

# Bill Albertini

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*Through Time: A Conversation with Bill Albertini*

## **SCULPTURE MAGAZINE**

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*Bill Albertini, Theodore*

373 Broadway Room F10, buzzer 610

October 21, 2022 - December 10, 2022

**ART FORUM**, Critics' Picks, New York  
October 2022

**LINK:** <https://www.artforum.com/events/bill-albertini-250520/>

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**LINK:** <https://davidrichardgallery.com/news/852-digital-vision-exhibition-blurs-the-line-between-futuristic-and-traditional-media-the-scarlet-black-jane-hoffman-february-5-2022>

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PHOTOS GRANT WAHLQUIST GALLERY:

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**DIGITAL VERSION:** [pressherald.com/2018/04/08/art-review-portland-gallery-displays-exceptional-objects-in-photo-and-sculpture/](http://pressherald.com/2018/04/08/art-review-portland-gallery-displays-exceptional-objects-in-photo-and-sculpture/)

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**THE NEW YORK TIMES** July 18, 1986 p. C1

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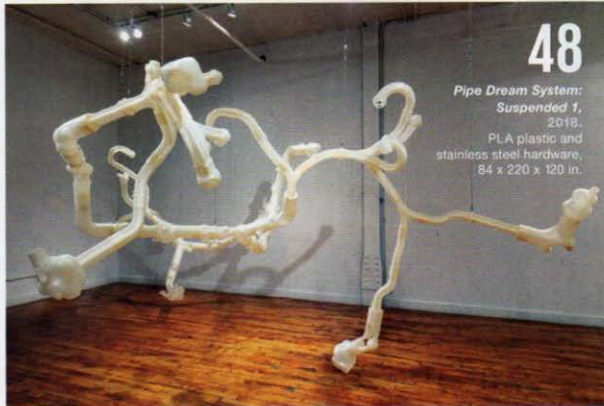
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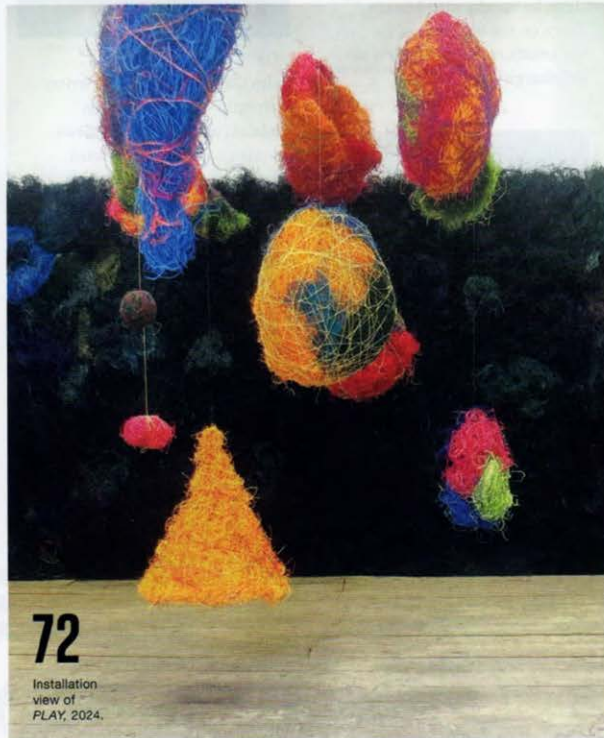
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**48**  
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Suspended 1,  
2018.*  
PLA plastic and  
stainless steel hardware,  
84 x 220 x 120 in.



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# Through Time:

## A Conversation with Bill Albertini

by Joyce Beckenstein





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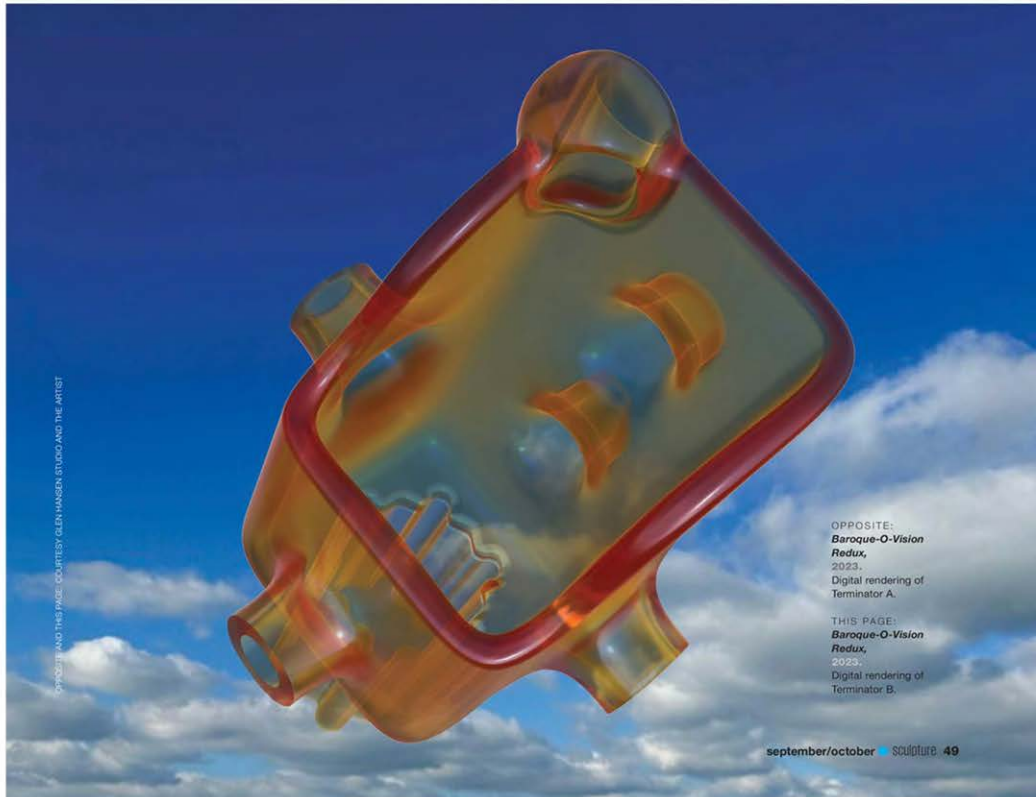
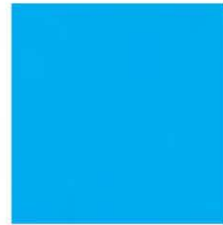
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q/a



OPPOSITE AND THIS PAGE COURTESY GLEN HANSEN STUDIO AND THE ARTIST

OPPOSITE:  
**Baroque-O-Vision  
Redux,**  
2023.  
Digital rendering of  
Terminator A.

THIS PAGE:  
**Baroque-O-Vision  
Redux,**  
2023.  
Digital rendering of  
Terminator B.

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bill albertini



OPPOSITE:  
*Baroque-O-Vision  
Redux,*  
2023.  
PLA plastic and  
stainless steel hardware,  
dimensions  
variable.

THIS PAGE:  
*Untitled (Tab),*  
2024.  
Cast iron bathtub,  
wood, hardware,  
plaster, and chandelier,  
78 x 87 x 43 in.

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COURTESY THE ARTIST

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OPPOSITE:  
*Baroque-O-Vision Redux*,  
2023.

PLA plastic and stainless steel hardware, dimensions variable.

THIS PAGE:  
*Untitled (Tub)*,  
1998.

Cast iron bathtub, wood, hardware, plaster, and chandelier. 78 x 87 x 43 in.

As a young artist, Bill Albertini traversed the Minimalist terrain of mid-20th-century Modernism into a postmodern landscape. His early, baroque-inspired work featured such disparate elements as a clawfoot bathtub, a chandelier, decorative molding, and crudely constructed wooden frames. Albertini has continued to live up to this contrarian, baroque-minimal identity throughout a five-decade-long career, relentlessly conflating genres, styles, and materials as he reconsiders the nature of art and the art object. In 1993, his stream-of-consciousness glide through art-making took a decisive turn when he bought his first computer and began to create a library of unique digital sculptural drawings. Then came an affordable 3D printer, a way to realize those two-dimensional renderings as three-dimensional forms.

It may sound like his work is all high-tech, but it's not. Albertini is, perhaps, a new millennium Wizard of Oz. His intuitively assembled, monumental installation *Baroque-O-Vision Redux* (2023) unfolds like an enigmatic Exquisite Corpse. Or is it a plumbing system run amok? The beginnings of an evolving (non) humanoid life-form? This visual playground is there to be enjoyed in the moment, but it might also hold profound insights about time and memory and how we experience them. Albertini leaves the interpretative choice to us.

**Joyce Beckenstein:** *Baroque-O-Vision Redux*, your recent installation at Glen Hansen Studio in Southold, New York, demonstrated how you merge genres, materials, and processes, which makes your work delightfully impossible to pigeonhole. In 1990, art critic Michael Brenson discussed these confections, concluding that incongruity doesn't always work. Did that review affect you?

**Bill Albertini:** It had an effect, but I felt that he only looked at my stuff through the lens of conventional art history. Things had changed by the late 1980s. Art did what art does—it breaks rules. And I wasn't working in a vacuum. There was a generational shift, with many artists bending established parameters: Tishan Hsu,

Ashley Bickerton, Christian Eckart, and older artists like Richard Artschwager, Christian Boltanski, and James Lee Byars were among the people I was looking at.

**JB:** So, when I saw the installation and thought "baroque Minimalist," I wasn't off, though I wondered how that could be.

**BA:** Time is an important component of my sculpture, and the baroque elements in combination with the minimal, formal aspects are meant to choreograph the viewer around the work through time—physically, visually, conceptually, and historically. As an example, *Untitled (Tub)*, which I exhibited at White Columns in 1988, consisted of an overly constructed frame holding a clawfoot bathtub that I found dumped outside my studio. Like many of my pieces, it wasn't planned out but happened as I combined materials and objects. A baroque-style molding sits above the construction and a chandelier hangs in the tub, illuminating the surroundings. I consciously incorporated these baroque elements as "material," much as Anthony Caro incorporated color as material.

In counterpoint to this baroque material is my



“So much is about time, its elasticity, and how we occupy three dimensions.”



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with Bill Albertini***SCULPTURE MAGAZINE**

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*Cube Drop,*  
ES Van Dam,  
1997–98,  
2 projectors,  
16 video displays, and  
20 VHS tapes,  
dimensions variable.

process, which is driven by a set of rules with Minimalist underpinnings. These are quite apparent in my “Sculpture Kit” series from the ‘70s. *Nude Descending a Staircase* (1979) was the culmination of that series, and its most successful piece. In this Minimalist homage to Marcel Duchamp, I arranged an overlapping series of trapezoidal planes on the ground in a spiral pattern. An intersecting series of orthogonal lines attached to a surround of posts represented the different angles of vision one would experience through time while moving through this spiraling form. In *Nude Descending a Staircase (No. 2)* (1912), Duchamp incorporated time through a painterly interpretation of stop-frame animation. Always interested in the technology of his age, he may have used Muybridge’s motion photo-experiments as source material. Giacomo Balla, the Futurist painter, did something similar in his paintings.

**JB: Critics described your subsequent conflation of styles as a mocking of Postmodernism, an expression of the turmoil that marked the fall of the Soviet Union. Was there a political motivation?**

**BA:** I’m a bit of a history nerd. Having grown up in Europe, the push and pull of two superpowers was a real thing for me, so I closely followed the events of

the late 1980s. It was a historic change. The Soviet Union, essentially frozen for 40 years—more than my lifetime at that point—began to creak back to life. There were, of course, disruptions in this stasis, such as the Cuban Missile Crisis, which I remember clearly from the anxiety of my parents. During the mid-’80s, when I worked a day job as an art installer, I saw the work of Anselm Kiefer, Jannis Kounellis, Gilberto Zorio, and Anne and Patrick Poirier, artists influenced by war or postwar experiences who used history as source and actual material. I also discovered IRWIN, a Slovenian artist collaborative that used history as material, recycling and subverting political and religious symbols, propaganda posters, and Constructivist and Suprematist imagery.

**JB: Did your baroque-inspired triptychs, *Iron Gate East* and *Iron Gate West* (both 1993), reflect those influences?**

**BA:** I wasn’t interested in appropriating existing symbols with all their inherent meanings, so I began to create my own, using them in made-up historical events, which almost mirrored reality. For example, in *Standard 1* and *Standard 4* (both 1992), I created two heraldic-like staffs bearing reinvented symbols, such as crosses. In *Iron Gate West*, I used an image of Soviet soldiers raising their flag over the Reichstag as source material and inserted one of my created symbols on the flag. I did the same with *Iron Gate East*, which was based on the famous Iwo Jima flag-raising image.

**JB: Those were the last works you did without a computer. Why?**

**BA:** I’ll explain, but I want to back up to a very early sculpture, *Untitled (Three Cubes)* (1977). I made Xerox images of wires and then used them to cover a third of the surface of the first plywood cube; the rest of it was painted with textured Roll-A-Tex. I treated the second cube with one third Roll-A-Tex, one third Xerox images of wire, and one third real telephone wires glued to the surface. Finally, I covered two thirds of the third cube in wire and one third in Xeroxes of wire, thus creating a progression of cubes evolving from a

THIS PAGE AND OPPOSITE COURTESY THE ARTIST



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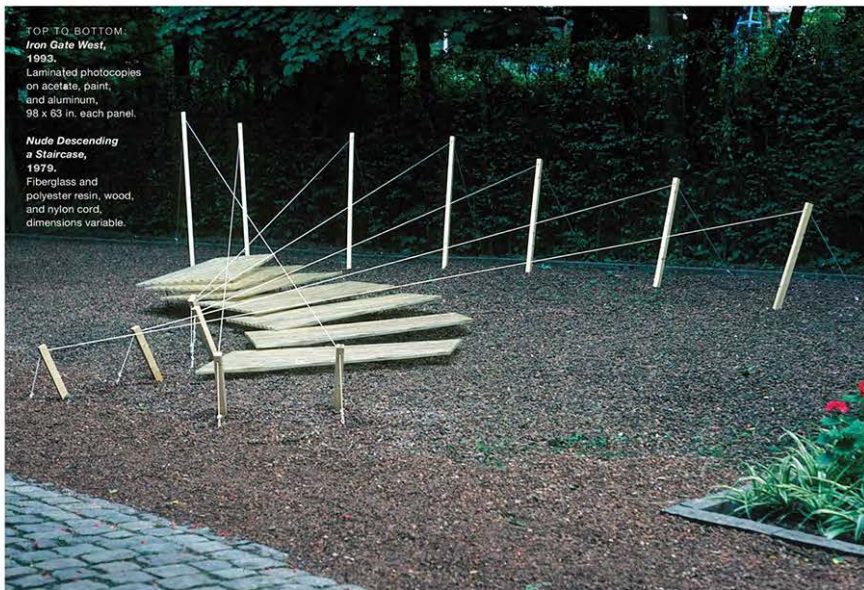
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bill albertini ■



TOP TO BOTTOM:  
*Iron Gate West*,  
1993.  
Laminated photocopies  
on acetate, paint,  
and aluminum,  
98 x 63 in. each panel.

*Nude Descending  
a Staircase*,  
1979.  
Fiberglass and  
polyester resin, wood,  
and nylon cord,  
dimensions variable.

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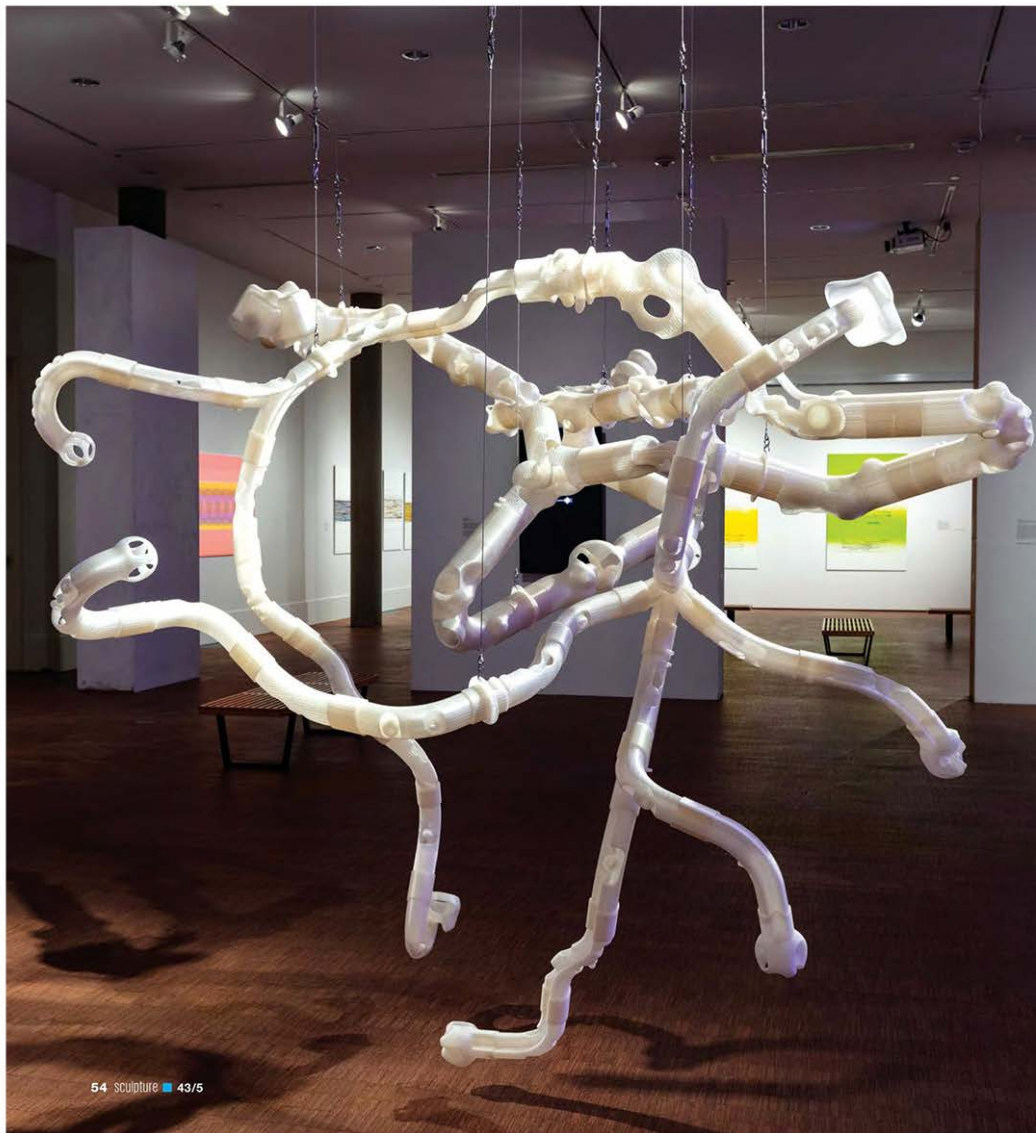
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bill albertini ■

OPPOSITE: COURTESY GINNELL COLLEGE MUSEUM OF ART AND THE ARTIST / THIS PAGE: COURTESY THEODORE ART AND THE ARTIST

series of reproduction surfaces to the incorporation of actual material. So, early on, I began much of my work with repetitive graphic imagery.

The *Iron Gate* works similarly began with Xerox copies to which I added drawings. I made photocopies of these images on painted acetate, laminated them in plastic sleeves, and riveted them to aluminum panels. This process allowed me to make my own patterns instead of recycling existing baroque elements. But in 1993, a friend—a graphic designer—suggested that I streamline my process with a computer, so I bought one with graphics capabilities. I also discovered a CD-ROM game called *Myst*, a puzzle-solving product using digitally rendered images. My eyes opened wide at the many possibilities of these cutting-edge applications and how they could expand my ability as a draftsman to render three-dimensional objects and space on a two-dimensional surface. They became staple tools, like the others in my studio.

**JB:** Can you describe how digital rendering differs from mechanical drawing, and how it informed your sculpture?

**BA:** I've rarely done freehand sketches. Prior to using computer technology, I created architectural- or engineering-style drawings, using a ruler, a compass, a French curve, and other tools. There are enormous advantages to using the computer to model a three-dimensional object. You can "see" objects from all angles, manipulate them, and spin them around in ways that make the back and forth of creating almost seamless. I used the computer to work out and design my "Structures and Facades" exhibition (2008) at Martos Gallery. But I was also working out new ideas about sculpture through video and film. I bought my first 3D printer in 2012, when they became affordable.

**JB:** How did you translate video and film into sculpture?

**BA:** It began with *Cube Drop, ES Van Dam* (1997–98), a digital video simulation of cubes bouncing around and coming to rest. An installation of video screens marked the spot where each bouncing cube in the animation had come to rest on the floor. The bouncing cubes in the video were thus stand-ins for sculpture, while the video displays, positioned within the installation space,

OPPOSITE:  
*Pipe Dream System:  
Suspended 2*,  
2018.  
PLA plastic and stainless  
steel hardware,  
84 x 120 x 120 in.

THIS PAGE:  
*Pipe Dream System  
Catalog*,  
2018.  
Archival inkjet prints and  
3D-printed frames,  
12.5 x 12.5 in. each.

