples.

There have been periods when a nausea with orthodoxy has sanctioned if not abusive procedures specifically then at least an abusive rejection of current practice as the only means of making a relevant art. This message has had mixed political origins ranging from the right-wing declarations of the Futurists:

We will glorify war—the world's only hygiene—militarism, patriotism, the destructive gesture of freedom-bringers, beautiful ideas worth dying for, and scorn for woman.\(^1\) [We declare] That all subjects previously used must be swept aside in order to express our whirling life of steel, of pride, of fever and of speed.\(^2\)

Through the anarchism of Dada:

Let each man proclaim: there is a great negative work of destruction to be accomplished. We must sweep and clean.³

To leftist commentary on the 1968 student uprisings in Paris: The primary task of the artist is to destroy, to suppress; the rest is, at the most, addenda.⁴

In so far as these, as well as other less militant, movements defined themselves in opposition to clearly identifiable traditions they only reiterate the trope marking the ascendency of the avant-garde as harbinger of future ideals which, to emerge, require the destruction of stifling old ones.

Anti-tradition: the revolt against aesthetic convention; an attempt to clear the ground of old art so that new art can take its place. Here avant-garde rhetoric militates against the putative tyranny of the masterpiece.⁵

This kind of a monolithic struggle has made little sense as an explanation for the diversity of work being made in the last fifteen years, despite the continuing tendency for a particular art that is dominant, say, in New York to have predictable repercussions in other parts of the U.S. as well as in Europe.

Current exhibitions, when not of painting that is shown together simply because it is painting, are usually characterized more for the lack of apparent relationship between work—the lack of similarity of intention and form—which leads to the sense that the individual artist is the only arbiter of relevance. What has changed recently in terms of the sequential displacement of old by soon to be old is the supplanting of a dominant ideology by the aesthetics of alterity where it is taken for granted that every artist but the least self-critical has the right to determine his or her own working criteria and to be judged as an individual artist different from all others.

...treating a canvas as a work of art necessarily involves being prepared to take it seriously, and that means being ready to engage seriously with the actual actual, not phantasized—point of view of its creator. And this is a mode of taking a person seriously, being ready to shape your viewpoint to his.⁶

Each body of work gets to be approached as an autonomous entity which receives its meaning from the personal directive or history of the artist, such as the skin-color determined monochromes of Byron Kim. This shows a tolerance for an extreme form of pluralism sanctioning historical amnesia and a reluctance for debate. There's a real relief that we are free from a pseudo-historical determinacy for contemporary practice, free to follow personal fascinations without having to evaluate them according to an external rule. Yet this tolerance for what one could call the individual artist's working narrative makes it

hard to consider his or her work in terms not just of historical precedent but importantly also in terms of what it might say, for example, about ontology or epistemology, that is about ideas beyond the local concerns that appear to fragment into as many issues as there are artists.

Since simulationism, which provided a common, if misrepresented, theory as a directive for relevance in contemporary art, there hasn't been any lingering philosophical justification for work. There is thankfully no sense of a need for a common purpose and no need to present new art under auspices of a single justifying theory. The revelation by multiculturalism of neglected artists and areas of concern has exposed much important work that has helped invalidate falsely unified idioms. However, since multiculturalism's goal has been to recuperate the overlooked by a focus on race and culture its theory is based on a limited categorization that of necessity excludes. It becomes less a critique than a classification according to place of origin and upbringing.

In the absence of a determining master aesthetic, for which we have to be grateful given the restrictions remembered from Greenbergian formalism,⁷ either the work gets presented in its dissimilarity, with each approach justifying itself, or, still more common and less defensible, the choice of work is made by some criteria of morphological similarity, (the term that Kosuth used twenty-five years ago to damn the persistence of painting). Neither of these approaches constitute an argument for the selection let alone attempt to build a theoretical base for the actions and ideas that determine the artwork.

With this problem in mind I am aware of the fragility of this thesis: the explanation of work according to its evidence of abuse, which is, de facto, an incomplete assessment.

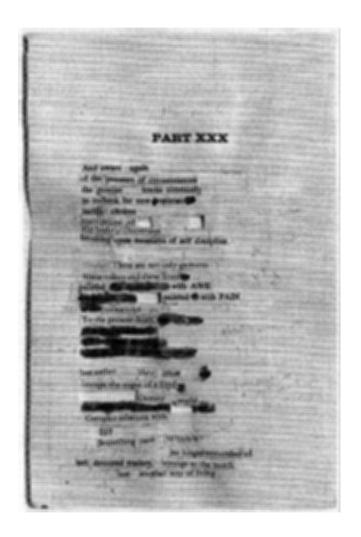
While defining the way that abuse has allowed the artists

to articulate their predominant concerns I have indicated the greater complexity of their work. Many of the exhibitions that isolate a facet of works to justify their inclusion forcibly obscure most else that the work is about. Instead, I have attempted to show how the isolated quality, abuse, is a way into that remainder rather than a means of blocking it out.

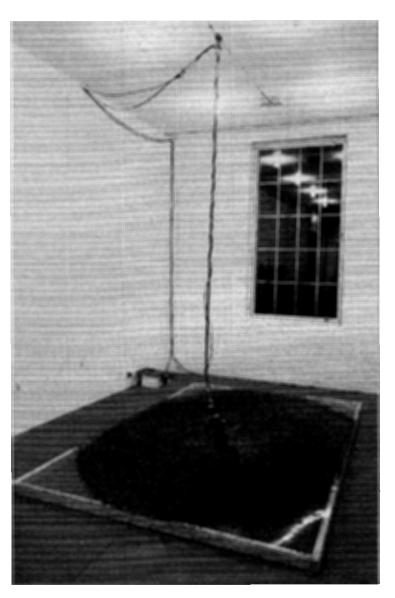
To take one of the artists here, Drew Dominick, the problematic of his down-at-heels kinetic art can hardly be envisioned apart from its existence as resistant artwork, its selfabuse and threatened abuse of its audience, as a rebellion even against its classification as art. The abuse in his case, and in different ways with the other artists here, is always on one level meant as an objection to the closing off, the terminal immobilizing, of the definition 'art,' though in Drew Dominick's, Steven Parrino's and Paul Bloodgood's cases this rebelliousness has the strongest voice.

Although there may no longer be a master text to rebel against, artists still need to define their work in relation to other art. The once monolithic tradition breaks down into innumerable fragments so that while a history can be discerned in each case, it isn't usually a common history amongst artists, and when it is common we find a tendency for conflicting interpretations. Despite this fragmentation the work here shows both an historical intelligence as a means of self-definition and an emphasized materiality to make the work demonstratively present. These two drives determine how the ontology of the work is defined. Its being is still part discourse and part physical presence, and in the case of these artists the abuse—the cutting, burning, tearing, piercing—affects both. It is used by the artists as one of the codes to let an audience know that the reading of the work must be seen to be a disrupted reading—where we expected a seamless text we now have to acknowledge the evident rupture. Where we expected an integrated surface we find it broken, our somatic responses changing because of the irreversibly modified nature of the initial substance, whether it is sugar, paint, or cloth.

