



Roni Horn, *Some Thameses (detail)*, 1999—1 of 80 color photographs, 26½ x 40½ inches



Jenny Perlin, *Right Reading*, 2004, three-channel color video projection, 7 minutes

EXHIBITION SPACE CANNONBALLS/ART BY TERESA BRUCE, Horn's image was the other to the museum masterpiece, and yet, following its wide-ranging itinerary, the Thames became the figure, the collection the ground. The absence of labels for Horn's seires signaled the uncertainty of authorship yet marked the photographs as interlopers. In this project, Horn complicated her system once again. In its insistence on doubling and difference, "Some Thameses" first queried the river, then the museum in which we were reflected.

—Judith Rassi Kirshten

JENNY PERLIN GALLERY 400

The raspy clackety-clack of 16 mm cine projectors is already a poignant and wistful sound, and this exhibition of recent films and drawings by Jenny Perlin included four such projectors running nonstop. One of them showed *Washing*, 2002, a grainy, ten-second silent black-and-white loop of the artist washing a window in her Brooklyn studio, the Manhattan skyline visible outside. Poignant and wistful certainly but melancholic and forlorn to boot, the repetitive act of stroking the window through which Manhattan beckons seems an act of obeisance, an acknowledgment of the fractious relationship between Manhattan and Brooklyn, a paeon to the city just an arm's reach away, a wish to serve and groom it. Of course, that skyline was radically transfigured just before 2001, and washing its vista also suggested a gesture of healing, of coaxing it back to life.

Some of the mundane realities of life in New York in the immediate aftermath of 9/11 also make up part of *Rorschach*, 2001, one of three hand-drawn animated 16 mm films shown here. Employing traditional stop-motion animation, the artist uses a 16 mm cine camera to photograph and rephotograph a sheet of paper as she gradually works up a drawing. When these individual frames of film are shown in sequence, the drawing seems to come to life before our eyes. Many of the several-second vignettes of which *Rorschach* is

CHICAGO

RONI HORN ART INSTITUTE OF CHICAGO

An extensive iteration of Roni Horn's encyclopedic project to photograph the Thames, staged at the Art Institute of Chicago, saw the artist partner her own signature fluidity with the solidity of the modernist canon. Curated by James Rondeau, this remarkable exhibition, "Some Thameses," consisted of seventy-seven framed photographs installed throughout twenty-five galleries devoted to the museum's permanent collection of modern and contemporary art, as well as in its corridors, stairwells, lobbies, offices, and library.

The footnotes that Horn employs in her work usually provide textual counterpoints, but in *Seying Water*, 1999—a monologue that she performed at the exhibition's opening, literary allusions became discursive. Dressed in black jacket and pants, she assumed the mannered cadence of a poet, showing slides and interrogating her work, her viewers, and herself. Emphasizing in her poses the androgyny of her name, her self-conscious attitude shifted to become by turns conversational, anecdotal, and seductive. Paired with the non-narrative structure of her photography, chains of quotations linked figures as disparate as Emily Dickinson, Hank Williams, and Martin Heidegger. These accumulations reiterated a desire for transparency in the face of opaque mundane experience. "Water is the master verb," stated Horn, "an act of perpetual relation."

Horn's attention to what she characterizes in her accompanying text as "the

masculine," the "aberration that is rare formation," accounts for the work's haunting presence. If we accept Horn's larger project as a sustained meditation on identity, then our task is equally charged by its endless variability. We followed the unexpected contingencies of "Some Thameses" like a treasure map. The identification of Monet with water may be clichéd, yet as we viewed Horn's photograph next to Matisse's *Interior at Nice*, 1919–20, a sunny seascape reverted to what it actually consists of, a slice of blue point, in a gallery of German Expressionism, the sour effect of Ludwig Meidner's 1913 portrait of Max Hermann Neisse was heightened by Horn's mustard-colored photograph. Elsewhere an orange speck on a mottled Thames surface echoed the edge of Clifford Still's abstraction 1951–52. Not only formal, Horn's edits were also conceptual. Like a liquid connoisseur, she replaced one too many Giacomettis with a photograph in which a brittle black branch matched the paintings' skeletal linearity. Abutting a Juan Gris *Portrait of Picasso*, 1912, the choppy river unfurled the jittery gestures on the canvas. Horn's glittering surfaces chimed with the hallucinatory landscape of Roberto Matta Echaurren's *The Earth Is a Man*, 1942, and the popular Magritte *Time Transfixed*, 1998, will never seem quite the same after Horn's pairing of the steam from the locomotive with the water's smoky wake. Twins are never truly identical, and by Horn's analogy, water does not reflect us, but rather we reflect the water, in all its confounding mutability.

The theoretical implications of this installation complemented and supplemented the chronology of the museum.

emotions are. Seen among these other works, it has a more frantic and explicitly tragic air. Tony Oursler's installation *Below*, 1996, is less like an oddball discovery from another world than an object inhabited by a potentially malevolent spirit, in this case a muttering head (projected, like most of Oursler's works, onto a sphere that both gives the head body and distorts it).

The work that best speaks to both species of possession is Nicola Vruwink's *Living*, 2001, a work based on a two-month period during which the artist executed every project on the television show *Martha Stewart Living*. Vruwink adopted Martha's baggy, indistinct style of dress and filmed herself cooking, sewing, assembling project after arcane project: pink candles that look like sugary peiris fours, ribbon-trimmed tote bags, and other objects of a more ambiguous function. The installation comprises the videos along with the results of those weeks of labor, spread out like evidence on makeshift tables. The sound track is provided by the deep, patrician tones of Stewart herself, her signature round vowels rolling around the installation like a spirit voice at a séance.