**JOYCE BECKENSTEIN INTERVIEW**

*Through Time: A Conversation with Bill Albertini*

**SCULPTURE MAGAZINE**

September / October 2024

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THIS PAGE:  
**Cube Place**,  
1998–2013,  
18 Plexi cubes,  
vertical video panel,  
and solid-state  
media player,  
dimensions variable.

OPPOSITE:  
**Crumple**,  
2016,  
3D-printed PLA and  
aluminum,  
dimensions variable.

became actual fixed sculptural forms. I reversed the logic with *Cube Place* (1998–2013). Here, the video featured small cubes dropping out of a pair of cupped hands. A sculptural grouping of large cubes placed on the floor extrapolated where those cubes landed.

**JB:** *Memory Index* (1998–2004), an installation based on the 1972 Andrei Tarkovsky film *Solaris*, marked a pivotal moment in your film-to-sculpture process. Here, memory, along with time and your conflation of genres and styles, questions our recall of reality. This piece introduced memory as another “material,” which informs your later works.

**BA:** I saw the Tarkovsky movie, a surreal science-fiction

film about faulty memory, in 1974. I don’t know exactly what triggered the impulse—though I had already begun to work in a diary-like way—but, in 1998, I revisited the film. I used 3D digital computer applications to re-create sets and locations and altered *Solaris* frame grabs according to recollections of the movie I’d seen 25 years earlier. If I happened to see something that reminded me of the film, I took a picture of it and incorporated it within my growing *Solaris* imagery file. *Memory Index*, which was shown at Alona Kagan Gallery, consisted of 600 archival images created from my memory of the original film. It revealed the mercurial nature of memory and our shifting perceptions of reality.

**JB:** How did 3D printing become a sculptural practice for you?

**BA:** Over the years, as with *Memory Index*, I built a library of digitally rendered, three-dimensional drawings—individual components for some future undetermined sculpture. Many of these images consist of translucent images floating against the sky, a daydream referencing technology, stored in the cloud. This process allowed me to catalogue memory, almost like a painter might catalogue images of individual brushstrokes. In fact, *Save As* (2022), a progression of 40 small sculptures, emerged from that feature of 3D technology; each piece in the group is a variation on the one before it.

Though I continue to use traditional fabrication processes, the initial decision to use a 3D printer was a practical one, a way to make all those two-dimensional digital drawings become freestanding sculpture, without the time and expense of, for example, metal casting. Size restrictions were the only downside, so units had to be pieced together for larger works. But the most exciting thing was the way that the 3D printer opened me to amorphous forms and allowed geometry to break out of itself.

**JB:** What was your first 3D-printed sculpture?

**BA:** The “Space Frame” series (2010). I developed it from a video projection, *Liminal Cube* (2006), an animation of an amorphous light form evolving within a frame into an organic shape. I extracted still images from the video animation and contained them in a space frame, an architectural structure surrounding

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bill albertini ■

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THIS PAGE, FROM TOP:  
**Braced Bracket** (detail), 2017.  
Mahogany, Plexiglas, PLA plastic, and laser-cured epoxy resin, 24 x 22 x 94 in.  
**Frame 350, Frame 450 and Frame 550**, 2015.  
Bardiglio imperiale marble, 59 x 18 x 18 in. each with bases.



the image. I then 3D-printed these models to produce different iterations of small amorphous plastic sculptures set within these frames.

Another series, "Floor Crumples" (2014–16), involved 3D-printed sculptural forms derived from digital images of crumpled paper. I attached each crumpled form to a stand of my design and assembled them within a freestanding installation. I used a different process for *Frame 350*, *Frame 450*, and *Frame 550* (2015), which were shown in the exhibition "Marble Codes" at Villa Strozzi in Florence, Italy. I was thinking about Michelangelo's statement that a block of marble contained a form that he longed to draw out. I reversed that idea with digital simulations of fluid filling up a cube. To translate the images into marble, I sent the 3D computer files to Italy and had the series robotically carved.

**JB:** In 2018, the exhibition "Exceptional Objects," at Grant Wahliquist Gallery in Portland, Maine, featured works that signaled a return to the Minimalist sculptures of your formative years. What inspired this change?

**BA:** I was interested in things that look like they might be functional but are a bit off, creating a sense of displacement. "Exceptional Objects," a two-person show (with Kate Greene), included simple mahogany planks connected by plastic 3D-printed brackets and fasteners, which I designed. These hardware components were derived from my library of digital drawings of real and imagined objects. Though works such as *Braced Bracket* (2017) resemble architectural constructions, they have no practical function. Like my earlier inclusion of baroque elements as material, these invented printed components added a new visual and psychological layer to the work. These works were precursors to my recent "Pipe Dream" series (2017–).

**JB:** The *Pipe Dream Systems*—enormous works that look like plumbing systems gone awry—celebrate life in a bizarrely exuberant dance. Could you explain more about them?

**BA:** Like *Memory Index*, the *Pipe Dreams* proceeded in diary fashion. I created component parts without worrying about how they would go together. My only rule required each 3D-printed part to plug into



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OPPOSITE, TOP: COURTESY GRANT WALKQUIST GALLERY, PORTLAND, ME AND THE ARTIST / OPPOSITE, BOTTOM: COURTESY THE ARTIST / THIS PAGE COURTESY MARQUEE PROJECTS, BELLPORT, NY AND THE ARTIST

another part of the assembled work during installation. If they did not, I made an adapter, similar to plumbing adapters, to connect different gauges of pipe.

**JB:** How did you keep track of all the component parts?

**BA:** As I mentioned with the "Save As" series, 3D engineering applications document visual history. They allow me to see all of my designs along the bottom of the screen and change them. The process becomes freer during installation. With *Baroque-O-Vision Redux*, I began with a box of my collected computer-generated parts and intuitively assembled them in situ, the sculptural installation growing like an Exquisite Corpse, a stream of consciousness.

**JB:** And so, as *Baroque-O-Vision Redux* snaked through 1,800 square feet of gallery space, we experienced the memory of your process. What did you want viewers to take from this experience?

**BA:** So much is about time, its elasticity, and how we occupy three dimensions. Our daily life is fragmented, interrupted by the beeps of modern technology vying for our attention. I believe that these near-rhythmic disruptions animate the "Pipe Dream" series. I want people to question this; to spend more than a few minutes; to absorb the history of making and assembling that the installation encapsulates; to take in the overall structure, then focus on its individual components. I am interested in the viewer interpreting my work in ways I haven't thought of. ■

**“ I began with a box of my collected computer-generated parts and intuitively assembled them in situ, the sculptural installation growing like an Exquisite Corpse, a stream of consciousness. ”**

bill albertini ■



*Pipe Dream System:  
(Untitled Corner Piece),  
2024,  
Color fin plywood, PLA  
plastic, and hardware,  
82.5 x 56.5 x 52 in.*

**CONNER REED REVIEW**

*Bill Albertini, Theodore*  
 373 Broadway Room F10, buzzer 610  
 October 21, 2022 - December 10, 2022  
**ART FORUM**, Critics' Picks, New York  
 October 2022

LINK: <https://www.artforum.com/events/bill-albertini-250520/>



View of "Bill Albertini: Hands Off," 2022.

**ARTFORUM**

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View of "Bill Albertini: Hands Off," 2022.

NEW YORK  
**Bill Albertini**

THEODORE  
 373 Broadway Room F10, buzzer 610  
 October 21–December 10, 2022

"Hands Off," Bill Albertini's latest show here, combines video art, stainless steel, aluminum prints, and robot-whittled wood to highlight modern technology's generative potential with such elegance, it could make a believer out of the most stubborn Luddite.

One wall is dedicated to Albertini's ongoing "Save As" sculpture series, which he's been chipping away at since 2019. At the center of the arrangement sits a compact prototype designed by the artist in an Oculus Rift VR headset, which was given life via bronze-infused

steel by an industrial metallurgy company. Variations on that work flank both sides of it, each iteration slightly different from its predecessor. Some of them even spawn branches that jut toward the ceiling or the floor. What might feel recursive instead has real motion; the overall impression reminds you why anyone ever thought computers might be liberating.

The rest of the gallery's long, narrow space is devoted to pieces from Albertini's series "Pipe Dream System," 2018–, a circulatory network comprising discrete parts made with various types of CAD software that were pieced together via sundry production techniques—in this case, a seven-axis robot from William Paterson University in Wayne, New Jersey. The disassembled components of a poplar-wood form appear beside it in dreamy aluminum prints, which also feature images of wildflowers. A looping video scatters light-refracting pieces of snakelike pipes that twist through steel grids on a shelf beside the screen.

The details of each individual sculpture are playful and stirring, and invite careful scrutiny in a way that sleeker, more frictionless digital art might not. That immutable human sensibility, in the end, is what makes "Hands Off" stick. Albertini can tie his hands behind his back all he wants. His touch, so to speak, comes through anyway.

— *Conner Reed*



**JANE HOFFMAN REVIEW**

*“Digital Vision” exhibition blurs the line between futuristic and traditional media*

**THE SCARLET & BLACK**

February 5, 2022

**LINK:** <https://davidrichardgallery.com/news/852-digital-vision-exhibition-blurs-the-line-between-futuristic-and-traditional-media-the-scarlet-black-jane-hoffman-february-5-2022>

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**“Digital Vision” exhibition blurs the line between futuristic and traditional media**



# The Scarlet & Black

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2 min read

## “Digital Vision” exhibition blurs the line between futuristic and traditional media

Jane Hoffman · February 5, 2022



“Digital Vision” showcases works from seven artists. Photo by Isabel Torrence.

**By Jane Hoffman**  
[hoffmanj@grinnell.edu](mailto:hoffmanj@grinnell.edu)

When museumgoers cross the gallery threshold for “Digital Vision,” the newest exhibition at the Grinnell College Museum of Art (GCMoA), they are met by a hypnotic display of lights rippling in infrared, an experience immediately delivering on the apparent theme of the show.

Moments later, however, they see pieces that evoke a more “traditional” gallery setting, arriving in front of paintings, photographs and elaborate sculptures hung from the ceiling. Upon further examination, these apparent contrasts fade away as the role of technology in each piece is revealed.

“This exhibition is about broadening our vision [of art] to include both digital and analog,” said Susan Baley, director of the GCMoA, who helped open the exhibit on Jan. 28.

**JANE HOFFMAN REVIEW**

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**The Scarlet & Black**

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**“Digital Vision” exhibition blurs the line between futuristic and traditional media**



The exhibit, planned in collaboration with former GCMoA director Lesley Wright, was originally proposed as a showcase of Grinnell art professor Matthew Kluber’s artwork, in which he codes luminous, undulating videos and projects them onto paintings. The result is a dreamlike, intricate and ephemeral exploration of art’s new frontier, made only more impressive by how the works engage and contrast with one another.

As the planning process continued, Kluber invited six other artists that utilize digital tools in their creative processes to participate in the exhibit. At the museum, viewers can also see pieces by Bill Albertini, Kate Petley, John Pomara, John F. Simon Jr., Anne Spalter and Jody Zellen.

Throughout the semester, students will have the chance to hear the creators discuss their art and processes through the Artists@Grinnell program. The artists will present in pairs, a nod to the centrality of how the works themselves are “in conversation with one another,” said Baley.

All featured artists attended school and began their careers before the advent of technology that now plays a primary role in their featured work. Within this context, the exhibit ultimately depicts a movement in transition, featuring artists who have integrated technology to a greater extent as both their careers and technical innovation at large have progressed. Kluber shared how the proliferation of “very small and very reliable” computers not only opened the door for new projects, but also expanded opportunities for bringing the works into museum and home settings.

Although visitors are immediately greeted by the neon waves of Kluber’s paintings, a stroll through the gallery also reveals works that are not overtly identifiable as high-tech pieces, such as Bill Albertini’s “Save As,” a set of sculptures made up of nested, twisting bronze and stainless-steel pieces.

Diving into Albertini’s process, however, reveals a technologically sophisticated technique: Albertini models the pieces using an Oculus Rift virtual reality headset and produces them with a 3-D printer. In an interview, Albertini raised a common refrain for the participating artists: digital artwork allows creators to experiment with the nature of time.

In “Save As,” Albertini explained that his process of drafting, saving and returning to the different pieces in “Save As” mimicked the rhythm of a “stop-frame animation, in which each iteration changes but offers the opportunity to return to your draft and begin working again.”

Artist John F. Simon Jr. also engages with temporality in his works. His pieces exemplify the duality of digital artwork that is rendered and saved in code, but manifests in a display of “always changing, never-repeating patterns” upon screens nestled within intricate and colorful frames.

In an increasingly hurried world, it is easy to dismiss technology as a distraction that pulls us away from absorbing the transitory. “Digital Vision” not only challenges that assumption, but provides a canvas upon which to marvel at the fleeting.

*Editor’s note: Previous versions of this article stated artist John F. Simon Jr.’s name as both John Simon Fraser Jr. and John Fraser Simon Jr., which have since been corrected. The S&B regrets these errors. Updated Feb. 9, 2022, 9:38 a.m.*



**DANIEL KANY REVIEW**

*Extraordinary are 'Exceptional' sculpture, photos*

**MAINE SUNDAY TELEGRAPH**  
 Sunday April 8, 2018

PHOTOS GRANT WAHLQUIST GALLERY:  
 Bill Albertini "Brace Bracket", 2017  
 "Prop and Corner Brackets"  
 2018, p. E2



cm Art review: Portland gallery displays 'Exceptional Objects,' in photo and sculpture

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ARTS & ENTERTAINMENT > Posted April 8

# Art review: Portland gallery displays 'Exceptional Objects,' in photo and sculpture

The work of Yale grads Kate Greene and Bill Albertini is on display through April at Grant Wahlquist Gallery.

BY DANIEL KANY

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Kate Greene, "Vonne's Hands," 2018, 8 by 10 inches. Photos courtesy of Grant Wahlquist Gallery

"Exceptional Objects," now on view at Grant Wahlquist Gallery in Portland, features the work of two Yale-educated artists. Kate Greene is a photographer who teaches at Maine College of Art. Bill Albertini is a New York-based sculptor.

Greene's beautifully stark photographs take the form of black-and-white studio still lifes featuring installation-like images of plants, fabric, mirrors and paper, as well as images that appear to be constellations in the night sky. While they look like negative-based black-and-white photographs, some of which have not been "spotted" (cleaned up), a closer look reveals them to be digital images. That they are "archival inkjet images," according to the object list, indicates at least one phase of digital handling, but it doesn't mean that a given image isn't, say, a collodion wet plate photograph that was scanned and then printed digitally.

cm Art review: Portland gallery displays 'Exceptional Objects,' in photo and sculpture

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We're at the point where the source and possible digital manipulation of an image is not necessarily indicated on its object label. I certainly don't see this as a problem; it's been a fact of art for centuries. The camera obscura came into use in the 16th century. Tracings and rubbings were around long before that. And photography has been colorized and manipulated practically since it was invented almost 200 years ago. Maybe what we're feeling now is simply the doubt we should have always felt.

Bill Albertini, "Braced Bracket," 2017, mahogany, Plexiglas, polylactic acid plastic, laser-cured epoxy resin, 24 by 22 by 94 inches. Photos courtesy of Grant Wahlquist Gallery

Albertini's sculptures and images approach digital phantasmagoria from the opposite path. Instead of beginning as objects, they are birthed (at least in terms of their key parts) as digital designs. His "Braced Bracket," for example, is listed as a 94-inch work in "mahogany, Plexiglas, PLA plastic and laser-cured epoxy." We see it as an 8-foot, 2-by-4-shaped mahogany board that nestles through a square, clear plastic window of Plexi. But the wood does not continue through the window. It is two lengths of mahogany joined by about a foot of 3D printed armature.

A handsome grid of 25 framed digital renderings of hardware pairs reveals the story of Albertini's process. He designs the hardware for his sculptures using 3D rendering software and then 3D prints them in polylactic acid (PLA) plastic. This is the new world of object art. To the quick glance, the gridded images could be photographs of his hardware objects, chromed in their metallic solidity. But they are (merely) digital renderings. The irony now is that such paperless designs can be made into real objects with a 3D printer.

Plato, I imagine, would be pleased.

As objects, however, they appear with a stunning sense of organic presence. The default color of Albertini's PLA is like beeswax – the ultimate mathematical organic building material.



**DANIEL KANY REVIEW***Extraordinary are 'Exceptional'  
sculpture, photos***MAINE SUNDAY TELEGRAPH**  
Sunday April 8, 2018PHOTOS GRANT WAHLQUIST GALLERY:  
Bill Albertini "Brace Bracket", 2017  
"Prop and Corner Brackets"  
2018, p. E2

Bill Albertini, "Prop & Corner Brackets," 2018, mahogany, polylactic acid plastic, laser-cured epoxy resin, 52 by 45 by 47 inches.

Albertini's two other sculptures play more to the notion of the organic. Both actually look to the symmetry of the human body which, in turn, more easily relates them to the sculptural work of Joel Shapiro, one of America's greatest sculptors, and an artist who managed to bridge minimalism with the symmetrical pulse of the human form. Albertini seems to channel both Shapiro's figurative abstractions and Richard Serra's work, made by forcing molten lead into the corner of a room with slick (however Frankensteinian) updates on their connective bolts. "Angle Bracket" connects two pieces of mahogany. This time, it acts asymmetrical, yet is a left and a right side held in place by three elements of hardware at the ends and in the middle. "Prop & Corner

Brackets" looks like a combo of Shapiro and Brunswick sculptor Duane Paluska, but, again, it seeks to camouflage its conceptual symmetry. The gesture is like that of a dancing, bending body, but while its legibility as a subject might be hidden, its grace and human appeal is not.

While Albertini's hardware studies appear as product photography – a place we expect the slick and perfectly presented – Greene's unlikely objects appear in the traditional visual language of art: still life. Her camouflage consists of hiding in the open. Her "Scindapus pictus," for example, features a sinewy tangle of the invasive silver vine hovering in a high focus over a studio light-feigned trapezoid. While clearly a still life, the structure of the image looks heavily to abstraction. "Studio Study No. 6" exudes the same formal presence, but with enough subtle marks that we begin to see them as large-format photography flaws: negative scratches and so on. With its center filled by a square of black velvet (with clear references to painters like Ad Reinhardt or Kasimir Malevich), "Studio Study No. 2 (black velvet, smoke)" is an even more direct reference to Modernist painting. The image is filled at the lower left with smoke-like (but fake) lens-flaring and marked with fake lens scratches, so that it feels like a period image. Still, it is somehow troubled by these theatrical invasions, but only after a longer look, and by then it's clear Greene is going far deeper than pretending to make a painting.

Art review: Portland gallery di: x +  
https://www.centralmaine.com...

Greene's range at first appears almost arbitrary. Her images include a set of pictures of hands and scenes of the starry night sky. But these come together as well on theatrical terms. The color of telescopic imagery is added later to help clarify differences in qualities of light. And Greene's images are actually fireworks simply pretending to be telescopic pictures. The hand images in "Yvonne" directly reference the hand images from minimalist choreographer and filmmaker Yvonne Rainer's 1966 "Hand Movie."



Kate Greene, "Studio Study No. 6," 2018, mirrors, plastic, paint, 14 by 11 inches.

The title "Exceptional Objects" might first appear as a merely aggrandizing shout of support for the work in the show, but it opens the conceptual basis of the show. An exception, after all, isn't necessarily a good thing; it's just something that falls outside of the norm, our expectations, the rules. To kick this consideration into play, Wahlquist quotes the journalist Ambrose Bierce, author of the "Devil's Dictionary," in which the writer correctly notes that the Latin phrase "Exceptio probat regulam" means that "the exception tests the rule, puts it to the proof, not confirms it." Calling for testing is an unlikely philosophical idea to pull Albertini's and Greene's work together, but it does. In this light, Albertini's work is primarily based in system logic, and Greene's pursues the relationship between theatricality and reality.

"Exceptional Objects" is a beautifully installed show chock-full of elegant ideas.

*Freelance writer Daniel Kany is an art historian who lives in Cumberland. He can be contacted at:*

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**ART REVIEW**

**WHAT:** "Exceptional Objects" – Photographs by Kate Greene and sculptures by Bill Albertini

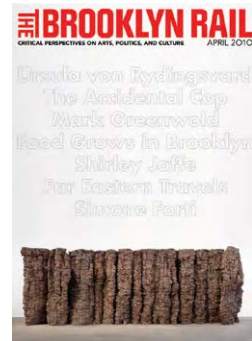
**WHERE:** Grant Wahlquist Gallery, 30 City Center, 2nd Floor, Portland

**WHEN:** 11 a.m. to 6 p.m. Wednesday to Saturday, through April 28

**INFO:** 245-5732, [grantwahlquist.com](http://grantwahlquist.com)



**DAVID ST-LASCAUX REVIEW**  
*Bill Albertini Space Frame Redux*  
**THE BROOKLYN RAIL** April 2010



**BILL ALBERTINI**  
*Space Frame Redux*

MARTOS GALLERY  
 MARCH 20 – APRIL 24, 2010

DAVID ST.-LASCAUX

Question: What's beige, 216 cubic inches, sits on a table, defies you to try to describe it in words, scares the hell out of you, and your *corpus callosum* wants to take out on a date to a sci-fi film festival in another dimension? Answer: One of Bill Albertini's futuristic numbered "Space Frame" sculptures, at the Martos Gallery through April 24, 2010.