I'd like to look at these two components, materiality and discourse, without completely separating them from each other, as they are affected by the abusive practice of each artist. Since I've already made a point for difference I'll divide the group according to five varying intentions that generate the abuse or are indicated by it. Within these divisions the artists' work will be shown to have still differing aims. I am interested to ask here if there could be a taxonomy of abusive art, something classifiable at this time that might have meaning beyond the categories that normally determine the nature of contemporary art. The most obvious breakdown of such work into torn, burnt, perforated, screwedup, taped-up, stitched, squashed, scratched into, cut into, will only index violence unless there's some greater indication of what these actions communicate, some more developed classification of purpose that these invasive procedures serve. There is the risk of a certain arbitrariness here and the probability that some artists fall into more than one category but it should be evident that I take their work to achieve much more than what these rudimentary divisions might imply. In each instance my intention is to show how the abusive procedure leads to its opposite, the restoration of content to the work, how the abuse of materials alters the presence and discursive nature of the work. One category mentioned already is of the rebellious artwork, the artwork conceded a demonstrative voice. Bloodgood stirs the language of the poems he alters into reaction, Dominick enables the spasmodic resistance of a dangerous machine, and Parrino interferes with the predictable course of a painting's materials to make it an argumentative object.



Paul Bloodgood Untitled, 1994 8"x5½" Collage and paint on book page



Drew Dominick
Body Grinders and
Surveillance (floor), 1994
Dimensions variable
Plywood, grinder, plexi, relay,
timer, rheostat, cameras

With his altered poems Bloodgood sets up an intersection of discourses—the original poem, his own intruding language, and the medium of collage and gestural painting. The abuse is most evidently of the original material (the basis of recent work has been R. Buckminster Fuller's poem on the history of industrialization), in the sense both of the poem's meaning and its physical body as text on the page. A published copy is taken apart rather than using a xerox of the book or printing out a 'clean,' already altered, version.⁸

Parrino's interventions are as apparently destructive, tearing into carefully painted monochromes or restretching them to look as if a terrible accident has occurred. Again the abuse is on different levels, the material of the work is literally torn apart while the text of painting is undermined. We see this in Bloodgood's work which recalls collaborations between abstract expressionists and poets where artists' prints accompany verse, though with a discreteness of image and writing that is here completely violated. Parrino on his part violates the codes by which abstract painting is read by making the material into gesture. Though the painting in this exhibition has been crumpled into a free-standing object Parrino's work usually hangs on the wall as an enamel monochrome on canvas which has been partially destroyed. These might initially be stretched with an excess of wraparound and once dry they are then badly restretched to bring some of this excess border to the front, including creases and crumbled fabric as part of the design. This leaves a surface so distressed physically that it disrupts any notion of illusionist space and displaces a conventional integration of support and image with a literalization of support as image.

The impression with Parrino of the work rebelling against the artist is also felt in Dominick's kinetic sculptures. A grinder will be suspended, often in a plywood box with plexiglass on



Steven Parrino Blob (purple), 1994 approx. 30"x 30"x 16" Enamel paint, silicone, tape, on canvas

one side, intermittently switching on and off as it hurls itself around the confined space. In some installations we are able to see the movement from one angle, accessed perhaps from the street, while a simultaneous video of the same movement taken from a different position is projected on a video monitor inside the gallery. This is effectively disorientating since, in addition to the sight lines varying, neither video monitor nor sculpture will be in view of each other though the grinder will be audible during the projection and the surveillance camera may be visible inside the box. It requires an adjustment for us to be able to complete the conceptualization of the work and we find ourselves piecing together aural and visual memories to grasp a totality which ultimately eludes us.

Inevitably Dominick's installation resembles a caged animal, a reading helped by the sudden arbitrary movements and the similarity of the electric cable to a leash. After a while though there is an understanding that the range of the grinder's movement corresponds to what the swing of an arm might be and relates to Dominick's earlier more conventional dependence on these tools to make sculpture. The abuse is not only in making a violent installation but is importantly also in the misuse of the tools, rendering them ineffectual, so that they circle aimlessly, grinding down nothing.

Each of these three artists has their separate dialogue with earlier art, without this indicating, as mentioned earlier, any claim to historical necessity. The recapitulations are invariably more critique than homage.

As Bloodgood's large paintings deliberately reiterate the visual statements of abstract expressionism so the altered poems recompose the verbal statements of their authors to criticize their texts. All three artists have chosen a humble approach, an emphasis on the hand in the work. While they recall many innovations of early twentieth-century typography

and collage, 10 Bloodgood's poems have the threatening structure of ransom notes with their roughly-pasted words and painted out passages. Parrino's overtly physical exaggeration of Fontana's more conceptual approach implies an American absorption of an aesthetic that until now has been largely resisted here." It is interesting how what thirty years earlier was described as too elegant can, through the most inelegant of movements, punk rock, come to be seen as having the means by which painting can be revitalized. Parrino moved into painting from doing performances and playing rock music with the intention of making the structure of painting as interesting as these other concerns. For him this meant giving it an equivalent energy, in this case through violence, bringing noise to the surface of the painting, making of it a post-punk gesture that refuses to quiet down, tearing into the idiom without apparent regard for what the idiom preserves. With Dominick's work we see a reconsideration of Tinguely and early Dennis Oppenheim, given the menace implied by the movement of the sculpture and the mimicry of art-making processes by some of these machines.¹² Yet, this work resists the possibility of a sophisticated, reliable kineticism by using a jerry-built structure, literally held together with tape, as if to further reverse the separation of machine from human and emphasize the implication mentioned above of the relation between kinetic elements and the movement of body parts.

The second category is the inverse of the previous in that the artwork instead of being a resistant entity is here shown to be a vulnerable one. In Beom Kim's case this is done by ascribing an animism to the cut and reconstituted materials and to the images they form, and in Susan Wilmarth-Rabineau's by the evisceration of the support.

With Kim one part of his project is always the abuse of the medium, the incorporation of materials into his work in ways

that are transgressive. An undercurrent of violence is often present in the implications of the images he uses and is at times reinforced by the way he works. This is conspicuous in the piece called 'Electric Noose' where a strand of barbed wire, shaped like a hangman's rope, is plugged into an electrical outlet. A series of work that cuts sections out of raw canvas to roughly tack them together again with thread before mounting them on a stretcher uses the basic materials of painting to propose a representation that would normally be rendered. It is in these pieces that the patching together makes for a vulnerable object. The cuts are imprecise and the pieces reattached in a makeshift way giving the materials a pathos that the humble images, barely holding onto representation, only add to.