The idea of Stewart as a controlling influence is an inspired piece of easiness, her current predicament adding a happy little stab of *Schindler's List* to Vruwink's work and casting an interesting light on "Possessed" as a whole, tinting the obsessions of the past with a rosy nostalgia. So it is that we turn on things that once gripped us. In the thrill of possession we lack perspective; with the benefit of hindsight we are savage indeed.

—Emily Hall

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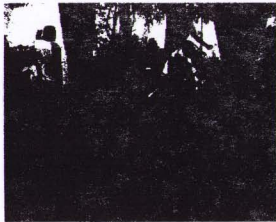
composed are slavishly copied ephemera such as computerized receipts, immigration questionnaires, and fortune-cookie aphorisms. Perlin's renderings of food receipts from September 18 and September 21, 2001, and the receipt headed 1 ♡ NEW YORK from October 21, 2001, all become, through their very banality, powerful monuments.

Perlin is adept at excavating the paper trail we leave behind us every day—a true vernacular—and watching a computerized receipt for a purchase of Chinese note cards form itself before us immerses us in the ubiquity of the generic and the hidden implications of the mundane. The exhibition is titled "A worry-free life or your money back," and while we're unlikely to receive either one, the wish feels curiously soothing. *Sight Reading*, 2004, is a three-channel video projection, each image showing a skilled musician seated at the same piano at different moments, playing Robert Schumann's Piano Concerto in A Minor for the first time. It is mesmerizing to watch music being translated into physical action, creation in real time. Each musician approaches the piece slightly differently, and Perlin has edited the film so that if a pianist makes a mistake, he or her projection disappears for a few moments. These stops and starts are not obliterative punishment; rather, they show knowledge being earned, as each pianist communes with the composer, learning intricacies and replaying tough passages, less in a performative mode than in intense and solipsistic study. This is what Perlin is most intrigued by: our negotiation with the multiple languages that perpetually surround us. It is a process that may be clumsy or absurd, poetic or revelatory, but is most often awkward and incomplete, as we sight-read every step of the way.

—James Yood

SAN FRANCISCO

LARRY SULTAN
SAN FRANCISCO MUSEUM
OF MODERN ART



Larry Sultan, *Tasha's Third Film*, 1998, color photograph, 50 x 50".
From the series "The Valley," 1998-2003.

Valley," 1998-2003, most of which was shot on adult-film locations, the area's social complexity emerges with remarkable economy. As a group, the fifty-three large-scale chromogenic prints convey a rich quasi narrative rooted in American lifestyle ideals. Sultan, a longtime resident of northern California, grew up in the Valley, which he famously depicted in his 1992 series "Pictures from Home." For this earlier sequence, he photographed his aging parents in their San Fernando house, with its lime green walls and lush lawn. The images are posed yet convincing scenes from a life of leisure.

The trope of "The Valley" is that actual residences serve as locations for triple-X films, ones that tell ordinary tales enhanced by super-size physical appetites and endowments. Sultan honors the ordinariness of his subject. His pictures are suffused with the plush theatricality afforded by professional lighting and the self-conscious poses of actors (female porn stars frequently appear in cutlers) yet are equally realistic representations of middle-class aspirations, backyard pleasures, racial tensions, and tastes in decor.

In a wall text, Sultan pointed to a sense of the locations' having been abandoned by their inhabitants, as though these homes had been left to house sitters who just hap-

Sultan also shoots in the actual film studios where equally realistic domestic narratives are constructed. *Backyard Film Set*, 2002, depicts a verdant outdoor location created in a studio with a photographic backdrop and artificial grass. The unpopulated setting promises an Ederic purity, though the crew's equipment, plastic garbage can, and ugly chairs that intrude reveal that this is not only an artificial scene but also a real workplace.

In many of the photographs, Sultan engineers single-frame narratives in which flesh functions as an initial lure. In *Midbroadway Drive #2*, 2000, two semi-clothed women get busy on a brocade couch. They are obscured by an um of flowers that deflects attention from the sound boom to the right. Similarly, *Caboniu*, 2000, shows a poolside tryst partially visible through a droopy rosebush. While attempting to untangle the sexual activity, we scan the scene for further evidence—the pile of abandoned jeans and panties, the fully clothed person on the sideline, the satellite dishes on the balcony.

Sultan also employs layering that connects interior and exterior space. In *Tasha's Third Film*, 1998, a window divides the image as cast and crew are shown lounging on the living-room couch while a scene is shot on the patio. *Off Sepulveda*, 2000,



Michael Minelli, *Intermittent*, 2004, polymer clay and acrylic paint, 5N x 3N x 3N".

LOS ANGELES

MICHAEL MINELLI MICHAEL KOHN GALLERY

The head of a nurse, an Arab woman in *Niqab*, and a castrated, monocolored Dandy Warbucks-like man stare at the viewer blankly, not even asking, in the manner of De Niro's Travis Bickle, "You lookin' at me?" The problems inherent to representing in sculpture both the act of looking and the information provided by a specific face account only partially for the strange power of Michael Minelli's second solo show. Where previously he proffered totemic, gleefully gaudy Bruce Conner-esque assemblages or combined the bodies of various television and cinematic stars to make small, meticulous figurative fetish sculptures (quietly deranging the Greek ideal of a body by constructing seemingly seamless wholes made up of disparate parts (a Mia Farrow-ish torso, say, topped with Yoda's noggin), with his new pieces something only apparently simpler but in the end more disturbing goes on. Minelli deploys a variety of stylizations and stereotypes to create a nostalgic rainbow coalition of silent talking heads from a nonexistent global village—tribal *casual* (all works 2004), wealthy

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