Make no mistake: these computer-generated (and fabricated) pieces of plastic are anything but sterile, kitschy or frivolous. In fact, it's their organic molecular presence, their biological and architectural plumbing, their fine art pedigree, their definitive *je ne sais quoi*, that give them the compact power that makes them seem, well, actually, alive.

*Space Frame Redux* marks Albertini's return to human dimensional space after an extended foray into computer simulation. Albertini's early work, *B.C. (Before Computer)*, was at environmental scale, in metal, glass, plastic and wood. Early technology explorations led to a series of visual evocations based on stills from Andrei Tarkovsky's film adaptation of Stanislaw Lem's novel *Solaris*. A decade or so spent creating elegant, unrealized organic forms has given way to the plastic—in the sense of that word as physical, palpable and malleable.

Albertini's space frames are, perhaps not surprisingly—given his three-decade career and intellectual methodology—highly referential. The lights are on, and this artist is *very definitely* at home. Albertini relates his sculptures to works by painter Francis Bacon (cf. "Study for a Portrait" of 1952) and sculptor Alberto Giacometti (cf. "The Cage" of 1949–50); indeed, his "space frames" represent an evolution in the continuum of visual culture. Circling them to gain the full dimensional, dysmorphic effect, one immediately associates—with delicious irony—the organic nude 19th-century

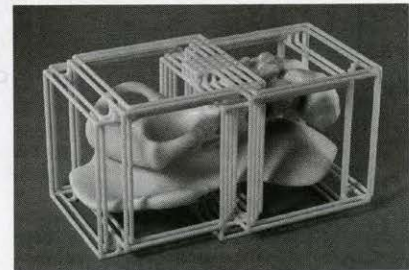
neoclassical marble sculptures in the American Wing at the Metropolitan Museum, all likewise begging to be circumambulated. Albertini's pale organic shapes evoke these beauties as deflated dolls, distorted jetsam floating through silent space, perhaps a kind of fluid, twisted taffy? And nice Cezanne bowls of apples, except collapsed and moldy, ergot, cream; or the naughty Duchamp engaged marble cubes, cuttlebone and thermometer in "Why not Sneeze, Rose Sélavy?" of 1921.

Duchamp the perfect metaphor, because Albertini's "Space Frames," like the former's white stone cubes, aren't the sweet little sugared somethings they seem to be. In an age of sculpture of scale, they are intentional miniatures, begging the question of why—*gotcha*. Their soundless presence is maddening: one wants them to explain themselves, to recombine into something resembling something, to a recognizable *anything*, to play fair with our feeble brains. This is art doing what it's supposed to do: to be something we haven't experienced before, to challenge our expectations, to find ourselves coming up short of processing power. Checkmated. This isn't your father's representational art, nor is it "conceptual," nor "post-" anything, nor "personal": it's *conjured*, and everything that that infers.

And then there's Hans Arp and Yves Tanguy and Henry Moore—and more, as the human mind grapples with the fluid organic, the human eye follows the motive curve, the rare birdcage, the stimulant abstraction. Comparisons to Orozco's organic mesh recently at MoMA, and of course industrial and architectural matrices likewise come to mind. One could go on: this work is richly allusive, an infinite, Borgesian visual encyclopedia.

It's also worth making another comparison, with Urs Fischer's organic aluminum castings recently on view at the New Museum. Unlike these, which convey an impression of risible, Duchampian slag or winking wreckage, Albertini's "miniatures" seem manicured, meticulous, intentional. Although the abstract forms may appear similar (in fact, Fischer's behemoths were fabricated from *maquettes*), there is a world of difference in *intension*. There may be no point here, however, in comparing boulders to songbirds, or klaxons to agates.

Albertini's presentation of these singular objects on oversized tables is also notable: they are close enough to examine, yet slightly aloof. Variations suggest



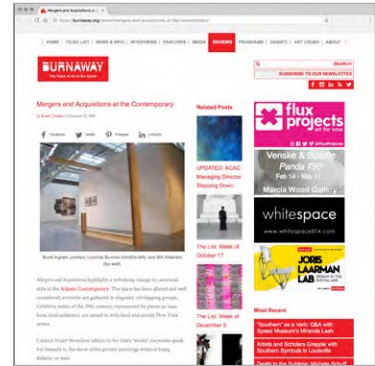
Bill Albertini, *Genus 267*, 2010, ABS Plastic, 12" x 8" x 7"

themselves: encasement in glass cylinders, for instance, to accentuate their otherworldliness, or suspended, or in motion, lit, to enable 360-degree appreciation. On the other hand, in not suspending, Albertini maintains a certain facet of mystery: the root foundation inaccessible.

The exhibition also includes a composited wall-sized collage of space frame images in liquid deep electric crimson. One immediately has the sense of the replicant possibilities—chromatic and material—of this work, from transparent to laval.

Perhaps in the end, Albertini's counterintuitivity is the genius of these things: They look like they were formed by hand in a remedial, therapeutic setting, when in fact they were not only created—using 3-D modeling software—but also fabricated—in ABS plastic, using the "fused deposition modeling" process—electronically. "Fused deposition modeling" is a fancy way of saying they grow upward in layer upon deposited layer. The paradox of ultraorganic art untouched by human hands adds to their intrigue. Unpainted, they have a somewhat slippery, altogether haptic, blobby, moist clay-modeled presence, contained within a geometrically and *diametrically* esthetically opposed space frame matrix. Viewers who will see this as "machine" art will miss the point: that this stuff isn't limited in scale, that mystery endures, that the mind and hand still hold the tools (whether paintbrush, chisel or code). And that in Bill Albertini, the art of the merger of the human and the cloud is well underway.

**KAREN TAUCHES REVIEW**  
*Mergers and Acquisitions at*  
*The Contemporary*  
**BURNAWAY.ORG** December 22, 2008  
ILLUSTRATIONS: Website Screenshot  
and PDF p.1



## Mergers and Acquisitions at the Contemporary

 [burnaway.org/review/mergers-and-acquisitions-at-the-contemporary/](http://burnaway.org/review/mergers-and-acquisitions-at-the-contemporary/)

Karen Tauches



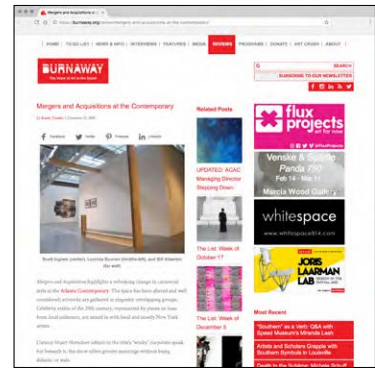
Scott Ingran (center), Lucinda Bunnon (middle-left), and Bill Albortini (far wall)

*Mergers and Acquisitions* highlights a refreshing change in curatorial style at the Atlanta Contemporary. The space has been altered and well considered; artworks are gathered in elegantly overlapping groups. Celebrity artists of the 20th century, represented by pieces on loan from local collectors, are mixed in with local and mostly New York artists.

Curator Stuart Horodner admits to the title's "winky" corporate speak, but beneath it, the show offers greater meanings without being didactic or stale.



**KAREN TAUCHES REVIEW**  
*Mergers and Acquisitions at*  
*The Contemporary*  
**BURNAWAY.ORG** December 22, 2008  
 ILLUSTRATIONS: Website Screenshot  
 and PDF p.3



Bill Albertini, *Soft Morandi*

My personal favorite is Bill Albertini's anti-material still life. *Soft Morandi* reads like a large, unfocused, two-dimensional hologram. At a scale of about 10 feet high by 8 feet wide, it seems to pop off the white wall as well as create a sense that you could walk into it. Matte black and white digital prints compose an exterior that, as you peer inside, layer over glossy prints in muted yellow, gray, and purple. It's just luscious in person. *Soft Morandi* speaks to the illusion of physical reality in what almost seems like a nerdy joke about still lifes. And Albertini achieves all this based on Giorgio Morandi's 1953 still life—a humble, traditional pencil drawing.



Albertini, *Snithaon Island (Project 0028)*

I'm pleased to discover Albertini, who usually works in animation, projection, and filmic images and sculpture of a seemingly science fiction flavor. Albertini's favorite art references also include Andrei Tarkovsky (*Solaris*) and Robert Smithson...



**METROPOLISMAG.COM**  
*Bill Albertini: Structures & Façades*  
April, 2008



**Through May 3, 2008**

## **Bill Albertini: Structures & Façades**

Albertini's work focuses not only on the practical methodology used to assemble American domestic architecture, but also on the structure and facade, essential components of the free-standing billboard and the "flats" of the traditional stage set. His work examines how the properties of the house often seem to share the same purpose of the billboard and stage flat—the idea of projecting what it is the owner/occupant wants it to present. Martos Gallery, NYC. <http://www.martosgallery.com>

**SAUL OSTROW REVIEW**

*Bill Albertini at Holiday*

**ART IN AMERICA** May 2007

ILLUSTRATION view of installation  
 “Liminal Cube 2006” at Holiday  
 p.202-203



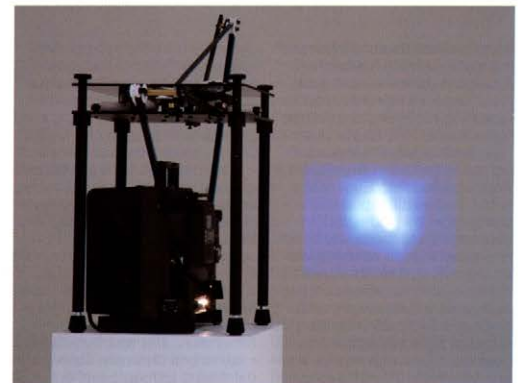
of their appealing luminosity, the paintings retain a sense of weightlessness. It's a bit like knowing that the universe is expanding—you can't feel it, but it's reassuring in a way, as if it affirmed that the realm of possibility still exists. For all their apparent offhandedness, the “Yellow Movies” have become serene monuments to the minor shifts of time.  
 —David Coggins

**Bill Albertini at Holiday**

Two years ago, Bill Albertini presented *Memory Index*, which consists of 600 computer-generated images printed on watercolor paper. These he referred to as “film stills” because they were based on his attempt to reconstruct from memory Andrei Tarkovsky’s visionary 1972 sci-fi film *Solaris*. In this exhibition, at the Brooklyn gallery Holiday, founded by the artist Patty Martori, Albertini again focused on the filmic experience, this time as a form of kinetic sculpture.

*Liminal Cube* is a three-minute digital animation presented as a 16mm film loop, whose beginning and end are marked by a brief interlude of either clear or opaque leader. Though the size of the projected image is variable, Albertini here chose to keep it a modest 40 by 30 inches. The image consists of a bright white biomorphic form slowly moving about the center of a rectangular blue field. This sluglike shape fluidly morphs as it blindly explores the undefined boundaries of its environment, flattening against the invisible limits that circumscribe it. As it completes its circuit, the shape reveals that it is actually embedded in a cube of translucent white light.

ca. early 1970s, mixed mediums on



Bill Albertini: *Liminal Cube*, 2006, 16mm film projection, 3 minutes; at Holiday.

Given the title of the film, the geometric space and its shape-changing occupant, *Liminal Cube* can be read as a work about the degree of awareness below which something cannot be consciously experienced or felt. Interestingly, the cube, with its glowing white form, formally mirrors the cubically shaped projector. In turn, the projector sits at the center of an open structure through which the film loops. Perhaps it is the projector rather than the image projected that constitutes the liminal cube.

Albertini also included a group of hand-colored prints of the computer-generated wire-frame drawings used to create the *Liminal Cube* animation. A similar wire-frame image was the subject of a 158-by-135-inch silverpoint wall drawing. Light played an important role in this work, in that silverpoint tarnishes with exposure to light. Over the course of the exhibition, this large drawing went from being nearly invisible to distinctly apparent and therefore consciously experienced. By transposing digitally produced images into films, drawings and watercolors, Albertini emphasizes the palpable interaction between an image and its mode of delivery, thus countering the notion that digital techniques will soon replace all traditional mediums.  
 —Saul Ostrow

**John Currin at Gagosian Gallery**

Is John Currin our John Singer Sargent? Like that earlier master, Currin displays a remarkable virtuosity in technique and an unflagging ability to produce imagery that generates comment and pub-

licity (of necessity, that imagery is more explicit in our salacious times, when it takes more than a flash of Madame X’s shoulder to excite controversy). But as with Sargent, large assemblies of Currin’s work create a sense of disappointment—alongside the flashy set pieces are more modest offerings that suggest what might have been if the artist were less self-conscious about pleasing and provoking his audience. In Sargent’s case, small landscapes and interiors suggested the ghost of another career. Here it is Currin’s more straightforward portraits that have a sweetness and humanity missing from much of the rest of the work.

For instance *Francis* (all work 2005 or ‘06), a portrait of his son, presents a fresh-faced blond boy open to the world. A neighboring portrait poignantly presents the same child imagined as an old man, with a flying lock of gray hair and a face transformed into a landscape of hills and valleys. It is a vision of a child as the parent will presumably never experience him. Similarly discreet, *The Pillow* is a luminous painting of a woman in a state of dreamy reverie, her eyes raised slightly from the book in front of her.

Such works contrast sharply with the real meat of the show, works that play with pornography, or mix provocative images with representations of Heritage-pattern dinnerware, candelabras and other symbols of the good life. In these works, Currin reverts to his trademark caricature, staging unlikely scenarios of improbable bodies described with beautifully finished brushwork. Lushly painted twosomes and threesomes

**SHANE McADAMS REVIEW**  
*Bill Albertini: Sept 16-October 22, 2006*  
**THE BROOKLYN RAIL** Fall 2006  
 ILLUSTRATION View of installation  
 at Holiday, p.32



**Bill Albertini**

**HOLIDAY** September 16–October 22, 2006

September in the art world has looked so far like what it is every year: an exercise in Dionysian excess. But thankfully, miles away from the clamor in Chelsea, HOLIDAY, has gone ahead with its modest business-as-usual from a converted garage on the outskirts of Williamsburg.

HOLIDAY's unassuming one-room gallery opens directly from the sidewalk of the tree-lined street. It has no smug gatekeepers sitting behind desks and no teams of preparators; just some supporting literature on a ledge, four sturdy walls, and, currently, the assorted elements of a multi-media exhibition by Bill Albertini that fits the space so perfectly, you'd think it was installed there permanently.

In the center of the gallery, a 16mm film projector clatters as it casts an ambiguous, milky-blue ball of light onto the back wall. Over the duration of "Liminal Space," a three-minute loop, the ghostly image gradually resolves into a churning, three-dimensional form enclosed within a transparent cube. The shape initially suggests something magnificent and cosmic, but soon feels more like a writhing, plasmatic microorganism desperately trying to free itself from the cube. It does this with a captivating rhythm, and, in concert with the droning hum of the projector, the experience is altogether hypnotic. All you need is some trance music and a body-length sofa.

Albertini's artistic intentions, however, are esthetic, not anesthetic, as ascertained by how the trippy animation relates to the other pieces in the show. On the wall flanking the projector are three 20 x 16 inch archival inkjet and watercolor prints. Each piece in "Frame Series # 1" depicts the wire-frame exoskeleton of the now familiar organism. The three depicted images represent frames 600, 700 and 800 of the film. The creature now seems unequivocally organic, but perhaps with silicone DNA.

An eight-foot-high silverpoint wall drawing on the opposite wall represents an enlarged, handmade version of the computer prints. As an independent wall drawing, the silverpoint registers as a delicate architectural rendering, but in relation to the film it gains biological associations and the somewhat imposing presence of a fossilized mastodon (without the following sentence I think 'mastodon' should be generalized to something like 'dinosaur' for fear of sounding too cute.) The same drawing, when paired with the inkjet prints, also reads as a 3-D blueprint for a character in a Pixar film.

Three types of mark-making—drawing, photography, and the computer-generated image—are represented in this exhibition, but the lack of an obvious sequence of production among the three frustrates our assessment



View of installation at HOLIDAY. Courtesy of artist and gallery.

of the original and its derivatives. The metaphysical and psychological nature of the form is thus thrown into a perpetual state of flux; its enigmatic soul forced into a looping, cubic purgatory.

Albertini's artistic touch is spare, focused, and a little cagey. He holds his cards close to his chest, requiring a space without clutter or distractions to let his ideas unfold. As I left the gallery I couldn't help but contemplate, as the mesmerizing film captivated the gaze of a lone spectator, the maelstrom of socio-artistic activity surging at that moment in Chelsea. The churning life form careening ceaselessly inside its permanent enclosure was a reminder, by contrast, of how liberating it feels to see the right art inside the right space.

—Shane McAdams



**DAVID LANG** REVIEW  
*Artists on Artists: David Lang  
on Bill Albertini*  
**BOMB MAGAZINE** Fall 2005  
ILLUSTRATIONS 16 images from  
“Memory Index”



# ARTISTS ON ARTISTS

## DAVID LANG ON BILL ALBERTINI

Early this summer I went to the opening of Bill Albertini’s piece *Memory Index, 1999–2004* at the Alona Kagan Gallery in Chelsea. It was a great opening, packed with interesting people drinking. I laughed when I went in, because it reminded me of how I became friends with Bill, some 20 years ago. We were in graduate school together, he in the art school and I in the music school. Classical music parties being what they are, my social life depended on crashing the parties at the art school. That’s where Bill and I met.

I didn’t immediately read the handout at the gallery that explained what *Memory Index* was doing, but certain powerful things jumped out at me at once. The piece is made of 600 computer-generated photographic images, all the same size, all presented in identical thin black frames, arranged methodically in a grid. The grid takes up all available space in the gallery, in a way that is oddly monumental. Monumental because it is clear that you are in the presence of a giant and comprehensive statement, but odd because the images themselves are tiny and enigmatic. The images are strange parts of things, little objects, indistinguishable places, a few close-ups of body parts, and they are all stamped in their centers with an indecipherable but very official-looking computer time code. There is no middle ground in this piece—there is the big picture of the grid and all the little pictures that fill it, but there is no way to link them without making something up. The effect is curious, as if a huge amount of effort

has been spent to impose an order on a chaotic event, like an official reconstruction of an accident. At the same time there is something impressive and hopeless about the order/disorder disconnect in this piece, and it gives *Memory Index* an air of moody desperation.

Later I found out that all the images are reconstructed from scenes, sets and locations that Bill remembered—or misremembered—seeing in the movie *Solaris*, by the legendary Russian director Andrei Tarkovsky. Tarkovsky’s style has certain quirks. There is a slow-motion inexorability about his films—they are so slow, so detailed, so hypnotic, so careful to avoid a linear narrative, that you can be unaware from one moment to the next of how the bigger picture accumulates.

*Solaris*, which is based on a science-fiction novel by Stanislaw Lem, is itself about memory. Cosmic travelers are trapped on a planet that manifests their memories, in a way that makes it impossible—for the travelers and for the audience—to tell if an event is a truth or a fiction, a memory or a reality. Tarkovsky is not interested in the science fiction but in the trap, the idea that we build our lives from scraps of where we have been, what we have done, what we love, what we fear. Out of these scraps we each build the reality we live in. This is the powerful and sobering notion that *Memory Index* captures.



**DAVID LANG REVIEW**  
*Artists on Artists: David Lang*  
*on Bill Albertini*  
**BOMB MAGAZINE** Fall 2005  
ILLUSTRATIONS 16 images from  
"Memory Index"

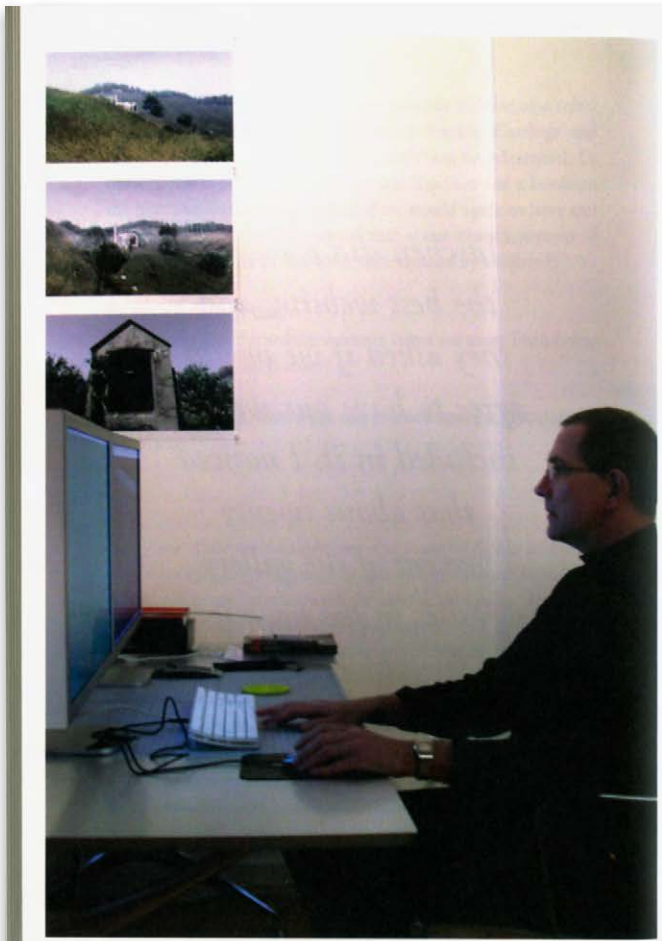
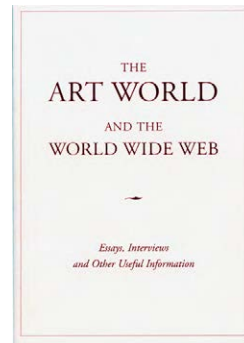


Opposite page: *Memory Index*, 1999–2004, installation view, Alona Kagan Gallery.  
Below: *Memory Index*, 1999–2004, 600 framed archival ink-jet prints, each 5 x 7". All photos courtesy of Alona Kagan Gallery, New York.