Wilmarth-Rabineau's process is different in that she starts with an abusive action, burning or distressing the linen, to prepare a support for a figurative image whose language is taken from another convention entirely. Embedding a representation in such a structure emphasizes the vulnerability of image and paint. There is an impossibility to the work where the image is an abuse of the support and vice versa. Here paint becomes an abusive substance, intrusive on the altered structure. The 'optimism' of the depiction (in this case flowers) contrasts with the nihilism of the support. There is a makingpresent of the support that forces the image to withdraw with the result that there is a disproportionate enacting of these two (usually you expect the support to become image or enable the image to become visible) and the image retreats to amplify the structure. Although their means are related her work is in extreme contrast to the assertiveness of Parrino's which uses the signifier of violence to give painting the fascination of a recuperating survivor. Wilmarth-Rabineau's painting by contrast remains intentionally vulnerable, the



Susan Wilmarth-Rabineau Allegory II, 1993 26½"x 20"x 4" Oil and beeswax on torn and crushed linen



Fabian Cereijido Untitled, 1994 84"x90" Oil on linen

image muted and the support a remnant rather than α survivor of an action.

With Kim's 'brick walls' the image is made out of the structure, not superimposed on it as in Wilmarth-Rabineau's work. In this way they bypass the conventional procedure for depiction. The cutting and stitching is cursory, the lines of bricks curving to make only the barest notation of a wall. These pieces pay homage to reductive painting only to subvert those intentions by using the pure materials impurely, converting them into a means of figurative reference. The use of raw materials to simultaneously denote their natural state and their (unnatural) ability to render engages critically with the historical precedent of minimalist and process art such that the originality of Kim's depictions depends on a contradiction of the dictates of earlier artists.¹³

The Benjamin essay 'The Work of Art in the Age of its Technical Reproducibility' proposed the continuing destruction of dogma and of auratic qualities which attach themselves firmly to the unique, aura-pervaded, conventional work of art. He saw this happening in any case with mass-circulated photographic reproductions of paintings. Yet even the exemplary model for him of a mechanically-produced work, the film, quickly acquires an aura, if not for its uniqueness as an object at least for its uniqueness as the product of one artist at a particular time, as if this were an inevitable function of our relationship to art.

In this case the question worth asking is whether it is possible for non-mechanical idioms, such as those used here, to afford artists a means of undermining the aura of their own work and so adopt a self-critical orientation. If material abuse is one way that artists have tried to achieve this destruction of aura then does this suggest a tradition of destruction that itself would obviate the possibility of renovation?

...the more tradition is destroyed, the greater the risk of destruction itself becoming a tradition through repetition, repetition, repetition here understood as perhaps the most impoverished but least used 'form' of tradition. Does not invention, the introduction of a series of 'unusable' concepts, ultimately aim at a destruction which is not reconstituted as tradition?...The law of tradition, which we here introduce, requires that a work or a thought have access to it—to tradition—only by breaking with traditional standards.¹⁴

By 'unusable concepts' Benjamin means those that are unusable for fascism, a movement he claims links its destructiveness to the traditions of capitalism. The categories of abuse outlined here don't claim an overt political agenda but the range of their intent and the differences of their means in relation to conventional practice shows an insistence on questioning any tradition of destruction in visual art. The artwork is being taken apart, scored, disembodied, to remove the possibility of illusionist devices, to destabilize the structure and to manifest an incorrect use of materials. Though there is a proposal of the impossibility of art-making by the disintegration of the support and the materials, that impossibility is itself made part of the vocabulary of the work, made the means by which expressiveness is restored. The abuse remains a signifier of destructiveness, of the annihilation of the work, but at the same time it ensures that this signifying is deflected from that most obvious, traditional, target to become integrated within the broader functioning of the visual language of the work.

With the third of these categories, the abuse, in failing to destroy the work, inscribes it with the personal, becoming the paradoxical means to a more intimate communication. Fabian Cereijido and Elana Herzog achieve this by rupturing the surface, Sarah Vanderlip by burning sugar, and in

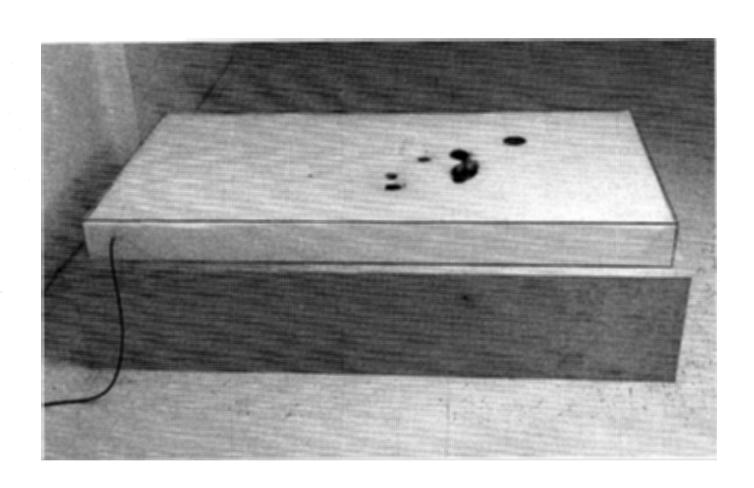
Suzanne McClelland's case by tearing through paper or forming text with virulent accretions of paint.

The perforations in Cereijido's paintings are an independent motif from the paint that seeps around and into them and form an invasive topography amongst the painted shapes that allude to maps, body organs and mountains. These holes began by standing for his friends and family and there are early paintings where a name is written next to each small opening. This use of an aperture to evoke a person is seen in Herzog's and Vanderlip's pieces also, and in all three cases it can be read as an indication of absence. Herzog's piece here is cut into to increase metaphoricity, making empty 'windows' of the rectangular apertures that cast shadows on the wall and suggest a floppy architecture with its architrave of tucked fabric. It's a work that languidly addresses us, articulating itself as a facade. In other, tentatively anthropomorphic, pieces that are bloated forms spread out on the floor or slouched awkwardly on a pedestal holes are sometimes roughly cut into the fabric giving way to a void, implying eyes or some sort of breathing device. The tired look to the fabric Herzog uses, like stuff bought from desperately remaindered stock, with the washed out colors and dull patterns of worn cloth already signifies intimacy. The piece here is set up as a curtain redolent of a domesticity that is violated by the holes cut through it. The fragile threads it hangs from and the sewn tucks at the top add to this sense of an intimate fragment.

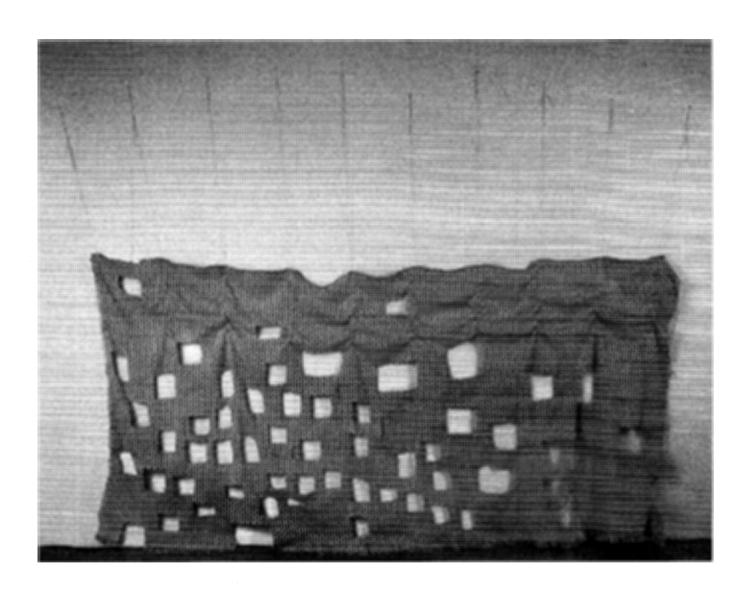
The bed-like structure of Vanderlip's sculpture is quite different in not referencing intimacy through its figuration or the inherent nature of its materials but rather through metaphor and the associations of its primary substance, sugar, which has had holes burnt through it by electric bulbs buried just beneath the surface. Where Cereijido's perforations are notations of people and Herzog's apertures into the body, here they stand for the

