

ARTnews



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DUCHAMP'S
PRIVATE JOKE

MOMA'S TOWER
IN THE SKY

THE VIEW
FROM CANADA

A modern Medici for public art

Door is a reconstruction of Duchamp's *Door* at 11 Rue Larrey, which functioned as a door for both bedroom and bathroom, yet never totally served either. Kubota built a small pie-shaped room in one corner of the gallery. Entering by either of the space's two doors, one's free passage was stopped by a loft-bed-type bridge, inset on each side with small color monitors. The monitors played a tape of Duchamp talking, set against an image of an apocalyptic landscape which resembled a cross between a color field painting and the heath in *Wuthering Heights*. The color had been adjusted in the monitors so that one side carried the colors of sunrise and the other sunset. The dreamy pyrotechnics were in sharp contrast to Duchamp's original *Door*, which was cooler and more functional.

Mountain was a pleasingly sculptural use of video. A plywood pyramid, which was open at the top and strong enough to allow viewers to drape themselves along its flanks, contained a mirrored polygon in its interiors. A nine- and an 11-inch color monitor were set into the mirrors and showed tapes of western landscapes seen from moving vehicles. The bottom was littered with rocks and geodes. The rumbling sounds and the videotapes, whose color and bouncing motion suffused the cavity with a series of brilliant flashes, enhanced the very tangible sense that one was looking at a volcano near eruption.

Richard Lytle (Marilyn Pearl): Lytle's recent paintings have the look of landscape, often seeming to depict promontories undercut by expanses of moving water, but he is actually practicing a type of biomorphic abstraction derived in some measure from Arshile Gorky. The cliffs and foliage are always treated as abstract mass. The shapes are sometimes striated, and often the

forms become architectonic—for instance the seeds in *Winter Solstice*, their protuberances weaving a pattern of intersecting lines and arcs. In *Embarkation*, the giant seeds and nuts sever a relationship with the naturalistic scale of the landscape and drift surrealistically across the surface. The foreground is frequently presented as a solid-colored band, framing the scene and further distancing it from reality.

Brian O'Neill (Sculpture Now): O'Neill's sculpture recalls the sculptural stage sets of Noguchi. Built on lightweight aluminum, fiberglass and wood armatures and covered with dacron and canvas, the pieces have always had intimations of weightlessness. The earliest sculptures in the show, such as *Konya*, a series of truncated cones, and *Kurti*, a large curved shape like Gaudi's serpentine benches inlaid with brightly colored mosaic patterns, rest firmly on the floor, but O'Neill's most recent work, such as the *Naga Cable Piece* (shown last year at P.S. 1) and *Duni*, (three aerodynamic cloud shapes) began to defy gravity and are suspended from the ceiling or cantilevered from the wall.

They are painterly sculptures, a quality O'Neill does not fully exploit. In one piece, four fat tubes, striped with irregular bands of bright color, are suspended side by side. They are held tautly immobile with guy lines. But if O'Neill had allowed them to spin, the random juxtaposition of the abstract Easter-egg bands of color would have generated a kind of kinetic painting in which the color relationships and overall graphic composition of the piece were constantly changing.

Tony Robbins (Alessandra): Three plaster casts of sculpture groups—religious statues that had been inverted, ornamented with a painted allover abstract pattern and studded

with white cubes—functioned both as a commentary on their Christian subject matter and as abstract composition. In one work, a statue of John the Baptist holding the Infant Jesus was placed diagonally and upside down in a wooden cradlelike structure. In this position, the figures surprisingly seemed more relaxed and less authoritarian than in their original upright position. When a scene of the Deposition from the Cross was placed askew, it resembled group sex or an encounter group.

The paintings partook of a similar ambiguity. For the underlying image Robbins used popular religious prints, primarily of female saints. These were painted with dots, lines and mandalas and framed in a wooden frame colored to match the dominant hue of the painting. One does not know if the painting was a re-creation of the state of ecstasy that advanced the individual to sainthood or if Robbins was deliberately debasing the works with his special kind of graffiti.

Louise Kramer (A.I.R.): The use of sheer fabrics by contemporary women sculptors is often a feminist statement about content in women's art and simultaneously a way of generating a painterly or sculptural form. Kramer employs both those attributes of fabric in her monoprints and clay reliefs. The prints were made by inking silk cloth and printing directly from it. Each work has three separate co-existent modes: the gesture of the cloth, a layered field and an allusion to the sensuality of silk stockings. The three-panel *Clockwise, Counterclockwise* rejects some of the lingerie-nuances and instead offers a definite sense of dance or motion. A single sheet of fabric with its edges folded under in equal-width bands was draped in a series of soft Ls at opposite corners of each panel. The Ls appear to leap



Tony Robbins, *Untitled*, 1976, acrylic on canvas, 72 by 153 inches. Alessandra Gallery.