**BRIDGET FREER INTERVIEW**  
*Interview with Bill Albertini by Bridget Freer*  
**THE ART WORLD AND THE WORLD**  
**WIDE WEB 2005**  
ILLUSTRATIONS p. 46, 48, 50



## Bill Albertini

*Artist, Alona Kagan Gallery, New York*

*Interviewed by* **Bridget Freer**

**Are you a computer artist?**

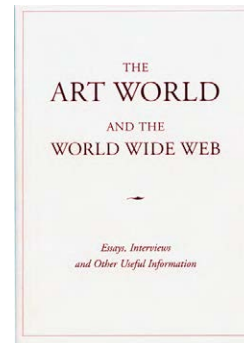
I still consider myself a sculptor and avoid calling myself a “new-media artist” or a “computer artist” as there’s too much baggage that goes along with that. It’s like saying you are a chisel artist—it doesn’t make sense.

**So it’s not relevant?**

The term “computer artist” is increasingly irrelevant because the computer is so pervasive. Everyone uses one, a lot of painters do. The more powerful computers become the more transparent they are. For instance, I use a lot of 3D programs



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*Memory Index*, Installation View, Alona Kagan Gallery, New York, 2004, 600 5 x 7 inch photographs, Dimensions variable. Photo courtesy Bill Albertini.

and when I started out 10 years ago they gave a very specific “computer look”—objects were always very shiny and pristine. As they’ve become more sophisticated, they’ve blended into the photographic or natural world. It’s often difficult to tell how something is created these days. I work with new media and use computers to produce a lot of my work, but the end product is images that don’t necessarily appear to be computer-generated. The computer is a tool I use but isn’t the important thing about what I’m doing.

**How did you start using the computer as a tool?**

It was a project-specific thing. I was working on a series of pieces that involved replicating a similar image over and over again. I bought a used Xerox machine and started doing all kinds of stuff altering photographs, etcetera, and someone mentioned computers were coming down in price and that there was this amazing program called Photoshop. It was still prohibitively expensive, but within a year prices had come down and I took the leap and bought a computer. That was 1993 and I haven’t looked back since, but if you’d told me in 1987 or 1988 that I was going to be working with computers I’d have laughed. They were not on my radar at all, and now they are central to my way of working. Everything I do is filtered through a computer.

**What project are you currently working on?**

I’ve just started working on a project based on [Andrei] Tarkovsky’s film “The Stalker,” which is the only science fiction film he made other than “Solaris,” which was the basis of the last project I worked on.

**BRIDGET FREER INTERVIEW**  
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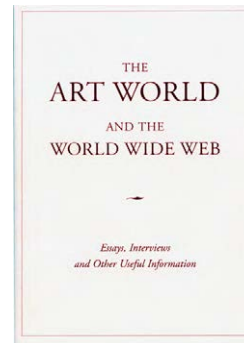


Image from *Memory Index*, 2004, 600 5 x 7 inch photographs, Dimensions variable. Courtesy Alona Kagan Gallery.

**Do you do your banking online?**

I check on my account and if I'm running late or traveling I might pay some bills online. I still have a little thing in the back of my mind about how safe it is. I'm old-fashioned that way. I'm sure it is as safe as putting a check in the mail, but it takes a while to change habits.

**Do you communicate with your gallery via email mostly?**

No, usually by phone, but I email them if I'm sending them images.

**What percentage of your communication, whether it be business or social, is conducted by email?**

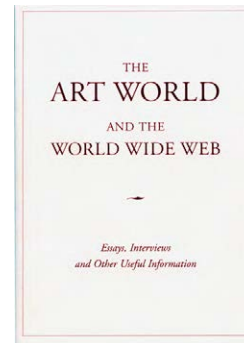
I communicate by email because that's what everyone else does. But if you are a slow typist, and I am an incredibly slow typist, it slows everything down. I've tried voice-recognition programs, but they're not really up to it yet. I have friends in Ireland and we use iSight to chat. It was a bit disconcerting the first time, but we're used to it now and can carry on a normal conversation.

**How very modern of you...**

I know! I think it's going to become much more common. I'm an early adopter of all those advancements. I was really into stereo equipment as a teenager and now, as well as using it for my work, the research I do into technology is a hobby.

**Do you find it hard to avoid understatement when talking about the World Wide Web because it seems the reality has outrun the fiction?**

**BRIDGET FREER** INTERVIEW  
*Interview with Bill Albertini by Bridget Freer*  
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I am not sure about the reality outrunning the fiction, it has just taken a different course. The web isn't what people imagined it would be. I'm not sure I had a specific concept of how it was going to work out, but I know it was different to how it has worked out. In the late 90s, we were told the United States was shifting from being an industrial economy to being an information economy and I remember thinking, "How do people live on information?" I just couldn't imagine it.

**And then came Google...**

Exactly, and now of course the United States is post-manufacturing, which is such a weird idea. It still doesn't make complete sense to me. I guess the faster and deeper this whole thing becomes you can package information in different ways, and that's what this is about: You provide services that didn't exist before and suddenly they become indispensable.

**Like what?**

Reading the newspaper online. I also do a lot of research and every time you search for something you get more information. If you put the same question in every six months the amount of information returned increases dramatically. I goof off every now and again and see what my name comes up with. Five years ago, it would have been one reference and now there are a lot more, maybe not as many as I'd like, but...

**Ever had any surprises when looking yourself up on the web?**

I've never found out anything completely off the wall about myself, but as a result of a show I did last spring, "Memory Index," a Tarkovsky site on the West Coast linked me. I was

interested that other people were making the connections.

**William Gibson said, "The advent, evolution and growth of the Internet is one of the most fascinating and unprecedented human achievements of the century akin to the birth of cities...a new kind of civilization." Do you find that exciting?**

I'm a William Gibson fanatic—I'm in the middle of "Pattern Recognition" at the moment—but I think that is a little hyperbolic. He's on the right track though. I think it's still too new to say how important it's going to be because if you look at it over the past five years, it's changed drastically and is still very fluid. So I am not sure where it's going. It is no longer the Wild, Wild West where anything went. Now the country's and international law are starting to monitor it and clamp down on what can be done, so I guess it's akin to the government structuring how railroads were built in the 19th century or telephone systems in the early 20th century.

**Your work is currently dealing with Tarkovsky's films. Why?**

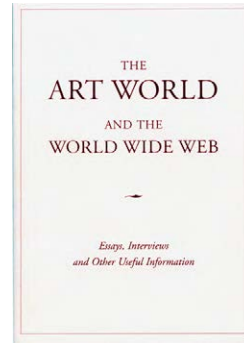
Tarkovsky was really influenced by artists and painters. I find it interesting that he could appropriate that and I am reappropriating it in a different way. I use his stuff as almost a hanger for what is going on with my own thing, such as memory and how you change things in your mind over a period of time.

**And do you think Tarkovsky would approve of your appropriation?**

I don't know, he is long dead, but intellectually I don't think he'd have minded because he was working on appropriating the look of particular artists and would have understood artists doing it back to him.



**BRIDGET FREER INTERVIEW**  
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**What would Tarkovsky make of the Internet?**

My guess is that he was very anti-technology. As a director of film he had to use camera equipment but he relied on a cinematographer for that so he probably didn't get too involved with technology. I've just come back from France where I bought a book of his Polaroid photographs and I was amazed that he even had a Polaroid camera.

**Has the advent of the World Wide Web changed you personally?**

In a way, yes. The best example I can give is that in the early 90s I'd stopped listening to music almost entirely. It was partly that there was nothing being made that interested me, but a lot of it was that in the early days you could go to record stores and ask to listen to a track on an album—I always liked that—but with CDs it became difficult. I mean, Tower Records had these machines but you could only listen to the Top Ten, so I almost completely stopped buying new albums. Then when iTunes came out you could listen to little bits so I started goofing off doing that and began buying stuff again.

**Do you like to look at your own work online?**

Not really, because that's what I do all day when I am working on it. When it's finished, I prefer to see the physical thing.

**And what about looking at other artists' work?**

If I've seen some artist in an art magazine and I don't know their work, then I will Google them to see what else they've done and look at it online. It's a good way of finding out stuff; I use it instead of a dictionary half the time.

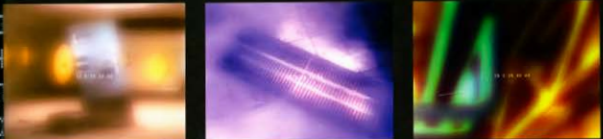
*Bill Albertini was born in Dublin, Ireland, and currently lives and works in New York, New York. He received his M.F.A. from Yale School of Art, and has exhibited in New York, as well as internationally. Recently he has had exhibitions at Alona Kagan Gallery, New York; Temple Bar Galleries and Studios, Dublin, Ireland; and Center for Visual Arts and Culture, University of Connecticut. He was included in "Imaging the Abstract" at Feigen Contemporary, New York (2003) and "Painting Function: Making It Real," at SPACES, Cleveland, Ohio (2000).*

View more at [www.alonakagangallery.com](http://www.alonakagangallery.com)

**SAUL OSTROW** ARTICLE  
*Encoding and Deciphering the Imagined  
Beyond Form: Architecture and Art  
in the Space of Media*  
LUSITANIA PRESS 2004  
ILLUSTRATIONS 63 images from  
"Memory Index" and DVD video



THE RESULT IS A MEDITATION ON HOW TECHNOLOGIES  
OF DIGITAL IMAGING AND REPRODUCTION ACCESS THE  
NETWORKS THROUGH WHICH EXPERIENCE LEADS TO ITS  
REPRESENTATION, AND IN TURN BECOMES THE SOURCE



## BILL ALBERTINI

DISSECTING SOLARIS  
*Encoding and Deciphering the Imagined*

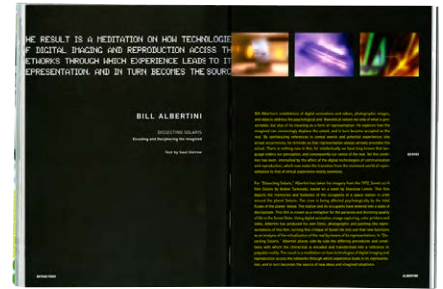
Text by Saul Ostrow

Bill Albertini's installations of digital animations and videos, photographic images, and objects address the psychological and theoretical nature not only of what is presentable, but also of its meaning as a form of representation. He explores how the imagined can convincingly displace the extant, and in turn become accepted as the real. By synthesizing references to unreal events and potential experiences into actual occurrences, he reminds us that representation always already precedes the actual. There is nothing new in this, for intellectually we have long known that language orders our perception, and consequently our sense of the real. Yet this condition has been intensified by the affect of the digital technologies of communication and reproduction, which now make the transition from the imminent world of representation to that of virtual experience nearly seamless.

02-0183

For "Dissecting Solaris," Albertini has taken his imagery from the 1972 Soviet sci-fi film *Solaris* by Andrei Tarkovsky, based on a novel by Stanislaw Lem. This film depicts the memories and fantasies of the occupants of a space station in orbit around the planet Solaris. The crew is being affected psychologically by the tidal fluxes of the planet below. The station and its occupants have entered into a state of decrepitude. This film is meant as a metaphor for the paranoia and declining quality of life in the Soviet State. Using digital animation, image capturing, color printers and video, Albertini has produced his own filmic, photographic and painting-like representations of this film, turning this critique of Soviet life into one that now functions as an analysis of the virtualization of the real by means of its representations. In "Dissecting Solaris," Albertini places side-by-side the differing procedures and conditions with which the chimerical is encoded and transformed into a reference to palpable reality. The result is a meditation on how technologies of digital imaging and reproduction access the networks through which experience leads to its representation, and in turn becomes the source of new ideas and imagined situations.

**SAUL OSTROW** ARTICLE  
*Encoding and Deciphering the Imagined  
Beyond Form: Architecture and Art  
in the Space of Media*  
**LUSITANIA PRESS 2004**  
ILLUSTRATIONS 63 images from  
“Memory Index” and DVD video



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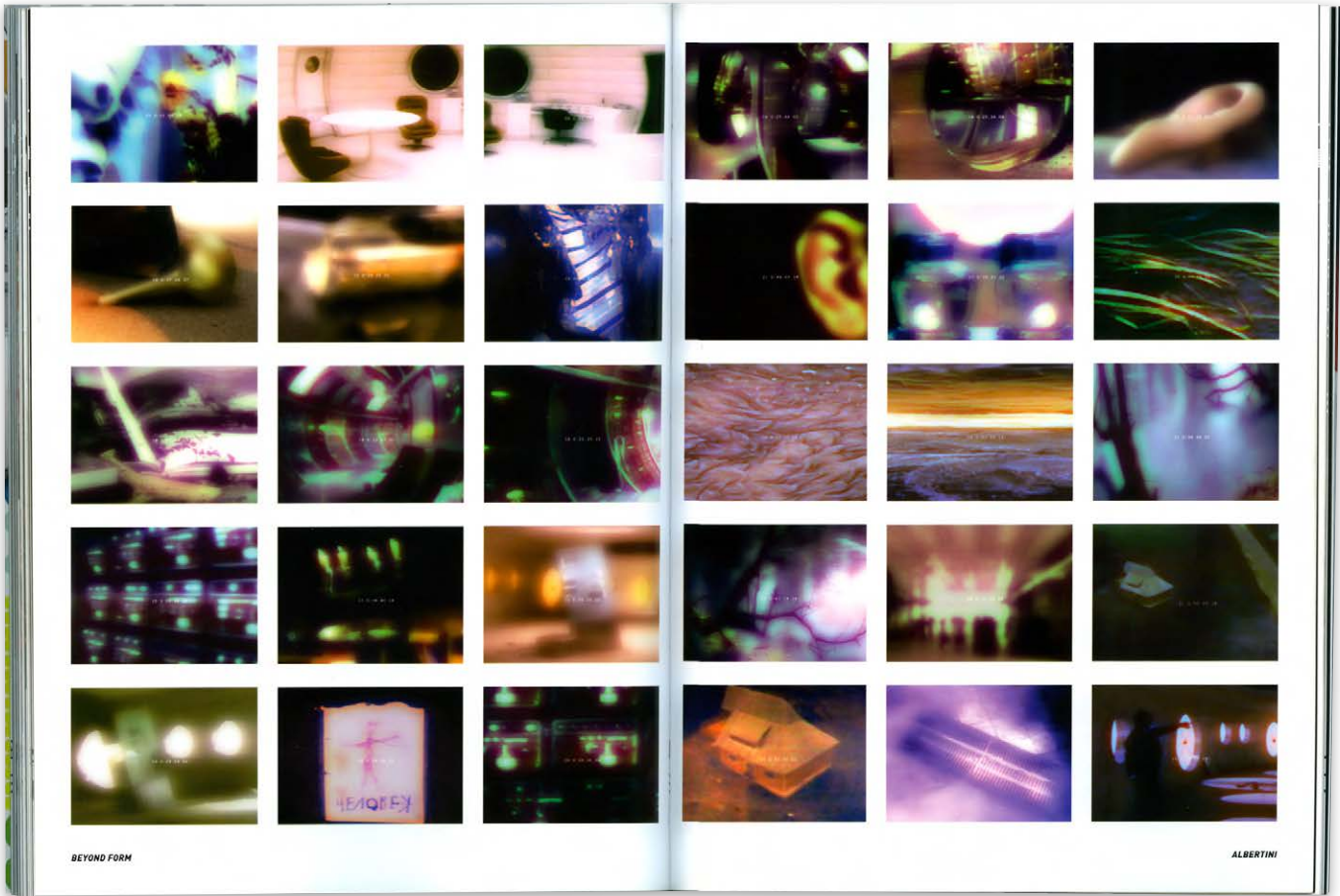
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**ALBERTINI**



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BEYOND FORM

ALBERTINI

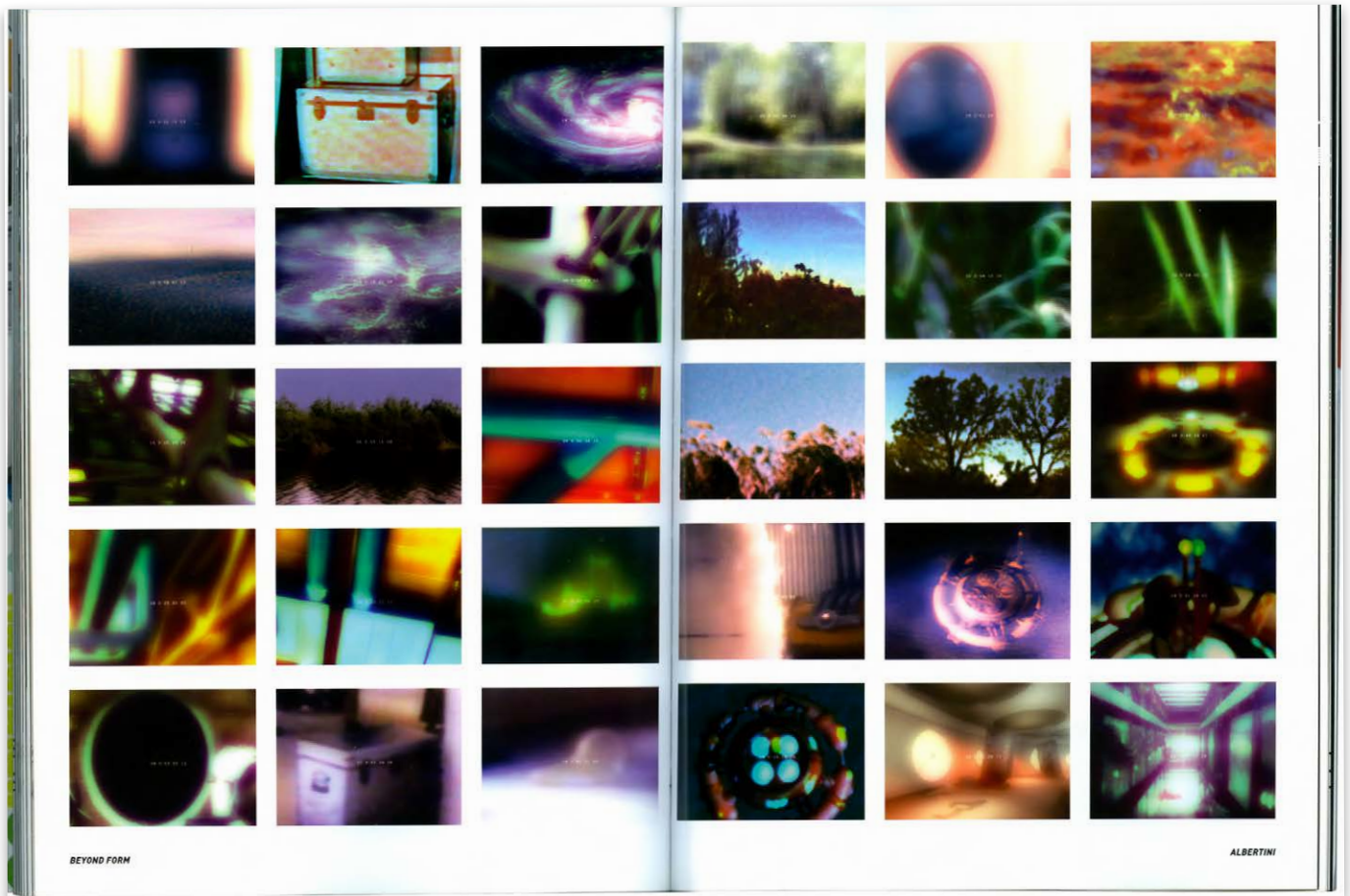
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## SCOTT WEILAND REVIEW

Episode

NY ARTS July – August 2004

ILLUSTRATION “Memory Index” installation  
view Alona Kagan Gallery

## Feature

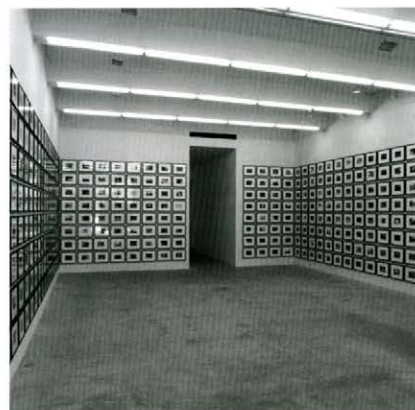
## Episode

Scott Weiland

The work...was developed not only from the memory of the film  
but from the memory of the project up to that point.

The original memory of the film had been replaced  
by the project in which it was contained.

The memory of the room was now a memory in the room,  
ready to be recalled and placed into the world.



I remember seeing an ad in one of my magazines (was it the *New Yorker* or *Gourmet*? I don't recall). It was a picture of Richard Avedon and a quote in which he said something like, 'A photograph is never true...it's always an interpretation...it's not an objective document' ...etc. I know I'm embellishing a bit, but that was the gist of it...as I recall. I don't even remember what the ad was for. A camera company? A watch company? Rolex? Who knows? I went back and leafed through several magazines, laying around, trying to find it so that I could quote it directly, but unable to find it, I looked back through all of the pages I had recently read and seen. I reacquainted myself the images in these magazines. They now had twice as much prominence in the cluttered room of my mind.