abuses we inflict on ourselves. The bed of sugar (and by implication the body made of the same) represents the result of a craving for any harmful substance and the ensuing diseases that will eventually consume us. The reductive shape of Vanderlip's piece as an apparently literal evocation of a bed recalls some of Rachel Whiteread's sculptures of cast furniture and certainly locates its intentions in that area of reinvesting the language of minimalism with a radical intimacy. With the form of the bed remaining a delineation this violation of the pure substance throws out a number of readings drawing in part on different senses of bulb. The anatomical meaning, as the expansion of an internal organ, is suggested when we notice that most of the dark holes would be situated under the chest of a figure lying on the bed. Evidently part of this reading is the more familiar metaphor for death of the lights being drained of energy as they consume the sugar. Simultaneous with the sugar evoking sheets is the restorative image of it as snow and consequently the holes as melted patches through which the first plants emerge from bulbs in the earth.

Those pieces of McClelland's that are most obviously atrophied are the newspaper drawings, torn and painted on, sometimes pinned in a deep pile on the wall where they can be leafed through as if they were carpet samples. Here the abuse is not only of the material since the inscribed words are made indistinct, obscured by the partial transparency of the layers and the rustling noise of the paper which cuts across the sound of the language and contemplation of the image. Where the legibility of the words is impeded by their painting, which tends to cancel as much as emphasize the language, there is a deferral of a distinct meaning in preference for representing the word as a signifier which, in the Lacanian sense of the signifying chain, would never find its signified since here it is continually requalified by its repetitions, by the



Sarah Vanderlip Untitled (Large Sugar), 1994 23"×78"×42" Glass, plywood, sugar, electrical cable, light bulbs



Elana Herzog Untitled #2, 1994 92"x 84"x 4" Heavy fabric, button thread, map pins

incompleteness of the iteration, and by the interference of the paint.¹⁵

In McClelland's oil paintings, where their subject is the significations of language, abuse acts through the excessive materiality of the surface that, like stuttering, makes layers of sound entangling speech. Words are treated as gestures, meshing variably legible letters within a painterly field. In a different way the newspaper drawings intersect the readings of made and found images. In the piece shown here successive torn newspaper photographs—showing á homeless man being shot by police near the White House—separate layers of transparent sheets painted in a viscerally unsettling way. This alignment of mass-produced representations of quotidian violence with the trauma of the paint surface (where the photos literally become the background of the work) proposes the question of correspondence between actual physical abuse, occurring in the world, and the abuse that structures the work.

These artists circumvent tradition in various ways. Where the painted gesture is conventionally metonymical, a nonobjective mark standing for emotional activity, McClelland retains the form of that mark but welds it to speech, as if wanting to reveal a current redundancy of the gesture as signifier of intention while she proposes a way to restore its potency. Cereijido also sets out to restore expressive capability to painting in his case by defining these near-abstract forms as if they were characters interacting with each other, investing them with specific personality as he makes them. The precedent of Fontana for the holes is a deliberate inclusion (both artists were originally from Argentina). That Fontana understood, but set himself against, tenets of American abstract painting would make him an effective counterweight to the experience of art that Cereijido has had since moving here. Cereiiido's combination of these once-antagonistic methods

into one body of work suggests an artist placing his thought between the two countries and using the respective idioms to appraise each other, using each tradition to query the other. Herzog's sculptures, made of material that has been cut into, stitched, or padded to make bulky objects, develop a vocabulary of torpor and flaccid form that is an unusual challenge to the rigid shapes of constructed sculpture and is an effective proposition of an alternative visual language. With an entirely different geometry Vanderlip's sculptures, as already mentioned, develop the severe forms of minimal art as a contrast to, and therefore a way of focusing on, the irruptions of meaning generated by the burnt sugar.

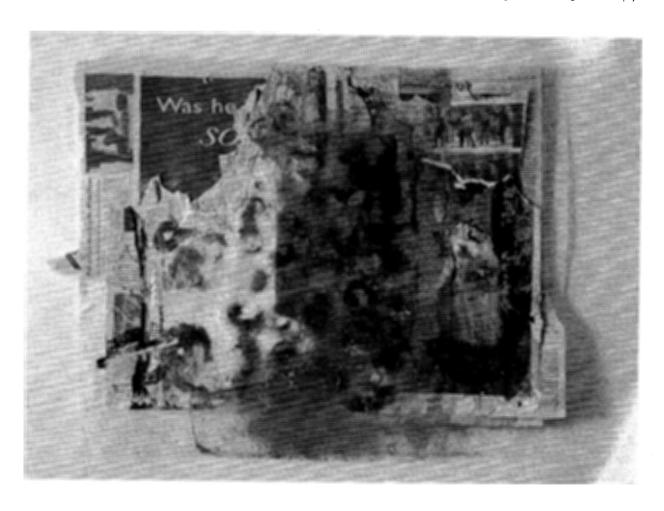
As the effects of abuse are incorporated into and alter the visual language being used, on one level their status is undifferentiated from other elements of the work like container or gesture. Burnt cavities are part of the syntax that includes glass box and electrical cable in Vanderlip's piece, while in Cereijido's painting the unnamed holes spreading out across the surface as a constellation of absences, become a coherent shape amongst the other forms. James Hyde sees the cutting and scoring of his painted surfaces as having the same measure as painted marks, and for Kim the lines made by cutting and restitching gain their irony from delineating much in the way that drawing would. This apparent restitution remains implied though since complete integration, and mollification, of abuse is never intended. Instead the effect is to break down the predictable wholeness of language to make a new kind of enunciation, and for this to happen the destructive interventions have to be equivalent to the components they disrupt. Relating to this process of regenerative breakdown Foucault, in his explanation of the development of language, remarks on the events within sentences and syllables through which literature originates, a process, or 'endless murmur,'

that opposes and undermines the conventional nominative function of language.

The idea that, when we destroy words, what is left is neither mere noise nor arbitrary, pure elements, but other words, which when pulverized in turn, will set free still other words—this idea is at once the negative of all the modern science of languages and the myth in which we now transcribe the most obscure and the most real powers of language.¹⁷

The fourth category of abuse includes two artists using processes that bring about a decomposition of the materials to form a synthesis of painting and sculpture. Melissa Kretschmer compacts debris as a ground to initially negate the painting that will ultimately organize it, while Lauren Szold pours a colored anti-medium of organic pastes onto transparent fabric.

