

NEW ART examiner

"OUTSIDER" ART—WHAT'S IN A NAME?

AN INTERVIEW WITH **MEREDITH MONK**

"AIDS: IMAGES, ACTIONS, ANALYSIS" AT SAIC

O. FUNMILAYO MAKARAH ON **L.A. AFTER THE REBELLION**

SAMPLE **ARTIST-DEALER CONTRACT**

Living Room

Betty Rymer Gallery
School of the Art Institute of Chicago
Columbus at Jackson, 312/443-3703

"Living Room" was an exhibition of installations by M.W. Burns, Laurel Fredrickson, Jo Hormuth, Wendy Jacob, and David Schafer. Curated by Joyce Fernandez, the School of the Art Institute's director of exhibitions and events, the show sought to anthropomorphize the architecture of the gallery space, engaging the viewer physically and challenging sensual expectations.

Burns's *Sphinx*/*Pores* is an audio-text work, its public-address system resembling a symmetrical organism growing from the sterility of the white gallery wall. Aural sensations (unintelligible, scumbled, indistinct, and yet somewhat lexical) allude to writing on a blackboard, the sounds metamorphosing to resemble an erudite, verbal paradigm of the aesthetic of balance; the "anesthesia of balance," and symmetry.

Articulating a corporeal relationship between viewers' perceptions of the function of the gallery space and their perceptions of themselves in relation to it, Fredrickson's *Shared Views* consists of a long, starkly white enameled table placed perpendicular to a partition; at the end of the table stands a wooden chair, across from which hangs a partially obscured oval mirror. On the other side of the partition (which itself offers a physical disjuncture, or impediment, to perceiving the piece in its totality) is a duplicate setup, allusive to a balanced and symmetrical spatial duality and presence, or another "mirror image."

Possibly the most enigmatic and disturbing piece was Hormuth's untitled constructed room offering a perceptual role reversal—a band of recessed photographs of pairs of eyes ran the width of the brightly lit cubicle (slightly staggered, perhaps in accordance with the individuals' heights), and surrounded a high, solitary stool. The photos gradually initiated a subtle psychological switch in perception, dramatically altering their once-benign character, and eerily becoming the "eyes of the room," calling into question the connotations of viewer/object/viewed; the room itself taking on the role of inquisitor.

A subtle piece, Jacob's untitled satin-wrapped ductwork gave a physical, mysterious presence to the

evanescent and unseen qualities of air circulation. In this exhibition, Jacob's work had a particularly ephemeral, decommodifying characteristic; a situational afterthought which seems to question the vagaries of artistic intention.

Schafer's installation, *A Model for Wild Harmony*, incorporated structural-looking materials with a pseudo-functional appeal. Heavy cables suspended a rung, steel platform, above which hung a convex mirror labeled "ding dong." In its concrete allusion to the inner workings of architectural systems, there was a fluid transition between a self-conscious, mechanistic presence and anthropomorphic gesture. In this sense, one can't help but recall the surrealist irony behind Duchamp's *The Bride Stripped Bare by her Bachelors, Even*, in that Schafer's piece seems to unceremoniously de-mythify the intellectually pristine qualities associated with a gallery space.

The installations as a group seemed to solidify the intrinsic yet intangible aspects of gallery space (didacticism, erudition, image, cognition, memory, and perception); perhaps in the process of blurring distinctions between art object and inaccessible intellectual phrase, they also take on a certain abstruse and indefinite appeal.

Olga Zdanovics