Time separates episodic memory from the procedural and structural. Time is of the essence and in this exercise, recall is organic. It bears the complexity of a world laden with temporal layers.

This is the fertile ground where Bill Albertini has located his recent work, called "Memory Index 1999-2004." This show consists of some six hundred images that Bill has been working on "episodically" since 1999. The images are derived from his memory of locations and sets from the 1972 Andrei Tarkovsky film, *Solaris*.

What Albertini ultimately finds salient in Tarkovsky's films is what he refers to as the absence of "forced film time." The narrative action has an unforced pace, a logic that is very mundane and very

often uneventful. If you have ever seen a Tarkovsky film you know what Albertini refers to.

Films often try to maintain a level of action or intrigue just beyond our expectations. Tarkovsky seems to make a point of confronting that implicit demand on the medium by letting our expectations out-pace the narrative events in his films. This is what Albertini may mean by "forced film time."

The plot of *Solaris* deals with characters confronting manifestations of their memories. Most of us never have to confront our memories outside of our own head. Episodic memories are often recalled over and over again without leaving our mental sphere. But what if those memories manifested themselves and we had to confront them in the physically present here and now? *Solaris* and Albertini's project ask this same question.

After seeing *Solaris* in the 1970's, Albertini collected, cultivated and developed images based on his memory of the film. He gathered what he calls the "core group," some 126 images, before seeing the film again. Once he had finally viewed the film again, he collected frames from the original that matched his "core group" of recollected images and edited the film stills he had matched to his own creations. To this matched set of images, he assigned a frame code, each matched set getting the same code. The code corresponded to the place in the film from which the matched image was taken. This group of images was shown together in 2002, after which Albertini took a break from the project.

When he returned to the work, he abandoned the notion that the time code should exist as an artifact, marking the place in the film where his original memories corresponded to the film. He also stopped looking at the finished "segment" of "Memory Index." The work at Alona Kagan Gallery was developed from not only the memory of the film but from the memory of the project up to that point. The original memory of the film had been replaced by the project in which it was contained. The memory of the room was now a memory in the room, ready to be recalled and placed into the world. And this can be seen throughout the show's six hundred images.

While *Solaris* was recently remade by another director, Albertini's work is in fact undergoing a similar shift. The remake is a repeat performance, granted, but a new interpretation, just as episodic memory recalled is always an instance unique from the original event. Episodic memory is intrinsically tied to our bodies, our minds, time and perception of change, motion and complexity. It's a system of processing, rather than recording or scrutinizing. It isn't something you can shelve for later, compartmentalize or place in a mnemonic system of rooms. Doors are the only metaphor from our common notion of architecture that seem to fit. Episodic memory is in essence a meme, a mirror of the world. Albertini's work is as much a performance as any set of prints can be. But, if anyone were to infer that these prints were an objective documentation of something, well of course, that would be untrue. □

**VINCE ALETTI REVIEW**  
*Imaging The Abstract*  
**THE VILLAGE VOICE**  
May 21 – May 27, 2003  
ILLUSTRATION Installation view,  
Feigen Contemporary



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VILLAGE VOICE MAY 21–MAY 27, 2003 92

## Photo

Reviews by Vince Aletti

★ **'IMAGING THE ABSTRACT'**  
Painter Shirley Kanada (whose computer-aided watercolors fill the front space) co-curated this extremely savvy eight-artist survey of contemporary photo work, much of it in high-impact color. Virtually everyone looks smashing here, but among the standouts are Jack Pierson's rough patchwork; James Welling's sunny strokes; Curtis Mitchell's molten firestorm, spilling right onto the floor; and Jeremy Blake's multipanel array of glinting extravagance. **Feigen Contemporary**, 535 W 20th, 212-929-0500, through 5/24.





**AIDEN DUNNE REVIEW**  
*A Voyage To Inner Space*  
THE IRISH TIMES March 20, 2002  
ILLUSTRATION "20 0: 41 . 39 32"  
from "Memory Index"



# A voyage to inner space



Visual Arts  
**Aidan Dunne**

**Reviewed:**  
*Dissecting Solaris*, Bill Albertini, Temple Bar Gallery until April 13th (01-6710073);  
*Origin*, Cléa van der Grijn, Cross Gallery until March 29th (01- 4738978);  
*Love Bites*, Bongji MacDermott, Kevin Kavanagh Gallery until March 29th (01-8740064);  
*Works on Paper*, Ashford Gallery until March 28th (01-6617286)

**T**HE late Andrey Tarkovsky is one of a small number of film-makers who have had a major, disproportionate impact on fine artists. Among these artists we can surely number Bill Albertini, who has built his entire exhibition at Temple Bar Gallery on his response to Tarkovsky's extraordinary sci-fi epic, *Solaris*. The Russian writer-director's psychologically intense, visually striking films have won him a devoted following, but Steven Spielberg he ain't. As film director Scott Hicks said of his later films recently, they "do have enormous power to mesmerise, but they also require a deeper kind of patience on the part of their audience, a willingness to be taken on that journey".

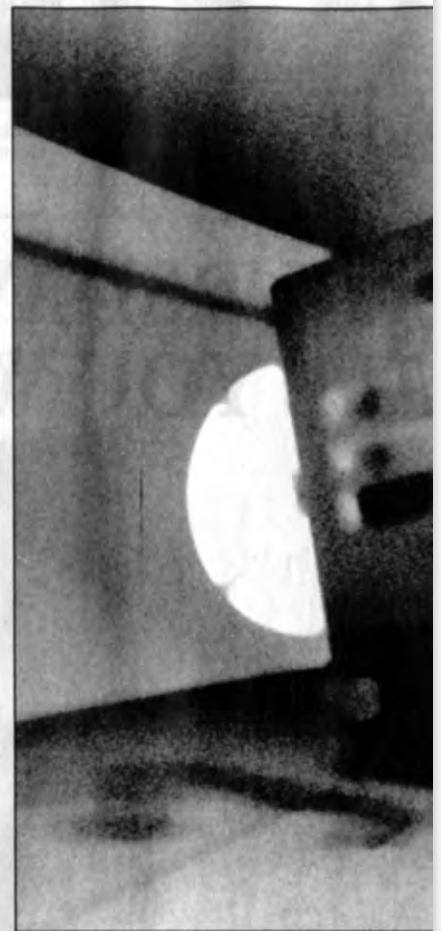
Some people do not want to go. In his ill-tempered response to *Solaris*, for example, it seemed as if the highly respected film writer, David Thompson, was personally affronted

by it, and could not for the life of him see the point of it at all.

At the heart of *Solaris* is the powerful image of a planetary intelligence which materialises the memories and imaginings of the astronauts in orbit above it. The main protagonist, sent to decide whether the orbiting space station should be closed down, finds himself revisiting the guilt, pain and regret surrounding his wife's suicide and faces the existential dilemma of possibly reversing the tragedy. The trip to outer space becomes a trip to inner space.

Dramatically, *Solaris* is either hypnotically or boringly slow, depending on your point of view. The first 20 earthbound minutes or so are visually brilliant, and both the run-down space station and the planet surface, seething and amorphous, are superbly visualised. Albertini's *Dissecting Solaris* is clearly a homage to the film, but it is more than that as well.

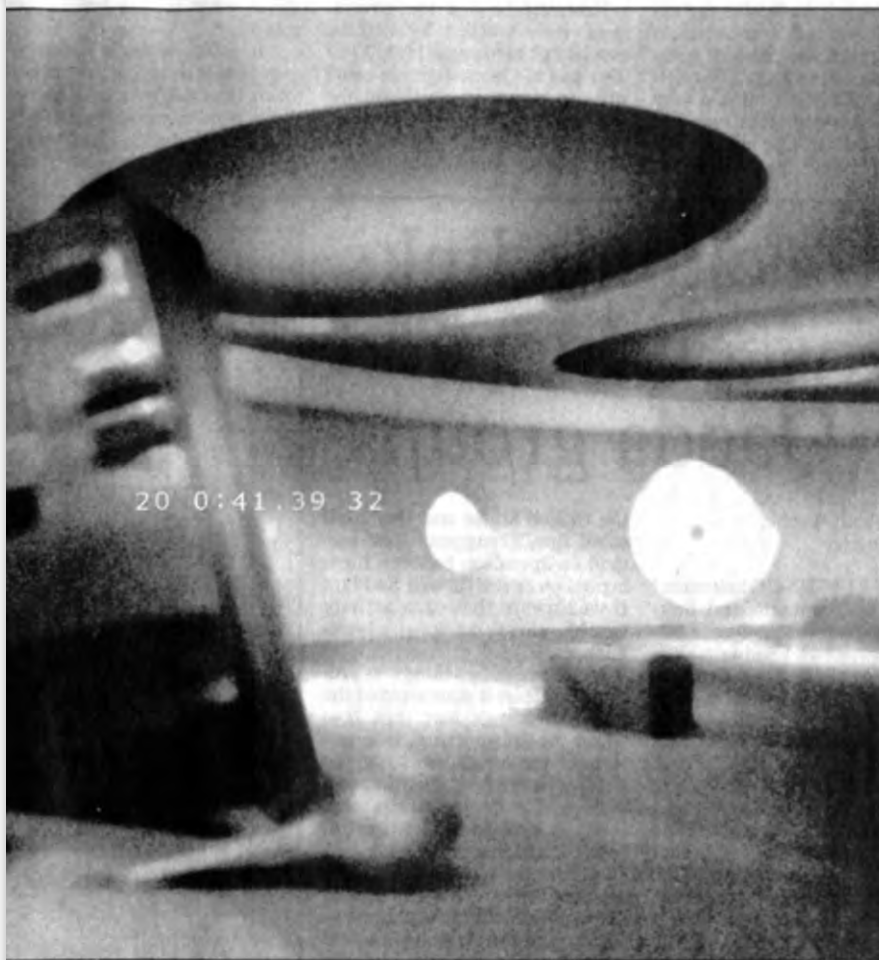
He has made several groups of still images, and a number of digital animated videos directly related to the source. One set of five still images is called the *Storyboard* series, although the *Memory Index*, a huge grid of images, is more like a storyboard. Except that none of the works is actually a storyboard in the practical, workable sense of the term. Albertini's work is more about the way the film persists in memory and, more generally,



about how we remember things in quirkily individual, fragmentary ways.

While he has quoted directly from the film, in terms of both images and words, for the most part he seems to have imaginatively reconstructed images from memory. In addition, what he has reconstructed is not so much a storyboard, not a narrative synopsis with likenesses of the characters, but the film as a narrative space with its own particular flavour, one that we can, perhaps, inhabit ourselves. Putting us in the picture, one of the animations

**AIDEN DUNNE REVIEW**  
*A Voyage To Inner Space*  
**THE IRISH TIMES** March 20, 2002  
 ILLUSTRATION "20 0: 41 . 39 32"  
 from "Memory Index"



takes the form of a tracking shot along the deserted circular corridor of the space station, littered with technological debris and bizarre-looking instruments. In all of this Albertini is referring to one of the main themes of the film, and the work in his show is, like *Solaris*, an engrossing meditation on memory and reality. One that, incidentally, refers us back to the original, which was recently released on DVD. There will be a screening of *Solaris* at the IFC next Saturday, March 23rd, at 11 a.m.

Cléa van der Grijn's paintings in *Origin* at

the Cross Gallery ignite terrifically dark deep blues and earth colours with brilliant flashes of gold to produce a body of lively, persuasive work. It is, explains a brief accompanying statement, informed by travels in Sri Lanka and Cuba. While the paintings are not in any obvious way representational, you certainly do get a sense of dark shadow and strong sunlight.

While the work heads in a decorative direction, it is never purely decorative. A certain toughness of pictorial intelligence comes

**A still image from *Memory Index* by Bill Albertini, part of his *Dissecting Solaris* show at the Temple Bar Gallery**

through, particularly in the stringently spare visual vocabulary. There is a strong horizontal emphasis in most of the compositions. Although van der Grijn has proved that she is well able to work on a large scale, the larger works here are the most uncertain, the medium-sized ones the most assured.

**B**ONGI MacDermott, whose show, *Love Bites*, is at the Kevin Kavanagh Gallery, is as ever a painter with a tremendous sense of attack. Her work is vividly, vigorously all there. The rawness of her boldly painted bodily fragments, culled from photographic illustrations in magazines, counterparts the rawness of emotional life that lurks behind the romantic ideal. Although she may be alluding to a narcissistic cult of the body in the way she sometimes frames body details as though they were jewels or trophies, that doesn't seem to be her primary intention.

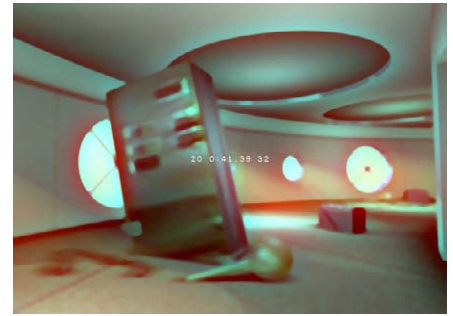
There is a feeling, in her work, that people do consume each other, that there is real ferocity in relationships. The violence of her imagery relates to the ruthlessness of the emotions, the way feeling cuts through reason and propriety.

Her incisive view of the fragmented body also recalls the unintegrated infant: a scattering of limbs and bits, sensations and desires. It is, in all, striking, lively work, provocative and engaging.

There is a distinctly Eastern feel to many of the pieces in *Works on Paper*, featuring three artists, at the Ashford Gallery. The practical and philosophical influences are there in the form of a strong emphasis on gesture throughout, in Jane Proctor's use of black ink and gold leaf and in Gerard Cox's fine ink drawings. These circular drawings build their unified motifs from a plethora of individual, rhythmic marks, in a way reminiscent of minimal music compositions. Their overall calmness emerges from the flux of detail. The best of Proctor's diverse pieces are her two *Black Drawings*, which take a simple idea and develop it beautifully. Joanna Kidney also strikes out in several different directions, most successfully in a series of relatively conventional landscape studies which have great spontaneity and a nice touch.



**MEDB RUANE REVIEW**  
*Wide Angle On Reality*  
**THE SUNDAY TIMES** London  
March 24, 2002  
Culture Colour Supplement  
ILLUSTRATION "20 0: 41 . 39 32" from  
"Memory Index"



## Art: Wide angles on reality

Photographs can be transformed into a journey through the imagination - by the right hands, writes Medb Ruane

Bill Albertini's *Dissecting Solaris* at Temple Bar Gallery is a fine technological adventure, beautifully conceived and executed. It's a measure of the so-what overload that the most eye-catching feature connected with it is the DVD players in the middle of the gallery.

*Dissecting Solaris* chops up and reconfigures Andrei Tarkovsky's 1972 movie *Solaris*. This immediately brings us into the territory of those who know the movie and those who don't. Before you fumble with the latest edition of Halliwell's movie guide, give yourself permission to be less than completely familiar with its filmography, because Tarkovsky was working within a very difficult Soviet film culture, and *Solaris* might have remained confined to underground cults if it hadn't miraculously won a prize at Cannes.

We're told *Solaris* is a kind of 2001 — *A Space Odyssey*, where science fiction throws up big moral questions. Tarkovsky is a Dostoyevsky of film, and Albertini's challenge is to simultaneously honour the auteur while deconstructing his original technology. He does this obsessively and thoroughly, keeping Tarkovsky's themes of memory and imagination uppermost. In the movie, a team of cosmonauts orbits an ocean-covered planet, the energy of which can make their dreams come true. Wherefore reality?

Computer-generated photographs lift images directly from the movie stills or lift Albertini's own memories of the movie to the level of movie stills. His *Memory Index* series stacks some hundreds of perfect little images almost edge to edge on two walls in what is part file box, part set of still lifes.

Larger inkjet images and acrylic paintings play deeper games with the imagery, near a set of so-called C-print storyboards on aluminium and plexiglass, while the DVD players unfold computer-generated pictures of the *Solaris* Lab, Room and Corridor. Various printing timings lend an assurance that what we see is the genuine article.

Such intense attention to detail has a pay-off in that the show is a kind of a journey through Albertini's technology and Tarkovsky's heroic imagination. It's as if *Neverland* has been brought to a gallery near you, with your role as viewer to take on the guise of Peter Pan and wonder at the virtual possibilities before you. There are enough de- and re-constructivist twists to fuel a blizzard of postgraduate theses. Fortunately, however, it isn't overwhelmed by its academic genealogy.

*Dissecting Solaris*, Bill Albertini, Temple Bar gallery and studios until 13 April

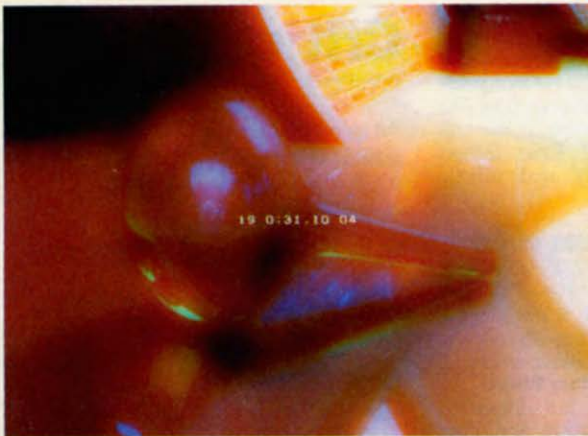


**ROBERT MAHONEY REVIEW**

*Dissecting Solaris*

TIMEOUT March 29–April 5, 2001

ILLUSTRATION “19 0; 31.10 04”, 2001



**Bill Albertini, “Dissecting Solaris”**

**Kagan Martos, through Apr 7 (see Soho).**

A few years ago, Bill Albertini abandoned making actual objects in real space for “virtual” objects or environments created by computer. For his latest show, he has infused his interest in virtual reality with themes of memory and representation. The new works are based on Andrei Tarkovsky’s classic film *Solaris* (made in 1971, it’s something like the Soviet counterpart to *2001: A Space Odyssey*), in which cosmonauts orbiting an ocean-covered planet begin to experience their dreams as reality. Just as Tarkovsky returns to the same objects and images throughout his low-budget movie to create a dreamy atmosphere, so too does Albertini isolate and riff on elements of the movie’s decor to create a body of work—photographs, paintings, DVDs—that is completely hypnotic.

**Eugenio Dittborn, “The Foreseen and Unforeseen Position of Their Bodies”**  
**Alexander and Bonin,**

**Bill Albertini, 19 0; 31.10 04, 2001.**

*Memory Index* consists of a grid of small, computer-generated images, some of which are taken directly from the film; others are created purely from his memory of it. (It is this aspect of Albertini’s approach that most closely resembles the work of Vik Muniz.)

Albertini will continually add images to the piece—currently there are 126 of them—and certainly his numerous renderings of space-age interiors and objects demonstrate the powerful pull of cinema on our imagination. Yet these same images also suggest how a movie, like any work of art, can serve as a jumping-off point for one’s own personal fantasies or imagined realities.

Albertini’s DVDs, for instance, feature continuous loops of digitally rendered scenes that were not part of *Solaris*. Two of these sequences display spacecraft interiors (the best being a trip down an orange corridor), while others focus on the undulating, ominous sea of the planet below. Another fascinating loop pans around a bright white, futuristic room—on the far wall of which you get a glimpse of *Solaris* itself. Unsurprisingly, the original looks old-fashioned and dreary in comparison to Albertini’s virtual version.—*Robert Mahoney*

Dittborn here relies on an iconography that’s as densely coded as it is personal.

As in the past, the artist hangs his envelopes next to the works to

**Paul Laffoley, “Portaling”**  
**Kent Gallery, through Apr 21 (see Soho).**

Paul Laffoley spends anywhere from one to three years making each of his paintings, and one would need the stamina of a kremlinologist to fully comprehend the ambitious intellectual trajectories most of them take. The artist—who regards his large, intricate canvases as research projects—pulls from science, science fiction, astrology, Eastern philosophy, parapsychology and theosophy to make mandalalike, diagrammatic works that attempt to do nothing less than explain the universe and its relationship to human consciousness.

The seven works here span the artist’s career, beginning with *Alice Pleasance Lidell* of 1968 (which refers to both the I Ching and Lewis Carroll’s 11-year-old love object) and finishing with this year’s *The World Soul of Plotinus*, an homage to an ancient Egyptian mystic who practiced astral projection (and who asked that, upon his death, only his head be buried). In between, there are paintings that address, according to texts in the compositions, THE CONNECTION BETWEEN THAT WHICH HAS NO HISTORY AND THAT WHICH HAS ONLY HISTORY AND THE DYNAMICS OF A UTOPIAN COMMUNITY. On the whole, the show walks a fine line between refined esoteric inquiry and self-important absurdity.