Kretschmer uses materials that in some cases have themselves been abused—broken glass and fragments of plywood

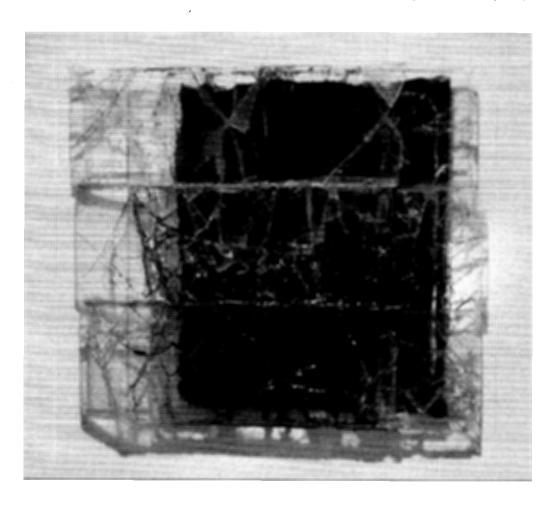


Suzanne McClelland 2295, 1995 25"x 33" Polyester sheet, newspaper, acrylex, clay

for example—and paints them with substances like black roofing tar that are so viscous as to blanket the support in gelatinous darkness. One theme is the difficulty of the materials. Hard to articulate beyond their inherent qualities and not easily compatible, they are combined in ways that distress each other further; for example, by stacking up or interleaving splintered wood with shattered glass. This abuse is always visible although the final piece has an unforced coherence from the unpredictable synthesis of materials. The aim, outlined

earlier, of reformulating the conditions for making art is elicited by both Kretschmer's and Szold's work through their improbable reconsideration of how pictorial methods can be used. This recalls the Situationist proposition of 'detournement' as a way of reinvesting meaning into exhausted idioms.

Detournement, the reuse of preexisting artistic elements in a new ensemble...[entails] the loss of importance of each detourned autonomous element—which may go so far as to lose its original sense completely—and at the



Melissa Kretschmer Kiss, 1994 17"x 19"x 1 ½" Tar, glass, and silicone

same time the organization of another meaningful ensemble that confers on each element its new scope and effect..."Detournement is a game made possible by the capacity of devaluation," writes Jorn...and he goes on to say that all the elements of the cultural past must be 'reinvested' or disappear. Detournement is thus first of all a negation of the value of the previous organization of expression.¹⁸

One way Kretschmer achieves this is to make even more material, more base-like, what is already raw material while constituting it, proposing it, as painting. In order to articulate inarticulable matter, she sinks it further into a basic state, degrading it even more and coating it with an impenetrable material, so it seems fused into a new substance which we are implausibly asked to 'read' as showing painting's intentionality.

In her installations Szold has formulated a thorough decomposition of painting and the radical proposition of her wall pieces is that this decomposition can be substituted for a conventional painted object. The early spills where dyed liquid was poured onto the floor could be taken as all-pervasive sculpture — flour and salt that permeated every corner of a gallery, or colored cellulose falling from the ceiling, apparently out-of-control, across a floor. In terms of abuse these installations filled the space with the effects of catastrophe, taking over olfactorily and physically impeding the viewer's passage across the space. In Szold's studio there is still this sense of disruption as the pieces, before they are moved to the wall, lie around on the floor and have to be negotiated if one is to cross the room. Although her transposition of material from temporary spill to something movable and more permanent makes the object essentially autonomous from its surroundings and more resemblant of painting, the original treatment has been carried over into her new work. The border is still

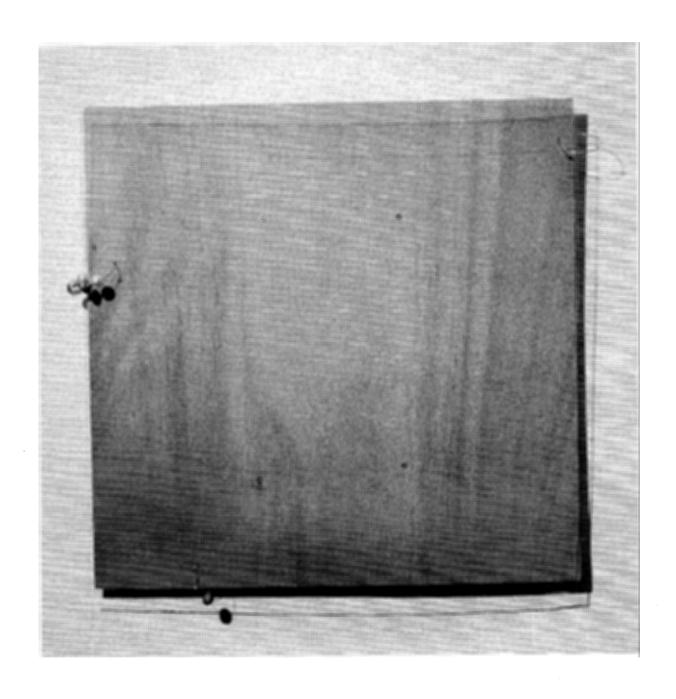
indefinite, the dyed material still cellulose and wheat starch, the swirls of color still without any sense of predeterminacy. The fluid material dyed in high-keyed pastel shades and occasional areas of saturated color is embedded in a gauze mesh that unpredictably reshapes the surface when it is pinned to the wall. Though a first impression may suggest a recasting of stain painting as painted relief sculpture the pieces are interesting in the way they collapse the two idioms while sustaining this simultaneous reading as painting and sculpture. The abuse is read in the unlikely use of paint and the critique this makes of conventional procedures.

Both artists set up a problematic where whatever is to be considered as painting has to wrest its way out of a structure that negates it. Kretschmer's found pieces of material are not collected together to enable us to see more clearly the nature of glass, wood or tar but to propose a function for them as pictorial elements that must articulate their way out of the block-like mass they have been compressed into. The pictorial reading is further complicated though by the reflectiveness of the glass and the sheen of the tar picking up glare from the surroundings that interferes with a visual comprehension of the work. The gauze support that Szold uses is so slight that it lets the work appear to have no ground other than what it is placed against yet the peel of paint gets remodeled by the ridges and folds of the material as it is strung out across a wall. Compared with the gestural or stain painting that Szold's work evokes her incorporation of frailty as the tangible parenthesis of her visual language, and the actual vulnerability of the materials she uses, propose an alternative form for abstract painting.

The final category is of an art that makes a point of apparent indiscriminateness, applying the actions of painting and sculpture to a wide range of materials. In the place of paint Dominique Figarella substitutes found objects,



Lauren Szold Untitled, 1994 Dimensions variable Wheat paste, dye, cellulose, fabric and glue



Dominique Figarella Untitled, 1994 20"x 20" Earrings, polycarbonate, on wood

extraneous to art, using them also as a device for holding layers of the work together, while James Hyde inserts paint into structures that would normally preclude its use but which ultimately transform the possibilities for painting.