Fans of chemistry-textbook illustrations will find Laffoley’s work especially comely. It tends to be jam-packed

**“Gérôme and Goupil: Art and Enterprise”**

**Dahesh Museum, through May 5 (see Museums).**

Now that Paul McCarthy has shows on practically every street corner



## SAUL OSTROW ARTICLE

*The Real, The Symbolic and The Imagined:  
Making The Present Presentable*

NY ARTS May, 2001

ILLUSTRATIONS "09 0;52.15 09"  
from set props to sculpture (yellow glass)  
and "12 0;55.52 05,"  
from "Memory Index," 2000, p. 20



From before Walter Benjamin to beyond Jean Baudrillard we have been warned about how the illusions and simulations produced within the media-sphere can and will colonize our imaginations. Guy Debord identifies that the advent of television in 1937 with the ascension of the society of the spectacle. Now, under the reign of digital technologies the last links to what we have come to think of as authentic experience are being severed. While this situation has intensified, it is obviously not new and actually has been an ongoing since Jean Jacques Rousseau criticized Enlightenment rationalism for cutting us off from our natural being – our Spirit. Since then, in the name of freedom, individuality and empowerment, the view that the world of instrumental logic makes us susceptible to the manipulation of those who control its means has been voiced.



## The Real, the Symbolic and the Imagined:

Given the complexity and the unimagined consequences of our present condition, a new psychology is forming – one in which our distrust in what our senses present to us has intensified. Our effort to adjust to the phantasmagoria of images and sensations that make up our media environment has given rise to a number of pressing questions. Perhaps most important of these is: how will we retain some sense of a palpable presence that can sustain the difference between what is present and what is appearances? To do so, our concept of the veritable can not be premised on merely essentializing what we think we are losing. Neither the same old objects or desires that define modernism, nor the illusionary world created by media events will be able to supply us with a new model of reality. Instead this will require us to address those moments of judgment and perception in which we convince ourselves, from moment to moment, what it is we might act upon. Obviously given this is contested territory we must recognize the paradoxical nature of this endeavor. With this in mind it might be possible that we will be able to consciously re-territorialize our own conceptual environment.

The German theorist, Friedrich Kittler has suggested that we will find our insights into the actuality of our situation not in the newer cultural motifs and themes of simulation, interconnectivity or complexity, but in how older concepts and forms perceptually and conceptually adapt to their effects. Though, this situation is not the sole subject of the artists discussed here, they do consciously, or unconsciously capitalize on how one condition of representation may be used to reference and make present another. As such, their works occupy the perceptual and conceptual space created by the slippage of their respective representational regimes. The effect of this is it makes apparent how the actuality of the symbolic, the real and the imagined impacts on the reception of their work and creates its meaning. In doing this they make our role in the creation of meaning available to us. While this is not a solution to our dilemma we face, it definitely helps to explicate it.

**Part One: David Craven: Painting's Capacity and Symbolic Order.** Within the frame of the effects that digital technologies are having on how we conceive of the interconnectivity between practices and their objectives, we have come to the realization that we no longer need to think in terms of thesis and antithesis. Therefore, for example, within the field of cultural production the critical practices associated with abstract painting reveal themselves to be just a particular nexus within our cultural network. The horizontality of this view expresses the explicit historical, authorial and aesthetic attitudes of post-Modernism, which has increasing come to displace the hierarchical, high and low structure of Modernism.

As such, David Craven's works are an apparent response to the ongoing quest on the part of abstract painters in particular to answer the questions: How and what might painting now signify with competence? This question is itself a result of the fact that in the wake of the collapse of the prescribed narratives that Modernism had once privileged our models' have consequently become more diverse. With this comes a consciousness that requires us to acknowledge the indeterminate and fluid nature of

authorship and meaning. Though marked by this awareness, Craven's works avoids appealing to extra aesthetic and historical issues or invoking the essentialism of formalism to create its specificity. Instead he has chosen to explore the distinct possibilities of hybridity.

The space between differing topologies is negotiated in his new paintings by adapting and relocating the vocabulary of abstract painting and its object. Therefore Craven rejecting the earlier strategies of appropriation and irony as now academic solutions, approaches abstract painting as a form of presentation and representation capable of signifying complex associations and relationships, or merely as a thing. The results are neither purely aesthetic nor discursive, but an uneasy hybrid of images, structures and materiality that are indeterminate in nature. A work such as *Float* (2000, 84X76) with its multiple processes: of collage, gestural mark, poured pools of paint, proposes exploits "the abstract" as both a thing in itself as well as a social and historical construct.

In *Chelsea Trim* (2000, mixed media on canvas, 70X53) by freely playing with structure, process and image by literally staggering, juxtaposing and overlaying the constituent parts of traditional painting, Craven produces a narrative that is a product of their inter-action. The result is that the heterogeneity of what constitutes the abstract is made manifest by locating the mimetic paradigm of abstraction within the space of the abstract. In doing this Craven avoids merely indexing them one to the other or objectifying them but instead emphasizes the functionality of these differing modes and codes. As such, his paintings become machines assembled from a multiplicity of modes of expression and signification by which sensory data comes to be organized into non-mimetic or mimetic image. The product of these is the actualization of ideas. This idea that abstract art functions on the level of metaphor, simile and analogy leads not so much to the resolution of the traditional conflict between the abstract and representation but its liquidation.

The dialogues between intuition, preconception, aesthetics, taste, meaning and interpretation within the framework of Craven's paintings becomes informative rather than didactic. The fluid interchange between differing codes elucidates how the significance and meaning of these works reside in the viewer's ability to negotiate their complex organization. In a work such as *Banquette* (mixed media on canvas, 2000) with its large pink form, protrusions and biomorphic forms we find a diverse and non-programmatic approach that reverberates with new potentials. His superimposition of three differing systems produces non-hierarchical, all-over motifs (as they crisscross and intertwine,) as well as a sign system that sometimes subverts itself and at other times questions its own coherence. Using these configurations to represent their own making, Craven creates structures that conceal or cancel their conceptual and logical base. Order and specificity are retained at the cost of formal logic, while sameness and dissimilarity become the shared qualities of a single entity. Intriguingly, Craven uses this same complex and shifting semiotic system to engage painting's identity and to address

Dominique Figarella, #6, oil on birch ply, 5 x 5 x 2 inches



**SAUL OSTROW ARTICLE***The Real, The Symbolic and The Imagined:  
Making The Present Presentable*

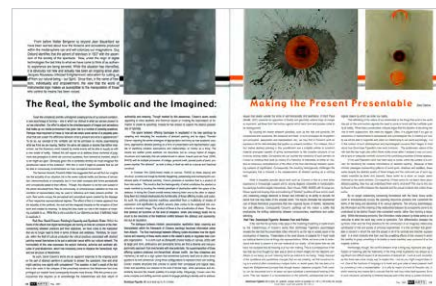
NY ARTS May, 2001

ILLUSTRATIONS "09 0;52.15 09"

from set props to sculpture (yellow glass)

and "12 0;55.52 05,"

from "Memory Index," 2000, p. 20



## Making the Present Presentable

Saul Ostrow

issues that reside outside the limits of self-referentially and aesthetics. *A Hard Place* (84x66, 2001) presents an opposition of fluidity and geometry without hope of merger or resolution, yet these form the horizon against which each form and process come to be distinguished.

By locating the viewer between polarities, such as the real and symbolic, the compressed and expansive, the displaced and fixed, or such processes as recognition and perception, association and interpretation, etc., we may find in Craven's work an expression of the inter-textuality that typifies our present condition. For instance, this in fact makes abstract painting in this post-Modern era a suitable vehicle to construct material analogies capable of giving representation to the complex structure of our evolving varying reality. Comparably we can ascribe the resistance of such painters as Craven to ordering their work by means of a hierarchy of intensities, to either an intuitive or conscious comprehension of the effect of the fluid interchange between opposing systems of signification. Consequently, the resulting heterogeneity challenges the homogeneity that is inherent in the representation of abstract painting as a unifying field.

What is singularly peculiar about work such as Craven's is that at a time when experience is increasingly suspect and to varying degrees vulnerable to manipulation, his paintings function largely interactively. *Open House* (1999, 84X63) with its large rectilinear spiral and looping drips and scattering of "blisters" (puddles of clear acrylic medium) containing collage elements is formed and informed by its ability to encode the sense that one may make of the sensate world. The results delineate the experiential root of those theoretical propositions that now organize issues of identity, representation and difference. Consequently Craven's paintings set into motion a subtle that emphasizes the shifting relationship between consciousness, experience and understanding.

### Part Two: Dominique Figarella: Between Fact and Fiction

If the role that the symbolic order plays in the modeling of painting is made known by the indeterminacy of Craven's works then Dominique Figarella's assemblages reveals the role that the presentable (often referred to as the real or actual) plays in the construction of meaning. Presentation is the most illusive of subjects for it must resist our habitual desire to turn all things into representations. While, we have come to understand that what is present is the raw material of our reality—at the same time we still have not accepted that all meaning is of our own making. This is a consequence of the fact that we once thought our task was to strive to obtain insight into the objective conditions of our being, as such meaning had to be external to our being. Today, because of the qualitative and quantitative changes that we are creating, we find ourselves living in a world of often contradictory multiple truths. In recent years, this has lead us to reject the Enlightenment principle that through reason, objective (singular) Truth (reality) can be discovered and in its place we have substitute a semiological reading of the world. This has resulted in a reconsideration of the scientific, philosophical and ide-

logical means by which we order our reality.

This rethinking of the nature of our relationship to the things that exist in the world has put on the post-modern agenda the need to come to terms with the ineffable quality of reality. While many conservative critiques argue that this situation is devolving into one of mere subjectivism, this need not happen. Often, it is argued that if we gain an awareness of representation's conceptually and psychological role in creating our reality we will be able to negotiate and order our relationship to our world accordingly. It is in the context of such philosophical and psychological concerns that I began to think about how Dominique Figarella's new work functions. The problematic nature of the role that the real might play within these works arose when I realized it was not possible to give an adequate symbolic account of the conflicting properties of these tableaux.

In the past Figarella's work had been easy to locate, within the context of a concern for literalizing the material connotations of abstract painting. Because of their mimetic passages representing patterns of wood grain, shadows and splatters, these works despite the abstract quality of these images and the continued use of such signature materials as lexan and plywood, these works as a whole no longer, seem informed by the same ambition. Consequently, if these works do not depict ideas about abstract painting, how may we understand them and to what end? The clue to this can be found in the conflict between the depicted and the actual incidents that orders these works.

By no longer referencing concerning themselves with the literal, these works come to simultaneously occupy the opposing discursive positions that coordinate the terms of the being and becoming of its various elements. The ensuing assemblages, the information and the ordering of the relationship between its components come to be understood to be distinct though inter-connected events, rather than forming a singularity. Within the ensuing economy, the information made present by these works is not reducible to what the work may come to symbolize. This differentiation between the symbolic order and the thing disallows for the construction of an imaginary relationship constructed of bits and pieces of previous experiences. It is this condition that generates a moment in which the real (the actual) in all of its contrast and disorder exposes itself. In a more romantic time then ours the unsettling effects of this moment in which the inability to grasp something in its totality is made manifest, was conceived of as the majestic sublime.

Interestingly enough, the conflict between what a thing may represent (the signification of meaning) and the materiality of the thing (what is present) has always be a significant and difficult aspect of all discussions of abstract art. I wish at such moments, as this there was some simply way to explain this—but as you might imagine there is not. One of the functions of language is to mask and give order to what presents itself by converting it into a representation. It is only by mean of a kind of Freudian slip, in which meaning and means fail to coincide that the real may make itself apparent. Even in such situations, something is forfeited because part of the being (a quality) of what is



**SAUL OSTROW ARTICLE**

*The Real, The Symbolic and The Imagined:  
Making The Present Presentable*

**NY ARTS** May, 2001

ILLUSTRATIONS "09 0;52.15 09"

from set props to sculpture (yellow glass)

and "12 0;55.52 05,"

from "Memory Index," 2000, p. 20



Bill Albertini (top to bottom), 09 0;52.15 09, inkjet on paper, 5 x 7 inches, 2000; From Set Props to Sculpture (Yellow Glass), photo color print, 18 x 24 inches, 2000; 12 0;55.52 05, inkjet on paper, 5 x 7 inches, 2000



present might come to be substituted for the ineffable whole. In such situations the event, object, thing is converted into still something else. For these reasons it is difficult to explain how Figarella's works accomplish their escape from this situation by sustaining their surplus.

The paradoxical nature of these works is that to address what they might mean is to return to the realm of the symbolic -- the very place they seek to escape. This friction becomes the means by which to expose the process by which we use language and codes to order the world. Reciprocally, this reveals that the real is an effect conditioned by undecidability and indeterminacy, rather than a thing that symbolized or signified. As such by emphasizing their demonstrative nature, Figarella's assemblages present themselves as events from which we are to derive information.

Because these objects partake of differing discourses, art being merely one of these, they are open to multiple, conflicting and conditional interpretations. The slippage and irreconcilability between these differing explanations create a horizon against which opinions and analysis concerning them is understood. As such, the works demonstrate how established systems of explication (discourses, epistemologies and taxonomies) order both our expectations and reception of such objects. The way Figarella's works accomplish what I claim for them begins with the fact that these works do not do what they appear to be doing. For instance in #3 (5' X 5' X 9 1/2" boxing glove u-locks lexan oil paint Birch plywood) the index of painting's material qualities Figarella builds, slips its bounds and unravels into an assemblage of disjointed events. While the work looks as if it is exploiting the long abandoned formalist project of self-referentially, the multiple texts of process, intention, inconsistency that arises from pitting the literal and the representational against one another, ultimately does not fulfill the terms of such dialogues.

This switch and bait strategy begins with the art historical references we might make to the varied objects and formal devices Figarella employs. The inflatable objects, rubber gloves, toilet plungers share the mundane and vulgar qualities of the targets, words, numbers, imagery for newspapers and magazines et.al that Jasper Johns and Robert Rauschenberg used over 40 years ago. Yet unlike these proto-Pop artists, the subject and object of Figarella's works is not one of surrogacy but instead how in a world that is increasingly circumscribed semiotics an object might assert itself. This concern for the "thing's" meaning rather than its sign function stems from the influence of the Support/ Surface group whose concern was less with what a work of art might represent than what types of information about itself that it might make present. Consequently, these French artists of the late 60s and early 70s took, as their subject painting's phenomenology. Their hyper-formalism resulted in making explicit the nature of the object brought abstract art into line with what the readymade. The result of this reference moves Figarella work, despite its appearances, conceptually closer to such U.S. artist as Robert Rauschenberg and the post-Minimalist than Jasper Johns and Robert Morris.

For example in #7, (61" X 60" X 5" plunger lexan, acrylic and oil paint on birch) initially, we may come to believe that by replacing the brush and its mark with a toilet plunger and its splatter that the content of this painting is a scatological joke. Yet, if this was all there was to this piece, all it would be is a one line joke, leaving it within the



realm of the Johnson but the fact is that the splatters do not register or correspond to their cast shadows. The failure of the actual to register with its rendered effect ultimately denies the primacy of the works' initial metaphorical and self-referential reading. If it was not for the mis-registration of image event and effects one could easily believe that such a work was a symbolic address to Duchamp's urinal or to the imagined ejaculatory drips and splatters of Jackson Pollack. That is an identification of painting with the singularity associated with the masculine. Yet the object materially reveals itself not to completely support such a reading.

This prophylactic separation of subject and object, the thing from its symbolic function -- within Figarella's work reiterates, on the perceptual rather than conceptual level Kant's warning that we must not confuse the representation of a thing with the thing in itself. Yet, it also seemingly takes into account Henri Bergson's view that all we know of the world is representation because the brain transforms stimuli into depictions of the world of objects. #6 (5X5X2" oil on birch ply) articulates this double economy in which the image of the plywood grain painted onto the plywood itself announces in a nearly burlesque manner the failure of representation when even mapped onto the thing itself from ever convincingly occupying the place of the thing. This reading is further re-enforced by the fact that the representation of the wood grain obscures the actual that lies beneath it demonstrating that representation only function in the absence of the actual. In these Figarella exposes and, or sever both practically and conceptually the link between something that is itself -- and its other by announcing the failure of one's ability to coincide with the other. It is at this moment, when the actual fails to register with its representation that the narrative flow of the work is broken and its subject is unlocked.

Yet such a reading of #6, as I've given for all of its seeming sophistication remains incomplete, for while these analogies and similes account for the blot, the smear and the failure of registration, they ignore the subtler texts of appearances and their simulation. Despite the deceptive rendering of what at first appears to be cause and effect, it is the fact that the signifier and signified fail to align -- allow us to recognize the presented (the reported and, or depicted event) produces a surplus. Consequently, the trompe l'oeil, the simulacra that render the look of the "actual" that Jean Baudrillard has likened to death and that formalist critics would associated with kitsch, Figarella uses to taunt the viewer with their own expectations, rather than question their taste. In this Figarella's works seem to annoyingly insist on denying or negating any readymade reading that would fix or limit their connections to the world. Figarella's work accomplishes this in part by the fact that mimesis and the actual, the symbolic and its signifier within these works reaches toward one another rather than displacing one another. The result of this is that in a theatrical, self-conscious manner everything retains its own identity. An awareness of how the imagined re-inserts the presentable back into the symbolic order of meaning is a by-product of the failure of these works to fulfill our expectations.

**Part Three: Bill Albertini: Encoding and deciphering the imagined**

If it is Figarella's desire to define the role of the presentable in the construction of meaning, the surplus of this is he marks off the territory of the imagined -- that process by which we synthesize unreal events and virtual experiences. Bill Albertini's video



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the *Memory Index* to invade the status of *Solaris* as an actual thing in the world. Using details from the actual film Albertini has secreted with in the index material (scenes) that do not exist in the original film, but are extrapolated from it. While the actual events depicted in the film are limited, each scene in Albertini's version may come to generate an infinite number of alternate moments and situations. As an object, *Solaris* is never present but only alluded as an imperfect point of reference that exist in the memory of the artist and those viewers who has seen this film.

Interestingly in *Dissecting Solaris*, Albertini has edited all the characters and dramatic action out of his reconstruction, turning the film into a series of spaces populated by props. With this, the narrative of the instability of reality, marked by hallucinations and conflict, which is the plot of *Solaris* is done away with. As such Albertini uses this undermining of the illusionary quality of the filmic to re-locate us within a terrain defined by suspended disbelief -- or the imagined. In other words without any evidence to the contrary, we construct (induce) an imagined logic from the inter-relations that we can form between the assembled images. In doing this rather than viewing the film as merely a literary device, Albertini re-interprets the site of *Solaris* as the place of presentation and construction.

In a video triptych Albertini reconstitute *Solaris* as the source of moving images. Yet these still continue to forgo any reference to the film's narrative or plot. Instead in this work consisting of pairs of monitors placed back to back on pedestals appears to return to the source of Albertini still imagery. In each pairing, on one side there is the abstract rolling surface of representing the planet, which because it has been decontextualized appears to reference color field painting. In this we find a reference to how the abstract has its source in the recontextualization of the representational. On the other side are images of a lab, a compartment and a passageway on the space station. Each of these images, like the images secreted in the Index are computer generated and has been extrapolated from the film.

Also included in this project is a group of images taken from the *Memory Index*, presented in a painting format. In these works Albertini has hand painted onto these digitally printed images the frame counter numbers. These numbers painted in process colors in reverse order, invert the printing process that produced the image upon which these have been painted. This undermines the relation veracity of the photographically derived imagery, by returning them into a ground against which the materiality and craft of the hand painted may be foregrounded. Within these works painting, become the other of to the process of digital reproduction because it is capable of negating its logic of standardization. Within the *Solaris* project, Albertini also produces images printed in hi -- resolution that looks to be photographs. These images titled "Proposals for Sculptures" or respectively "Proposals for Paintings" represents what appear to be elaborate exhibition spaces in which isolated objects or paintings of images that appear in the film now installed as works of art. By re-contextualizing these objects and images, both real and imagined Albertini both create a self-referentiality that references how both framing and context conditions of both representation and presentation.

By exploring simultaneously the virtuality of the real and how it comes to be fixed and determined by its representation, Albertini demonstrates the ramifications of the effect of representations effect on organizing our experience, thought and memory. By producing and reproducing over and over representation of representations, in the *Solaris* project, he builds an unreal referent that is the product of shared logic, visual similarities and physical contiguity. This demonstrates how these elements form a network in which each element supplement and supports the other. As such there emerges a multiplicity of readings rooted in the relationship between the sign and its object, between the sign and its mode of delivery and between experience and the expectations we form based on them. By these means Albertini locates the space in-between the symbolic and the real, as not being defined by the deformation of one or the other, but by the integration of one into the other by means of the imagined. This subtly turns *Dissecting Solaris* into a map of the economy by which representation models an imagined real. In doing so, Albertini articulates the less obvious but more malevolent aspects of the Digital's ability to model our thinking. □

installations, film stills and objects address the impact of the imagined on the psychological and theoretical registers of representation and the presentable. The importance of his exploration of how the imagined as a form of representation may precede the actual is a consequence of how the world of representation and the experiential are being re-ordered by the affect of new digital technologies of communication and reproduction.

In recent years the imagination of artists and their audiences have been seized by The promise that soon digital media will be able to transform the imagined into a trompe l'oeil virtual reality. In the interim, we settle for manipulated photographs and videos, or Web-based displays involving to various degrees a rudimentary interactivity. While such "digital art" is little more than a simulacrum of other forms or an aggregate of texts, signs, codes and protocols, in actuality it is intent on to replacing and, or displacing those works of art that reference materiality, process and, or sensuousness. Countering these trends, Albertini's by using contrasting forms of delivery denotes the means, limits and veracity of each mode of information storage and presentation. The differing procedures and conditions by which the chimerical is encoded and transformed into a reference to reality become palpable when they are placed side by side as Albertini has done in *Dissecting Solaris*.