In an earlier group of painted works Figarella would sandwich the medium between inert surfaces, usually plastic and sponge, so that it spread out unpredictably, a serene nightmare of support, paint and alazing merging into one unit. The transgressiveness was blatant in this coolly-plotted manufacturing of gesture, increased by the promiscuity of elements closely pressed against each other which, with the often pink or lightyellow colors and pliancy of the sponges, suggested a sexualized body for painting. These felt like paintings but though certainly employing traditional elements they contradicted the nature of the idiom by taking the treatment of these to an illogical extreme. If in a formal definition it is inherent in painting that the nature of the support should influence the paint that is applied to it, here was a particularly obstreperous example. Yet this work, abusive of tradition and materials, restored alternatives for painting and increased its expressive range. In recent work Figarella is incorporating everyday materials in the place of paint allowing him to use puns as a way of undermining convention. In one piece chewing gum, resembling the underside of snails as much as paint, is pushed up from behind against clear plastic, clustering around two blocks of wood that state a crude grid. In another, three hoop earrings hold the edges of a square of plexiglass to a bare plywood support that has four roughly-placed screws sunk into its center, wittily hinting at self abuse as the jewelry pierces through the structure. Both periods of Figarella's work reflect insistently on the peculiar situation of the substance of the art medium, whether of paint or ersatz paint, as it becomes, in a sense, denatured by its frame and support.

These components which are supposed to focus attention on the medium are shown here as interfering with it which becomes instead a kind of intermediary between the two. This visual inversion of the use of materials interestingly finds its linguistic parallel. The sense of medium as art material is turned into the meaning of a medium through which something is transmitted from frame to support, an inversion itself of the familiar notions of artist as medium or of the artwork as a medium between artist and audience.¹⁹

Hyde makes heterogeneous objects that discourse on the possible forms painting and sculpture might take while still definable as such. They use a syntax reiterating methods from art of the recent past in unlikely combinations, painterliness within a minimalist structure for example, that break through the hermeticism of these idioms to propose new ways that work could be made. Hyde's procedure states itself as a polymorphous art where paint seems to be applied interpretively to every conceivable surface or where colored unpainted surfaces are presented as if they were painted ones. It acts as a kind of physics of painting, an investigation of the nature of paint as it falls on other substances.

The painting tradition is contravened as it is being queried, conspicuously by the obtrusiveness of Hyde's supports which through bulk and foregrounding are as immediately legible as the painting on them. The value of a support is conventionally in its strength and low visibility in relation to the painting on it though this relationship has sometimes been inverted. The painted constructions of synthetic cubism or of Ivan Puni's Suprematist work intertwine structure with medium, and more recently Rauschenberg's combines invoked a hybridized array of abrasively visible surfaces for paint. Customarily though the support has a restrained three-dimensionality as a discrete means for the painting to face its audience. With



James Hyde Untitled detail, 1994 Size of detail approx. 5"x 4" Fresco on concrete

Hyde's work, especially the frescoes, the structure is as prominent as the painted surface and acts as an overt explanation, a determinant, for what has been placed on it. Frescoes are projected out on massive styrofoam blocks or oil paintings are made on the inside of sealed glass boxes. The painting on the surfaces of these is intentionally desultory, evoking abstract expressionist gestures but doing so languidly as if wanting to defuse that rhetoric-laden manner. This makes the painted part a signature of painting, a sign of its presence. The real being-present resides with the bulk of the structure which has this assertive physicality in order to reach the same plateau of recognition as the more instantly 'seen' painting.

A product of this consensual balance between painting and sculpture in the frescoes is the release of gestural function from the surface, with its indifferent handling of paint that has sunk flat and mute into the plaster, to the styrofoam support which with its roughly-carved edges and huge form feels like a gesture protruding into space. This inversion is a witty abuse of the conventions of painting while remaining within the framework of abstraction. The painting looks more or less as it should but is emptied of much of its historically-determined qualities, a measure of which are then transferred to the support.

Hyde's work, like that of the other artists, uses abuse to defer a definition of art, resisting, as mentioned before, any immobilizing of that category. The various methods they all use propose cancelling the idea of art while leaving it standing. This simultaneous impulse of striking out the entity while giving it the means to speak recalls the way Heidegger, after decades of defining Being, writes it as Being 20 to show how we can't manage without this concept which is at the same time so inadequate. These artists want to place work under a material critique to show its inadequacy as an integral

object without renouncing that object altogether. It's in this way that these abusive interventions cancel to establish meaning, redeeming idioms that threaten to become ineffectual.

¹ Marinetti, Futurist Manifesto, 1909.

² Boccioni, Futurist Painting: Technical Manifesto, 1912.

³ Tzara, Dada Manifesto, 1918.

⁴ Gilbert Lascault, Contemporary art and the 'old mole,' in Art and Confrontation, New York Graphic Society, 1968.

⁵ Paul Mann, The Theory-Death of the Avant-Garde, Indiana University Press, 1991.

⁶ Flint Schier, Painting after Art?: Comments on Wollheim, written in 1987, published in Visual Theory, Harper Collins 1991.

- 7 "It quickly emerged that the unique and proper area of competence of each art coincided with all that was unique to the nature of its medium. The task of self-criticism became to eliminate from the effects of each art any and every effect that might conceivably be borrowed from or by the medium of any other art. Thereby each art would be rendered 'pure,' and in its 'purity' find the guarantee of its standards of quality as well as of its independence. 'Purity' meant self-definition, and the enterprise of self-criticism in the arts became one of self-definition with a vengeance." Clement Greenberg, Modernist Painting, 1961, (from Modern Art and Modernism, edited by Harrison/Frascina, Harper & Row, 1983). What Greenberg inflects here with a sense of fatalistic irony suggests that he is preparing the premises for claiming an historical inevitability for his own edicts.
- ⁸ Interspersed in the altered poem are occasional phrases from other books valued by Bloodgood, Philip K. Dick's Valis, Ursula Le Guin's The Dispossessed, Ashberry's Houseboat Days and work from Blake and William Carlos Williams.
- 9 "Fuller/because/his recording of history/was of necessity/naive, legendary, —/full of fanciful misemphasis/on a universal perspective." The lines are from one of Bloodgood's altered poems.
- For instance Mayakovsky's collaborations with El Lissitsky in the layout of For Reading out loud, 1923, or with Rodchenko who made the photomontages accompanying About This, 1922-3.
- 11 See note #16 on Fontana.
- Tinguely made a machine to erratically draw on paper, Oppenheim's firework pieces generated light shows, the rubber disks of Dominick's grinders draw on their plexiglass beds and plywood walls, and sometimes a video of the sculpture, or of the audience looking at it, is incorporated as part of the installation.
- "What was relevant to the '60s was the necessity of reconstituting the object as art. Objects were an obvious first step away from illusionism, allusion and metaphor. They are the clearest type of artificial independent entity, obviously removed and separate from the anthropomorphic. It is not especially surprising that art driving toward greater concreteness and away from the illusory

would fasten on the essentially idealistic imagery of the geometric... Art of the '60s was an art of depicting images. But depiction as a mode seems primitive because it involves implicitly asserting forms as being prior to substances." Robert Morris, Notes on Sculpture 4: Beyond Objects, 1969. (from Art in Theory, edited by Harrison/Wood, Blackwell, 1992).