In his project *Dissecting Solaris*, Albertini has taken his imagery from the 1972 Soviet sci-fi film *Solaris* by Andrei Tarkovsky, based on a novel by Stanislaw Lem. This film depicts the memories and fantasies of the occupants of a space station in orbit around the planet Solaris. Its crew is being effected psychologically by the tidal fluxes of the planet below. The effect of this is that the station and its occupants have entered into a state of decrepitude. This film meant as a metaphor for the paranoia and declining quality of life in the Soviet State. Using digital animation, image capturing, color printers and video, Albertini has produced his own filmic, photographic and painting-like representations of this film, turning this critique of soviet life into one that now functions as an analysis of the virtualization of the real by means of its representations. The result is a meditation on how the technologies of digital imaging and reproduction accesses the network by which experience leads to its representation and in turn becomes the source of new ideas and imagined situations.

In *Memory Index* (digital prints, on watercolor paper, 2000) Albertini has assembled into a type of atlas 126 images captured from *Solaris*, each of these marked by its time signature (frame location). These images, produced at a low resolution in a uniform format are framed in standard, black, metal section frames and displayed in a grid, the proportion of which brings about chance juxtapositions. The mimetic realism (that is a result of the images appearing to be photographic in origin) forms a simulacrum of the dismantled continuity of film time. Reconstructing the film through its material structure (sequential imaging) and having denuded it of its narrative functions, Albertini uses

David Craven (from top left clockwise), *Open House*, 1989, acrylic on canvas, 84 x 63 inches; *Floor*, 2000, acrylic on canvas, 84 x 65 inches; *Bronze*, 2000, acrylic on canvas, 52 x 75 inches. Courtesy the artist.



**SCOTT WEILAND ARTICLE**  
*Virtual, Bill Albertini and Mariko Mori*  
 NY ARTS June, 1999  
 p. 32



## Virtual <sup>2</sup>

by Scott Weiland

"Within the domain of the postmodern New Age anti-Cartesianism this antinomy (constructionism and essentialism) assumes the shape of the tension between so-called "Deep Ecology" and the New Age techno-spiritualism: the first advocates a return to the spontaneous experience of nature by way of breaking with the attitude of technological domination, whereas the second sets its hopes on a spiritual reversal brought about by the very opposite, the complete technological reproduction of reality (the notion that, in some not too distant future, by way of their full immersion into Virtual Reality, human subjects will be able to weigh the anchor that attaches them to their bodies and to change into ghost-like entities floating freely...)" - Slavoj Zizek "Virtualization of the Master"

"Art is in service...I really think everything is in service, our whole lives are in service. We just don't know what we are serving." -James Hillman, "When You Are Healed, Send Me A Postcard"

In the discussion between Suzi Gablik and James Hillman, published in *Conversations Before The End Of Time*, the notion that art (and the artist) is in service, comes out of a discussion of the possibility of arts service to "Deep Ecology". Hillman tracks art's service from the context of verification of the gods existence, power, immanence, etc., to the current powers that be (ie., "the commodity-museum-gallery ethos, behind which is our consumerism god - the bottom-line God...") Whether Dominique Mazeaud's cleaning of the Rio Grande river as art has an aesthetic dimension is the question which lingers at the end of their conversation. Yet, within Pierre Levy's book, *Becoming Virtual: Reality in the Digital Age*, we are positioned to consider notions of media ecology in relation to art.

Interspersed through the show of work by Mariko Mori, "Empty Dream", at the Brooklyn Museum of Art, are several allusions to the philosophy of Buddhism. In her performance, "Tea Ceremony", on May 4 at the museum, Mori seemed to update a traditional Buddhist tea ceremony within the lexicon of gestures and props which are all her own. Implied within the ceremony and Buddhism itself, is a notion of oneness. "This vision of inevitable interconnectedness inspired the popular determination in (Buddhism) for persons consciously to evolve toward realizing their highest potential and transforming the whole world into a positive environment." (Thurman)

In her 3-D video "Nirvana", which was created with technology specially designed by the GIT Corporation, Mori combines her pop sensibility with Buddhist thematics. Mori works directly in the digital editing facilities of the corporations which provide access to the technology she needs. She sees the next millennium as a moment when the world will unite in peace and harmony and can fairly be characterized in Zizek's terms as a "New Age techno-spiritualist", courting the effects of new media technology for a stylized Neo-Buddhist message and not least, the production of her hybrid self-image. The matrix which Mori's work infers for the estimation of notions of ecology is one seen through the lens of Buddhism where the self (agency, ego, subjecthood) dissolves into "interconnectedness" and is supplanted with a techno-spiritualistic optimism. Within this model, it is possible that her vision of world unification may be a foresight of the final corporate merger.

In the sense that Heidegger enframes us as the "standing reserve" of the very technology with which we order the real, (that is, endowing it with a form of agency which, unmediated, can be seen as structuring our relationship to its virtuality as the real) we are seemingly encouraged to cultivate a notion of the media ecologist. It is the agency effect which accrues in the nature of media and which, (after McLuhan, qualifies its affect through its "mode of revealing" rather than that which is revealed) is re-contextualized by the media ecologist. The virtual can be understood as a simulation of the real, neither in opposition to it nor equivalent but as a principle vector for the production of reality. As such, the virtual is similar to a Heideggerian understanding of technology. It is the interface which represents and affects the production of our reality.

For Levy, the virtual has organized three fundamental aspects of our interaction with the real. It has functioned as language, technics and contract. Language and computation represent the world to us and render a virtual sense of "real time". Technology virtualizes the action of the body. Lastly, with the virtualization of real time and action, follows the virtualization of contract or the moment of ethical conflict. Virtualization, for Levy, is an emancipatory effort which sets us at a distance from the real; it's chaos and ineffability. In *Becoming Virtual: Reality in the Digital Age*, Levy presents the notion that art virtualizes the virtual. That is, it is possible to become structured by those virtual aspects of the real which in their function bear agency upon us as objects. If it is possible to understand the virtual through media theory, it is the artist in Levy's terms, who acts as a media ecologist in highlighting the virtual through the means of the virtual.

In Bill Albertini's new show at Kagan Martos, the piece entitled "Cube Place" disperses the location of the operative virtual. By virtualizing the virtual, Albertini calls forth an interpretation of his work which empowers the viewers sense of subjectivity. Using cubes of an opaque plastic, ideal for standard 3-D rendering scenarios, Albertini represents stages of the creative process. In three monitors we are shown: a still rendering of the cube stack, on a second, the cube being shuffled by a digital rendering of hands, and on the third, a documentation of the viewers interaction with an enlarged version of the cube stack situated in the middle of the gallery. The cubes on the floor seem actual enough. Yet, captured within the camera monitor they, along with the viewer, are the standing reserve for the next computer simulation (virtual reality). The (floor)cubes are possibly a virtualization of the virtual representation of them on the screen (not prototypes). We do not know... and in this confusion we must relinquish our notions of causality and perception of the real within the virtual. Albertini reveals the nature in which the virtual can out distance our perception of its foundation. If a relatively unsophisticated circuit of smoke and mirrors can confuse our grasp of the real, the call for "Deep Ecology" of the future may be a call for the return to our present condition.

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**JOY FYFE REVIEW**  
*They Liked What They Saw at the  
 Rotunda Gallery*  
**THE PHOENIX** New York, October, 1993  
 ILLUSTRATION Untitled, 1991



## Rotunda Gallery Visitors Like What They See STORY PAGE 12

# THE PHOENIX

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## They Liked What They Saw at the Rotunda Gallery

BY JOE FYFE

I have been telling everyone that I know in "The City" that they should see the new Rotunda Gallery space. But it continues to seem like a request to meet me in Montreal for the hash browns. Sounds like a long way to go for something hopelessly short of extraordinary. Art in Brooklyn is not a concept that holds people's attention for long either.

In some ways I can't blame them. The Brooklyn Waterfront Artists Coalition Show last spring sent me screaming out of the building and the elusive Four Walls in Greenpoint is open only one day a month. The Brooklyn Anchorage has been dependable every summer for over a decade but they didn't show art this year.

There needed to be a place in Brooklyn where you could always see contemporary art, without going to the museum; where the hours were always dependable and there was always something worth seeing. Happily, the new Rotunda is beginning to become that place.

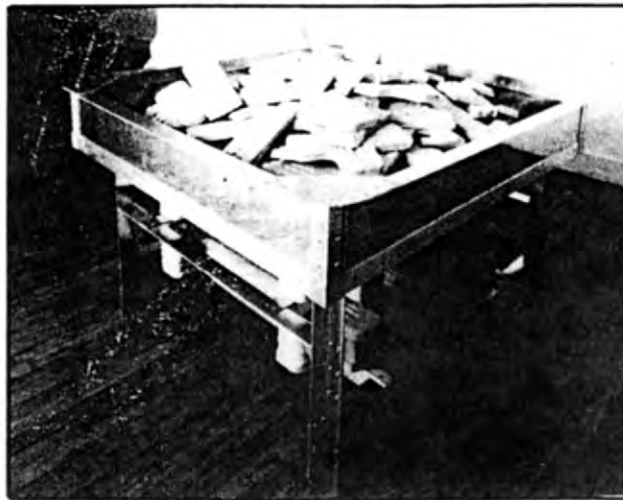
The opening of the Rotunda's latest show on September 23 was full of people dressed in black or with very young, very unhappy children. The smokers stood on the sidewalk outside. The requisite beer ("Brooklyn"), wine and recently compulsory seltzer was served.

### SOME SEEPAGE INTO BROOKLYN

This is a scene familiar in Soho and probably, Athens and Taipei and a hundred other cities, but uncommon on Clinton Street and the rest of Brooklyn. What this means is that of the microscopically thin veneer of art connoisseurs spread over oceans of humanity there is seepage into Brooklyn.

They weren't just there either, they also liked what they saw. I came to this conclusion by the simple method of standing by the door and listening to the pitch of people's voices as they left. Low voices and cynical laughter is bad and higher-pitched and airy is good. Take weather into account.

The current exhibition, "Dirty Ornament," guest curated by Brooklyn artist Amanda Trager, is, with the exception



*This aluminum and plaster sculpture by Bill Albertini is among the work featured in the Rotunda Gallery's "Dirty Ornament" exhibition.*

of one installation, a thoroughly "professional" show. All that means is that there are no visual stumbling blocks in the way; that the art is presented that could interrupt a clear reading of what you are looking at. This is the difference between stating a fact and making a proposition.

### INHERITED BY NEW GENERATION

In the curatorial essay that accompanies the exhibition (which is always a proposition) the idea is set forth that the purist aesthetic of minimalism and its relative serialism has been inherited by a generation of artists who have reintroduced much of what the first generation of artists who have reintroduced much of what the first generation threw out: narrative, symbolism, fetishism and reference.

So it's work that as minimalism is con-

ceptually "dirtied" which in the ideal minimalist desert sticks out like a cactus "ornament."

What the work on hand has in common with its art parent is that it doesn't look like art that we are used to seeing and that it has a pristine beauty. The essay touches on the idea that this new work projects a personal reading onto the empty rhetorical authority of daddy minimalism: kind of like trouncing the Wizard of Oz in family therapy.

The most breathtaking work in the show is an installation by Patti Martori. In the small room of the gallery three long silver swords stand on their points in front of three of the walls where white pillows have been stuffed in the gap between the top of the wall and the ceiling.

Entering this environment is like walking into a beautiful bad dream. It directly enters the bloodstream to suggest a feeling of extremely repressed havoc. I thought of the powerful, pathetic figure in Strindberg's "The Father," and the suffocated psychic hysteria that still seems to be our inheritance from the Victorian era. I don't think that good art, like this piece, is judgmental. Repression is treated like a phenomenon; it's not bad or good but is simply being named.

Other works suspend moral judgment through a process of reversal, as in Charles Long's "Extension Trips" where crack vials, usually responsible for destroying brain cells, in this case grow giant synapses, to one of Saul Ostrow's "Hand Jobs," a hamhanded mold in unfired clay of a miniature factory belching smoke.

Other installations are a lovely Eve Laramee wall piece that has a sparky magic reminiscent of Joseph Beuys and another wall piece by Lynne Yamamoto that suffers from the use of brackets. It's hard to confront this series of soap and hair when the artist hasn't sufficiently worked out how it should be installed.

There is a final irony in the title in that this is a clinically spotless group of work. There isn't even any color. It's an elegant show. The space itself is already garnering architectural awards and it's good to see how well it handles art works. Don't forget to go up on the mezzanine.

**ROTUNDA GALLERY:** "Dirty Ornament," curated by Amanda Trager. On view Tues.-Fri., noon-5pm; Sat. 11am-4pm. New 6:30pm evening lecture series in conjunction with exhibition - Oct. 28, poet/critic/curator John Lau, "The Art of Andy Warhol: A Fresh Look." Nov. 4, artist Eve Andree Laramee, whose work is included in show, speaks about "The Dance of Faith and Error." Nov. 18, art historian Kithy Glantz, "The Art of the Ready-Made, from Duchamp to Installation." 33 Clinton St., off Pierrepont. Exhibition, free; lectures \$5. 875-4047.

REVIEW

Contemporary Art Exhibit on view at Gallery  
BAY NEWS October 18, 1993  
ILLUSTRATION Untitled, 1991



# BAY NEWS

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THREE SECTIONS  
(USPS 066980)

Week of October 18, 1993 50¢

## Contemporary Art Exhibit on View at Gallery

"Dirty Ornament"

Rotunda Gallery

Now through November 6

The Rotunda Gallery opened its 1993-94 season with "Dirty Ornament," a group exhibition examining the use of repetition of forms in contemporary art. "Dirty Ornament" will be on view now until November 6.

When we arrange similar or like objects for example-bricks to build shelter, stockpile cans of food and string words together into spells--we are often constructing a primary defense against concrete dangers in the world. When this kind of arrangement is without a



An aluminum and plaster sculpture by Bill Albertini

clear function, as in a work of art, the act and/or the resulting object may be read as a compulsive one mounted against a fear that is undefined, amorphous or internal.

The exhibition features work in all media by Bill Albertini, Lisa Alberts, Jackie Chang, Eve Andree Laramee, Charles Long, Patty Martori, Saul Ostrow, Elliott Puckette and Lynne Yamamoto.

Sculptors Alberts, Long and Yamamoto employ objects from the real world including pennies, crack vial tops and plastic eyeballs; while Ostro and Puckett present representations of easily recognized forms, such as silhouettes and monopoly pieces. Martori and Laramee will be represented in the exhibition by site-specific installations.

An evening lecture series will be held during the

exhibition featuring art historian Kitty Glantz, artist Eve Andree Laramee and poet and critic John Yau. Please call the gallery at (718) 875-4047 for additional information.

The Gallery is at One Pierrepont Plaza, at 33 Clinton Street in the downtown Brooklyn area. Hours are noon - 5 p.m. Tuesday through Friday and 11 a.m. - 4 p.m. on Saturday.



**SUSAN TALLMAN REVIEW**  
*At Althea Viafora*  
**ART IN AMERICA** January 1992  
 ILLUSTRATION Display, 1991, p. 121



www.billalbertini.com New York page 53

**Bill Albertini at Althea Viafora**

It used to be that when we imagined the societies of the future, we imagined something streamlined, all metallic pinnacles and glass globules. This optimistic vision has lately given way to a bleaker one of rust and potholes and grubby technical deterioration—something like that depicted in the movie *Brazil*. Bill Albertini presents a third option: objects that are sleek yet tailored, ornamental yet violent, ripe with meaning yet ultimately inscrutable.

Albertini's work has always had a sort of cyber-punk chic to it, but this is the first time he has used his full battery of war toys, architectural fittings and outside hardware to suggest a cohesive, half-hypothetical culture. His recent sculptures combine aluminum frameworks with curious cast-plaster elements that somewhat resemble cruciform tea trivets. These emblems popped up in virtually every piece: in neat silver-painted stacks beneath the frigid blue light of *Display*; in battered and broken terra-cotta-color plaster jumbled into a gleaming bin in *Untitled*; and in another piece, alternating pairs run all the way up a painted aluminum column, like a cuneiform display in some Babylonian Vegas.

Two-dimensional versions of these emblems, sandwiched between heavily bolted Plexiglas blocks, appeared clustered on Kodak negatives of drawings made by Albertini and were elsewhere stamped onto charred gold leaf; in yet another instance, they were shown glowing forth, in an unearthly blue, from a laser-copy photo of a wall in (the title informs us) war-shattered Verdun.

Interspersed among these assorted runes, there appears a second motif, the image of a Renaissance herm—a bearded, cross-armed man whose lower body is a pedestal. Like the trivet emblem, the herm shuttles back and forth between the job of ornament and the job of signifier (Hermes was, among his other attributes, the god of letters). The overall politics of this body of work was unsettling. That these signs are incorporated into housings of brutal elegance, suggestive of construction sites or surgical tables, marks a further connection between superficial beauty and veiled threat.

Perhaps the most seductive works in the show were the four Plexi-encased, half-burned pictures of soaring aircraft: photographic representations brilliant with the opalescent blue of the laser-copy process by which they were made. It is hard not to read these works as an ironic visual turn upon the joy of free flight. The planes themselves, shown gliding endlessly towards the pictures' fire-blackened edges, represent four generations of cutting-edge military technology, from a Messerschmidt ME 109 to the SR71 spy plane; their bolted containers pervert the cliché of airborne freedom into a metaphor for perpetual incarceration: these are flies trapped in amber. And somewhere in this eccentric amalgam of *Jane's Fighting Aircraft* and Owen Jones's *Grammar of Ornament* lies a world that is terrifying, lovely and not so alien after all. —Susan Tallman

**BOSTON**

**Louis Risoli at Zoe**

Louis Risoli has been showing his vibrant, colorful, densely worked abstractions for 10 years. Aside



**Bill Albertini: Display, 1991, aluminum, plaster, lights, 36 1/2 by 192 1/2 by 44 inches, at Althea Viafora.**



**Dan Devine: Installation view of exhibition, 1991, at Wesleyan University.**

from a brief early period when human forsores made a muscular appearance in his segmented geometries, his vision has been thoroughly and energetically abstract, his paint thick and crusty, his colors rich and bold. One might have thought that some of those canvases were stiffs from a complex, swirling animated film—a response that attests to the richness of the abstraction.

In his new works, the focus is tighter, if one misses the abundance and exuberance of the earlier work, one appreciates the taut balance between control and abandon he has now achieved. Risoli's shapes have the feel of being worked at and discovered; vistas of color, shape and pattern appear as if pulled from the hypnagogic ocean. He gives his imaginings flesh in columnar constructions or in canvases with a 6-inch skirting that pushes them out from the wall.

He often enriches his work with unexpected supplementary touches. In *Mirror* (1990), for example, there's a highly charged central ovoid in red, surrounded by a shower of red shards, within a field of yellow. The arrangement, which suggests the formation or disintegration of some elemental object, is interesting in itself, and Risoli could have stopped there. Yet along the edge of the oval there are small intrusions—thin, striped bands of completely different palettes, reminders of another order of things.

In *Ten to the Negative Eleven* *Power* there's clearly a reference to the Fibonacci series, that mathematical formation of the spiral sequence behind many natural forms; this colorful explosion of red and yellow blocks might be an enormous magnification of, say, a sunflower head. It might also be simply a study of pattern or a painterly exploration of texture Risoli refuses to be bound by a single scheme.

—Thomas Frick

**MIDDLETOWN, CT.**

**Dan Devine at Wesleyan University**

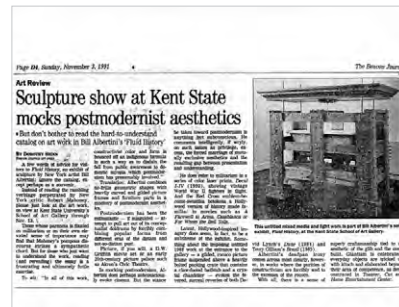
In this show of Dan Devine's cast-concrete irregular solids, five chunky pieces from the last year or so were set down without ado on the concrete floor of a lofty, windowless limestone chamber in Kevin Roche's handsome Zekka Gallery. This setting might have served sublime effect—the tall, windowless stone room perhaps resembling a certain Hogarth anticipation of *Boullée*—but Devine's rust-belt workmanliness conveyed integral strength instead.

All Devine's recent sculptures are titled after explorers' sailing ships. Except for the untitled *Golden Hind*, at 23 by 30 by 32 inches the largest shown, each is cast in pigmented concrete from a closed, hollow clump of found late-industrial and electronic junk. When a piece is two-toned, such as *Aina* in blue and black or *San Lucas* in black and white, the no-longer-horizontal interface between successive pourings indicates rotation or implies disorientation; for the work not only has no base, it doesn't even offer a preferred "bottom." The self-contained stereotomic mass is the thing.

Although the forms derive from junk, mainly the discarded electronics of today's garbage mountains, this is not "junk sculpture." Devine doesn't simply replicate forms; the found stuff becomes the (negative) matrix, not the (positive) model. Devine takes a unique "positive" cast, which thus "negates" the detritus. This reversal of the relation of matrix and molded form is peculiarly "antirepresentational"; the wild crystalline volumes might be said to be anything but the hunks of plastic television sets, toys, keyboards and whatever from whence they come. Everybody complains about the culture of



**DOROTHY SHINN REVIEW**  
*Sculpture Show At Kent State Mocks*  
*Postmodernist Aesthetics*  
**THE BEACON JOURNAL**  
Cleveland, Ohio, November 3, 1991  
ILLUSTRATION Untitled, 1988



Page D4, Sunday, November 3, 1991

The Beacon Journal

**Art Review**

# Sculpture show at Kent State mocks postmodernist aesthetics

• But don't bother to read the hard-to-understand catalog on art work in Bill Albertini's 'Fluid History'

**BY DOROTHY SHINN**  
*Beacon Journal art critic*

A few words of advice for visitors to *Fluid History*, an exhibit of sculpture by New York artist Bill Albertini: Ignore the catalog, except perhaps as a souvenir.

Instead of reading the rambling verbiage perpetrated by New York critic Robert Mahoney, please just look at the art work, on view at Kent State University's School of Art Gallery through Nov. 13.

Those whose paranoia is fixated on militarism or on their own elevated sense of importance may find that Mahoney's pompous discourse strikes a sympathetic chord. But for those who just want to understand the work, reading (and rereading) the essay is a frustrating and ultimately futile exercise.

To wit: "In all of this work,

constructivist color and form is bounced off an indigenous formula in such a way as to disdain the fall from public awareness to domestic myopia which postmodernism has presumably involved."

Translation: Albertini combines no-frills geometric shapes with heavily carved and gilded picture frames and furniture parts in a mockery of postmodernist aesthetics.

Postmodernism has been the enthusiastic — if misguided — attempt to pull art out of its conceptual doldrums by forcibly combining popular forms from different eras of the distant and not-so-distant past.

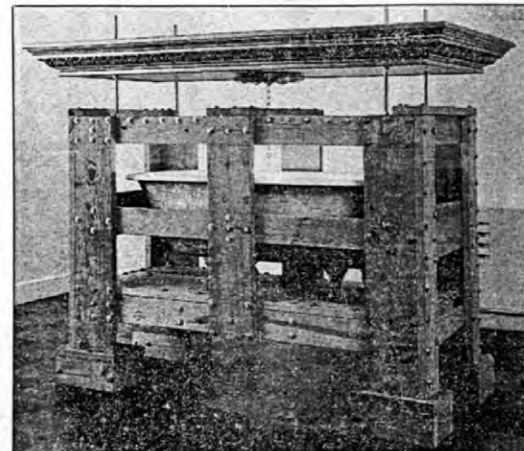
Picture, if you will, a D.W. Griffith movie set or an early 20th-century picture palace such as Akron's Civic Theatre.

In mocking postmodernism, Albertini does perhaps subconsciously evoke cinema. But the stance

he takes toward postmodernism is anything but subconscious. He comments intelligently, if wryly, on such issues as privilege, excess, the forced marriage of mutually exclusive aesthetics and the resulting gap between presentation and understanding.

He does refer to militarism in a series of color laser prints, *Decal I-IV* (1990), showing vintage World War II fighters in flight. And the Red Cross emblem-become-swastika betokens a Hollywood version of history made familiar in movies such as *A Farewell to Arms*, *Casablanca* or *For Whom the Bell Tolls*.

Latent, Hollywood-inspired imagery does seem, in fact, to be a subtheme of the exhibit. Something about the imposing untitled 1988 work at the entrance to the gallery — a gilded, rococo picture frame suspended above a heavily bolted packing crate that contains a claw-footed bathtub and a crystal chandelier — evokes the fevered, surreal reveries of both Da-



This untitled mixed media and light work is part of Bill Albertini's solo exhibit, *Fluid History*, at the Kent State School of Art Gallery.

vid Lynch's *Dune* (1984) and Terry Gilliam's *Brazil* (1985).

Albertini's deadpan irony comes across most clearly, however, in works where the purities of constructivism are forcibly wed to the excesses of the rococo.

With all, there is a sense of

superb craftsmanship tied to an aesthetic of the glib and the overbuilt. Giantism is celebrated; everyday objects are tricked up with kitsch and elaborated beyond their area of competence, as demonstrated in *Toaster*, *Cut* and *Home Entertainment Center*.

**PATRICIA GONZALEZ REVIEW**  
*La Historia Paralela de Bill Díaz Albertini*  
**ESTA SEMANA** Costa Rica,  
 September 1991  
 ILLUSTRATION Moth, 1988, p. 17



# La historia paralela de Bill Díaz Albertini

Patricia González,  
 para Esta Semana

Cotidianamente nos desenvolvemos en un mundo rodeados de símbolos que nos transmiten una idea. Símbolos que nos hablan de fuerza, religión, política o que simplemente rigen nuestra realidad diaria ordenando nuestros patrones de comportamiento. Cada uno de nosotros ha aprendido a relacionar estos símbolos con una idea abstracta, pero rara vez nos detenemos a pensar en los conceptos que sustentan este modo de expresión.

El escultor Díaz Albertini inspira sus creaciones en la historia y los símbolos. Pero no una historia real,

sino la creación de su propia historia paralela, su propios símbolos que a través de un depurado manejo técnico, nos dejan ver un documento intemporal como sacado de las paredes de un museo y que nos obliga a reflexionar sobre símbolos desconocidos.

Bill Díaz Albertini nació en Dublin, Irlanda, en 1955, de padre inglés, madre norteamericana y abuelos originarios de París y Cuba. Durante su niñez viajó con su familia por distintos países y visitó Estados Unidos frecuentemente.

Realizó estudios primarios y secundarios en Inglaterra. Ingresó al Ravensbourne College of Art and Design, en Kent, Inglaterra, donde cursó un año; luego completó sus

estudios en Crawford School of Art, en Irlanda.

Posteriormente, trabajó en esta misma institución por espacio de un año, como técnico, enseñando a los jóvenes, particularmente recur- sos escultóricos.

Había postulado para escuelas de arte en Londres y en Estados Unidos y lo aceptaron en el Yale School of Art.

Su permanencia en Estado Unidos le permite adquirir una perspectiva diferente "...Aquí no se hereda la carga histórica de cuando uno nace en Europa, todo es nuevo. Por ejemplo, las carreteras parecen alfombras incorporadas al paisaje, todo parece ocupar un solo espacio de tiempo.

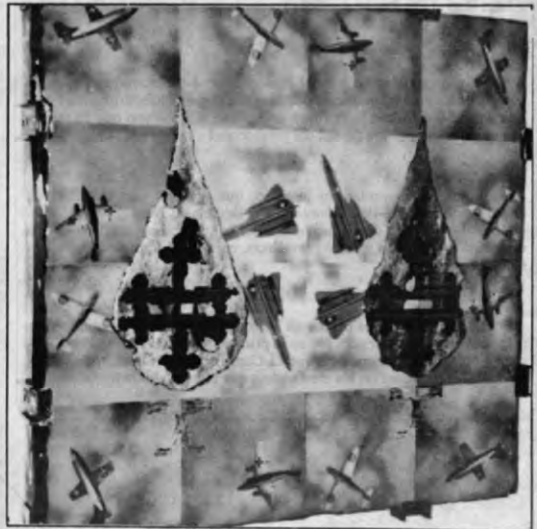
En el sentimiento americano, a pesar de que ellos hablan de tradiciones, el concepto del pasado no es el mismo de Europa."

A partir de esta nueva perspectiva, condidera él que comienza su trabajo artístico. 1989 cuenta con múltiples exhibiciones colectivas; las principales galerías newyorkinas le abren sus puertas. Posteriormente, efectúa *shows* individuales y en la renombrada Galería Althea Viafara que lo representa.

La primera exhibición de su trabajo en Latinoamérica, es la muestra que se encuentra actualmente en la Galería Jacob Karpio en San José, Costa Rica. Sus obras *Moth* y *Trípico* fueron recientemente adquiridas para la colección de Daniel Yankelewitz.

## Historia paralela

La obra escultórica de Albertini, en primera instancia abre al espectador una puerta en el tiempo, para recorrer una historia imaginaria, en cuya creación son primordiales los materiales llevados a ilimitadas



*Moth*, de la colección de Daniel Yankelewitz.

combinaciones. Así, nos da una visión histórica particular, similar a la que conocemos pero que forma un universo paralelo creado por el artista. Este universo lo logra con el uso de símbolos que forman parte de su lenguaje particular, un poco parecidos a los cotidianos pero al la vez diferentes.

Nos muestra un trabajo en el cual le gusta unir cosas que no van necesariamente juntas cronológicamente. Para Bill Albertini, la historia es usada como un material más a la par del oro, el hierro, el laser y el plexiglass, también "...la religión y la política son formas de manipular la historia y la gente".

La primera impresión que sentimos al apreciar su muestra, es aparentemente una clase de espejismo de la guerra; sin embargo, su temática tiene menos que ver con esta como tal, es más un reflejo de la eterna lucha por el poder.

El punto más importante, según el artista, es el tiempo, ante el cual no ofrece una opinión particular de lo correcto o incorrecto sino un especial interés por la mecánica, la manera en que se van desarrollando los mitos "...la historia se va creando a través de mitos y de símbolos que la gente toma sin cuestionarse realmente cuál es el pasado o el fin de estos."



Bill Díaz-Albertini y Daniel Yankelewitz con la obra *Trípico* recientemente adquirida para su colección.





# ARTS

MAGAZINE

Bill Albertini's exhibit at Althea Viafora (January 3-30) had the advantage of being the first SoHo show to open in the '90s. New leaves and dead regimes, a sense of scale and presence enforced by sympathy with events in Europe, made Albertini's odd synthesis of Magritte and Tatlin coalesce. *Out of Order* states the existential premise of Albertini's vocabulary: dramatic quasi-architectural objects, stripped of their use-value, put out of order so as to be possibly useful to art. A platform with woodwork bolted together in a manhandled way, upholstered in industrial carpet, mechanically bears a Magrittian displacement of a figure: a coffin. The bright-red inside would make death glow with a suggestion of the erotic, were it not for a splash of cold, very bright chain-link that neutralizes the effect. A fallen pillar, caged, can represent anything from personal to governmental impotence, depending on how big you like your readings. A SOTS art sensibility having migrated out of the USSR into Western post-glasnost art is suggested. *Untitled* site-specifically rebuilds a gallery-space pillar-to-post to suggest something of public-life grandeur within the narcissism of the white cube.

Albertini's smaller pieces have to do with releasing the myopia of ownership of technology and its symbolism to a broader historical term. *Home Entertainment* reframes stereo tweeters in elabo-

rate Gaudi-isms of gilt. Heavy metal is the bird, the gilded cage, hopelessly passé. *Sconce* and *Target Block House* catch a hint of old signs (swastikas) in a half nelson, pinning them as adornment in a revisionist salon. The way in which Albertini reaches up to history to comment on private life clearly something the Committee for Un-American Art Activities would love to look at. There is a grandeur here that our neo-provincialism cringes at. And Albertini's boldness breaks through the cultural sac worries of the petty bourgeois paradigm called postmodernism. Albertini is *Zweitmodern* (second modern): modern went wrong once, history has resumed again (November 9), let's get right this time.

Robert Mahoney



Bill Albertini, *Out of Order*, 1989, Wood, steel, paint, hardware, and florglass, 56½" x 128" x 61½". Courtesy Althea Viafora Gallery.

**JUDD TULLY REVIEW**

*Baroque-O-Vision*

COVER MAGAZINE February 1990

ILLUSTRATION Home Entertainment Center, 1989, p. 10



# Baroque-O-Vision

Bill Albertini  
ALTHEA VIAFORA GALLERY

JUDD TULLY

**B**ill Albertini's impressive debut on Broadway intensifies the notion that sculpture is alive and kicking but at the same time, dangerous to your health. I mention the health factor because these works exude a kind of barbed-wire menace, implying that viewing them will somehow make you vulnerable to, well, an accident.

*Bill Albertini Home Entertainment Center 1989 wood panel, steel, hardware, neon lamps 72x68x23"*





JUDD TULLY REVIEW  
*Baroque-O-Vision*  
 COVER MAGAZINE February 1990  
 ILLUSTRATION Home Entertainment  
 Center, 1989, p. 10



There is an ecclesiastical ring here, as if a delegation of high-tech clergy in red formica vestments was waiting in the wings, intent to save or banish your bankrupted, art-depleted or otherwise-compromised soul.

Black and red abound. Two colors in the insect world that warn others to bug off—eat me and you'll die. When red and black mingle with gold, a baroque, somewhat spoiled and debauched air descends over the objects. The caution flag goes up.

Albertini's fantastic and deliberated array of both pre-fabricated and handmade materials alternately beep Canal Street and some fancy French decorator shop on Madison Avenue. As Simon Taylor says in the gallery handout (more essay than press release), the artist insists on the "primary importance of materials." This obsession snares both bought and found objects and he juggles them in endless combinations.

Oddly enough, the found things look new and untouched. Similarly, hand-crafted parts seem fabricated. Every nook and cranny appears polished, gilded and mirrored, crafty like Artschwager but not so obnoxiously smart. Albertini throws you off balance with slicked-up surfaces but you eventually realize it's a kind of smokescreen, razzing both spectator and artist. His posture slouches with friendly reminders that the system—all these nuts and bolts—is inherently jinxed, screwed up for the long run. Otherwise I don't think you'd notice the exposed angle irons in his nasty coffin-piece titled "Out of Order," still marked with their discount prices.

Resembling a souped-up funeral pyre, the pointy piece seems ready for inclusion as a prop in "The Cabinet of Dr. Caligari II." A long coil of shiny silver chain spills out of the mini-coffin, licking the wood floor. Though clean and unblemished, the multi-level contraption reeks of confinement, a constructivist's clink for repeat offenders.

Depending on your aesthetic bent (the work demands a point of view), the object triggers either art historical associations or more emotive reactions, like, "what kind of commie thing is this?" "Piss Christ" aside, there's something sacrilegious about the hybrid cross-swastika in "Double Vision," punchy enough for a corporate logo. "Isms" clash and the unfinished phrase sways in the air.

Peering into the wire-mesh cage-frame of "Double-Vision," you see your own image reflected off a mirror as well as the iconic piece called "Pump" hanging on the distant wall behind you. Hopefully no one is looking over your shoulder at this moment of self-scrutiny.

Stepping back, the personal contact with the object fades and the viewer examines the niftily fabricated swas-cross, its compromised position on the gray-toned mirror and the Boucher-like curves of the fancy frame. A ricochet of images bombard and confuse. Is this just some overworked, art historical board game? I don't think so.

Despite cosmetic pretension, the piece has soul. It is painfully contemporary and that's why the work looks even better when surrounded by fashionable folk sheathed in black leather. From every angle you get a sense that civilization is crumbling before your eyes or is already lying there in a heap, in which case, you're the surrealist documentary of the event. †

**MICHAEL BRENSON REVIEW**  
*at Althea Viafora Gallery*  
**NEW YORK TIMES** January 5, 1990  
 Weekend Section, p. 29c



www.billalbertini.com New York page 59

century Hindu goddess, faces the  
 eous profile of Gilgamesh, the all-  
 ing Babylonian king.  
 he light of a projector suspended  
 n the ceiling is directed onto a  
 stalline form within the painting  
 t seems to be bouncing around the  
 es of a map that separates the two  
 files. The crystal is also a moon il-  
 inating an absolutely still sea that  
 ms to open up behind the figures,  
 rring them passage to another  
 d. In the world of Gino De Domini-  
 anything is possible.

*The work of Gino De Dominicis re-  
 ins at the Murray and Isabella  
 yburn Foundation, 41 East 57th  
 eet, through Wednesday.*

**Katsura Funakoshi**  
*Gold Herstand Gallery*  
*West 57th Street*  
*rough Jan. 27*

Katsura Funakoshi is a 38-year-old  
 anese whose polychrome sculp-  
 es of camphor wood have been re-  
 veying considerable international at-  
 tion. They are highly realistic rep-  
 entations of a hybrid race —  
 stly men — with alert (marble)  
 s. They are disconcertingly  
 ange.

The proportions of the small heads  
 larger bodies are almost Manner-  
 Allmost all the figures seem less  
 e actual people than characters in  
 els or plays. The titles are cryptic  
 l literary. "Between Words and  
 od" is a sculpture of a young man  
 o could be medieval or modern,  
 dent or priest. "Words Descend-  
 " is a boy with horns on his head.  
 "A Silent Mirror" is the one full-  
 ght figure, almost six feet tall, a  
 ithful, modern Japanese Every-  
 in with wavy hair and cleancut,

**Bill Albertini**

*Althea Viafora Gallery*  
*568 Broadway (at Prince Street)*  
*Through Jan. 30*

Bill Albertini's first solo gallery  
 show gives a pretty good idea of what  
 this talented though still emerging 34-  
 year-old artist can do. It combines  
 many different kinds of materials,  
 some natural, like wood, others fabri-  
 cated, like steel. Mr. Albertini, who  
 was born in Dublin and lives in New  
 York, is one of many artists working  
 between architecture, sculpture and  
 furniture.

He is also one of several sculptors  
 working between the found and made  
 object. It is often hard to know which  
 is which. For example, in "Out of Or-  
 der," a column that could have been  
 built by the artist was found and the  
 steel cage enclosing it, which could  
 have been found, was made. The el-  
 ements of the works usually suggest  
 ordinary objects like chairs and  
 speakers, but it is almost never clear  
 what they actually are.

Mr. Albertini wants to question and  
 reassemble the history of art. There  
 are references to Greek art, Supre-  
 matism, Surrealism, Minimalism,  
 tribal art and the Baroque — to artis-  
 tic approaches that have been seen as  
 incompatible. But this is an artist who  
 sees no reason why gilt cannot go  
 with sparseness, why tribal art and ad-  
 vanced technology cannot go togeth-  
 er.

But Surrealism and Minimalism  
 cannot go together. And the hybrids  
 in this show never have the force of  
 the art they refer to. With a little  
 more clarity of tone, a little less  
 pleasure in confounding categories  
 and expectations, and a little more  
 ability to make people care about the  
 objects he builds and uses, Mr. Alber-  
 tini can leave his stamp.

sion" into a cane, adding what  
 be a garden tool to a piece of  
 wood so that it becomes an ex-  
 like arm with claw, scrambling  
 bending chairs so that obj  
 counted on for support seem to  
 decided to revolt and collapse.

The Surrealist objects that re-  
 never quite work. The craftsman  
 is too crude. The disjunctiveness  
 incongruity of the objects  
 seems too contrived. The not-  
 smallness, thinness, hollowness  
 loss is never strong enough. The  
 some poetry here, but it is not  
 fully shaped.

**Horacio Torres**

*Salander O'Reilly Galleries*  
*20 East 79th Street*  
*Through Jan. 27*

All four paintings in this show  
 made between the time Horacio  
 res settled in New York in 1970  
 died here in 1976, at the age of  
 They are good paintings, with  
 going on in them, and they serve  
 warning to those who would auto-  
 ically dismiss works with an  
 abashedly traditional look or styl

This is not Formalist art. In all  
 paintings, the figures are nudes  
 there is a quiet tension between  
 heads, which are either conce-  
 erased or withdrawn, and the bo-  
 which are responsive and ampl  
 "Woman Drying Her Hair," a t  
 blankets the head in a way that  
 ggests the struggle for air that  
 vades these often expansive worl

Indeed, there are two very diffi  
 approaches to painting here. O  
 close to Renoir in the fluency  
 lushness of the brushwork. The  
 is closer to Cézanne in the powe  
 suggestiveness of the drapery  
 fabrics, and in the absolute det



**MICHAEL BRENSON REVIEW**  
*Positive Show, Jack Tilton Gallery, New York*  
**THE NEW YORK TIMES**  
February 24, 1989



# The New York Times

## Review/Art

FEBRUARY 24, 1989

### 'Positive Show'

Jack Tilton Gallery  
24 West 57th Street  
Through March 4

This is another group show with a good deal of energy. Like "Pillar of Post," it brings together largely unknown artists, in this case only five — William Albertini, Lisa Beck, Peter Boynton, Warren Kloner and Marc Travanti. Although they share some concerns with Appropriation and Neo-Geo artists, including the feeling for geometry and a compulsion to comment on other art, the Jack Tilton Gallery says they represent a new, more romantic, less cynical spirit.

In fact, much of the art in the show is transitional in feel and not all that distinct in tone. It is not cynical, but there is an instructive struggle to be attuned to Conceptual skepticism and at the same time remain upbeat. There is an unmistakable but also somewhat defensive attitude toward craft and form. And when Mr. Travanti places images by Mondrian under lace, he is expressing the kind of alienation from modernist abstraction that is characteristic of Neo-Geo painting.

Nevertheless, all the art is to some degree unexpected. Mr. Boynton plays on images of stringed instruments that have been prominent throughout this century. He built all three stringless basses in this show from scratch, giving each one an eccentric shape. All of them look like a cross between a functional instrument and something that just stepped off a U.F.O. All seem finished and unformed, available and sinister. If there is a problem here, it is that they are not crazy enough.

This exhibition is worth a visit for Mr. Albertini's work alone. In his "Snakes and Ladders," fluorescent lights are not on the ceiling but on the floor; an elegant gilt table supports more than 100 blocks of raw wood; the wood seems to be held against the wall by a ladder, which needs the wood and wall to support it. In Mr. Albertini's sculptures, first-rate craftsmanship releases irrationality, and formal precision makes wackiness and improbability seem inevitable.

By MICHAEL BRENSON