Alexander García Düttmann, Tradition and Destruction: Walter Benjamin's Politics of Language, in Walter Benjamin's Philosophy, Routledge, 1994.

- 15 "There is in effect no signifying chain that does not have, as if attached to the punctuation of each of its units, a whole articulation of relevant contexts suspended 'vertically,' as it were, from that point...What this structure of the signifying chain discloses is the possibility I have...in so far as it exists as a language, to use it in order to signify something quite other than what it says." Jacques Lacan, The Agency of the Letter in the Unconscious or Reason since Freud, 1957, revised for Ecrits, 1966.
- Fontana has never found much of an audience in the U.S., where he was criticized as too elegant, too sexy (Reinhardt), and where he clearly transgressed the determinants of abstract painting prevalent in the 1950's and 60's. He spoke as such himself returning a certain antagonism towards the artists who failed to connect with his work. "Once an American in Venice said to me, 'You're the spatialist but you don't understand about spaces. Who are you anyway?... We've got Arizona. There's space for you...' So I said to him, 'Look, if it comes to that, I come from South America and we have the Pampas which is twice the size of Arizona. I am not interested in the kind of space you are talking about. Mine is a different dimension.' The 'hole' is this dimension. I say dimension because I cannot think what other word to use. I make a hole in the canvas in order to leave behind me the old pictorial formulae, the painting and the traditional view of art and I escope symbolically, but also materially, from the prison of the flat surface." Fontana in an interview with Tommaso Trini, 1968. (From Whitechapel Art Gallery catalogue, 1988).
- ¹⁷ Michel Foucault, *The Order of Things*, 1966, Random House, 1970.
- ¹⁸ Guy Debord, Internationale situationniste, 1959. (from Art in Theory).
- The idea of artist as medium through whom the artwork moves into society was articulated by Duchamp while the proposition of the artwork as medium through which emotion is transferred from artist to spectator can be found in Kandinsky's On the Spiritual in Art, 1911.
- "...would not then the crossing of the line necessarily become a transformation of language and demand a transformed relationship to the essence of language...A thoughtful glance ahead into this realm of 'Being' can only write it as Being. The drawing of these crossed lines at first only wards off, especially the habit of conceiving 'Being' as something standing by itself..." as quoted from Heidegger's The Question of Being (1958) by Gayatri Spivak who explains that Heidegger, seeking to liberate the old terminology, crosses it out while leaving it standing in case we imagine we have got over the problem of its meaning. (From the preface to her 1976 translation of Derrida's of Grammatology, Johns Hopkins University Press).

Selected Biographical Information

Paul Bloodgood

Education: Yale University, New Haven, Connecticut, BA, Painting, 1982

Norfolk Summer Fellowship, Norfolk, Connecticut, 1981

Selected one-person exhibitions

1995 Sandra Gering Gallery, NYC

1994-5 Baumgartner Gallery, Washington, D.C.

1994 Gavin Brown's Enterprise, NYC

1993 Paintings and House Poems, Sandra Gering Gallery

1992 Margulies Taplin Gallery, Florida

1990 Daniel Newburg Project Room, NYC

Selected Group Exhibitions

1994 In the Spirit of Things, Stux Gallery, NYC Reveillon '94, Stux Gallery, NYC

Sandra Gering Gallery, NYC

Bernard Toale Gallery, Boston

Shouts and Whispers, Venue, Philadelphia, PA

1993 Anxious Art, Bernard Toale Gallery, Boston Jours Tranquilles à Clichy, curated by Alain Kirili at Paolo Croyannes, Paris, and TennisportArts, LIC, NY New York Artists, Gallery Eigen & Art, NYC

1992 Paul Bloodgood, Leonard Bullock, Cora Cohen & Ben Kinmont, Sandra Gering Gallery

Curatorial

1993 Underlay, 15 Renwick, New Yark

1991-present Director/Curator of the A/C Project Room, NYC Selected Bibliography

1993 Philippe Dagen, in 'Le Monde,' June 11 Michael Kimmelmon, 'The New York Times,' Moy 14 Sue Scott, 'Art News,' September Jerry Soltz, 'Art in America,' September

Fabian Cereiiido

Education: New York Studio School, 1983-6

Escuela Nacional de Artes Plasticas of the Universidad Nacional Autanoma de Mexico 1979-82

One-person exhibitions

1995 Grand Solon, New York 1994 Grand Salon, New York

1993 Colby Callege Museum of Art, Maine

Selected Group Exhibitions

1994 International Critics' Choice, Mitchell Museum, Cedorhurst,

1993 Elvis has left the building, 23rd Street, New York, curated by Collins & Millazzo . Rubber Soul, Ledisflam Gallery

1992 David Beitzel, NYC

1991 Brooklyn, Jack Tilton, NYC

Selected Bibliography

1995 Owen Drolett, catalogue for exhibition at Grand Salon 1994 Charles Merewether, catalogue for International Critics' Choice, Mitchell Museum

1993 Cothy Goncharov, catalogue for exhibition at the Colby Museum

1992 Marco Colopietro, catalogue for exhibition at Opening/Sattatracia Galleria, Rame

Drew Dominick

Education: Tyler School of Art, Philadelphia, MFA, 1992 University of Calorada, Boulder, BFA 1988 Habart and William Smith College, Geneva, NY, 1983-5

Selected exhibitions

1995 Liz Deschenes, Drew Dominick, Susan Silos, Jose Freire Fine Art, NYC

Take Me To God, Jose Freire Fine Art, curated by Jessica

When the children are in Darkness, Vienna Secession, Austria, curated by Birgit Jurgenssen

1993 Installations, Sauce, Brooklyn, NY

Outside Possibilities, Rushmore Festival, Woodbury, NY, curated by Bill Arning

In the window, an the wall behind the wall, and on the flaor, Amy Lipton, NYC

1992 Energy made visible, Larry Becker, Philadelphia, PA Not Working in L.A., Strip Mall, curated by Pae White and Jorge Pardo, Los Angeles, CA Works an Paper, Beaver College Art Gallery, Glenside, PA, Juror, Robert Storr

Dominique Figarella

Selected one-person exhibitions

1995 Galerie Météo, Paris, France

1994 Galerie Météo, Paris

Neue Galerie, Graz, Austria 1993 Villa Arson, Nice, France

Forum Saint-Eustache, Paris

1992 Galeria del Tribunal, Bologna, Italy Forum Saint-Eustache, Paris

Selected group exhibitions

1995 Frozen Light, Neue Galerie, Graz, Austria, curated by Peter Weibel

1994 Snark, Galerie Pierre Nouvion, Monaco Mété(vous)o-show, FIAC, Galerie Météo, Paris Neue Galerie, Graz, Austria

Nouvelle Vague, Musée d'Art Moderne et d'Art Contemporain, Nice

1993 Les passants du Phalanstère, Villa Arson, Nice Salon de Montrouge ART/OMI NY

1992 Le triomphe de la peinture, Galerie Météo, Paris Les Mystères de l'Auberge Espagnale, Villa Arson, Nice Selected Bibliography

1994 Catherine Perret, catalogue, Neue Galerie at the Landesmuseum Joanneum, Graz

1993 Christian Bernard, catalogue, Villa Arson, Nice

Elana Herzog

Education: SUNY, Alfred, New York, MFA, Sculpture, 1979 Bennington College, Bennington, Vermont, BA, 1976 Selected exhibitions

1994 Family Ties, PPOW, New York

American Representative to the Chilean Biennial, Valparaiso. Chile

The Concrete Voice, Leubsdorf Gallery, Hunter College, NYC Beauty, Four Walls, the Back Room, Brooklyn, NY

1993 Shooting Blanks, 81 Greene Street, New York, curated by Kenny Schochter

Outside Possibilities, Rushmore Festival, Woodbury, NY, curated by Bill Arning

55 Ferris Street, Brooklyn, NY, curated by Frederieke Taylor Songs of Retribution, Richard Anderson Gallery, NYC, curated by Nancy Spero

Drawings from 55 Ferris Street, Wynn Kromarsky, NYC

1992 Ambiguous Pieces, White Columns, NYC 10 Steps, Muranushi Lederman, Inc. NYC, in collaboration with Soul Ostrow and Harodner Romley Gallery Results are in, Art in General, NYC Gallery, Dooley Le Cappelaine Gallery, NYC

1991 Snug Harbar Sculpture Festival, Snug Harbar Cultural Center, Staten Island, NY

The Neurotic Art Show, Four Walls at Artists' Space, NYC Selected Bibliography

1994 Kim Levin, *In Brief* in 'Village Voice,' October ' 1993 William Zimmer, 'The New York Times,' Jersey Section, Dec. 5

1992 Gretchen Faust, New York in Review, 'Arts Magazine,' April

1991 Michael Brenson, Sculpture Festival, 'The New York Times,' July 26

1991 Roberto Smith, A Sprinkling of Exhibitians Near Factories and the Water, 'The New York Times,' Morch 23

James Hyde

Education: University of Rachester, NY, 1975-77 Seoul National University, Seoul, BFA 1986

Selected one-person exhibitions

1994 Galerie Art In, Nurnberg

John Good Gallery, NYC

Art Hotel, Amsterdom Paolo Baldacci, NYC

Johan Jonker Galerie, Amsterdam

1993 John Good Gallery

Wesleyan University, Ezra and Cecile Zilkha Gallery, CT

1992 Galerie Art In, Nurnberg 1991 John Good Gallery

1989 John Good Gallery

1988 John Good Gollery

1985 Esther Rand Gallery, Tompkins Square Librory, NYC

1984 Back Room, Germans Van Eck Gallery, NYC

Selected group exhibitions

1994 Tight, Hales Gallery, London

A Survey of American Drawing, Lorient, France

Crash, Curated by Rob Reynolds & Tom Zummer, Thread Waxing Space, NYC Across the River and into the Trees, curated by Collins &

Milazzo, The Rushmore Festival, Woodbury

1993 Plane Truths, Washburn Gallery, NYC

Elvis has left the building (A painting show), curated by Collins & Milazzo, NYC

Silent Echoes, TennisportArts, Long Island City, NY Fragma, Atelier Pierre Zarcate, Paris

Jours Tranquilles à Clichy, curated by Alain Kirili at Paolo Croyannes, Paris, and TennisportArts, LtC, NY Irony and Ecstasy, curated by Klaus Ottman, Salama-Caro, London

1992 Re-Framing Cartoons, curated by Thomas Zummer, Wexner Center, Columbus, OH

Who's afraid of Duchamp, Minimalism, and Passport Photography?, curated by Collins & Milazzo, Anina Nosei Gallery, NYC

Pushing Painting, Stark Gallery, NYC Rumored Painting, Anne Plumb Gallery, NYC Hyde, Lomberg, Marcaccio, Arena Gallery, NYC

1991 Synthesis, John Good Gallery

1990 nonrePRESENTation, curated by Jeremy Gilbert-Rolfe, Security Pacific Corporation, Los Angeles Cantemporary Fresco, Stork Gallery

1989 *Post-*Modern Painters, Jahn Good Gallery

1988 Numerators, John Good Gallery Almost White, Gabrielle Bryers Gallery, NYC

Selected Bibliography

1995 Joseph Masheck, Thomas Zummer, et alio, catalog essays

1993 Dovid Pagel, 'Artforum,' Dec.

Thomas Zummer, Christine Buci-Glucksmann Catalag, Fragma, Atelier Pierre Zorcate, Paris James Hyde, exhibition brochure, Wesleyan University Klaus Ottman, Irony and Ecstacy, Solamo-Caro, London Holland Cotter, 'The New York Times,' March 12

1992 Buzz Spector, 'The Journal of Cantemporary Art,' Fall Collins & Milazza, Who's afraid of Duchamp, Minimalism, and Passport Photography?, Anina Nosei Gallery, NYC Roberta Smith 'The New York Times,' June 26

1991 David Carrier, 'Tema Celeste,' Autumn Marjorie Welish, 'Arts Magazine,' Oct. 'The Journal of Art,' Discussion, Summer 'The New Yorker,' May 27

1990 Jeremy Gilbert-Rolfe, nonrePRESENTation

1989 Peggy Cyphers, Arts Mogozine, March 1988 Stephen Westfall, 'Flash Art,' Summer Nancy Spector, 'Artscribe,' Jan./Feb.

Beom Kim

Education: School of Visual Arts, New York, MFA 1991 Seoul National University, Seoul, BFA 1986

One-person exhibitions 1994 Yoon Gallery, Seoul Selected group exhibitions

1994 New York Artists, Mancs, Progue

Memory & Pratotype, Yoan Gallery, Seaul Race and Gender, Raritan Velley Community Callege; and Wolters Hall Gallery, Rutgers University, New Jersey

1993 (oh, shyness) Nicale Klagsbrun Gallery, Thread Waxing Space, Sandra Gering Gallery, NYC The Return of the Cadavre Esquis, The Drawing Center, NYC, The Corcoran, Washington, DC, and other venues National Showcase Exhibition, Alternative Museum, NYC Fictian and Experience, Gallery Korea, NYC

1992 Engendered Staries, 494 Gallery, NYC Seaul - New York '92, Gollery Korea, NYC

1991 Two People's paintings, (with Wha-Young Lee) Gaa-in Gallery, Seaul

1989 Honesty, Botangol Gallery, Seoul

1988 Seoul Contemporary Art Show, Fine Art Center, Seoul The Contemporary Art Place, Doll Gallery, Seoul

1987 Sights of 8 People, 3rd Gallery, Seoul Seoul '82, Kwanhoon Gallery, Seoul

Selected Bibliography

1994 Mark Harris, Uncovering the Visible, catalog, Yoon Gallery 1993 Dan Cameron, Son of Scatter in 'Art in Auction', Dec. Ingrid Schaffner, The Return of the Cadavre Exquis, Catalogue of the exhibition, Drawing Center Embarrassed Artists in 'Flosh Art', October

Na Ryu, Fiction and Experience, The Han Guk Times, April 17, 1993