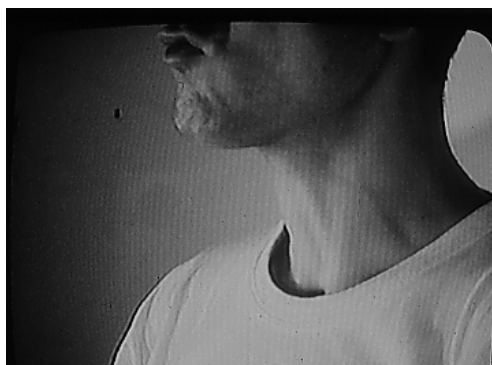


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## POST CRAP; ROVE: KENNY SHACHTER - NEW YORK, NEW YORK



Kenny Shachter, tick-tock, video still

"Post Crap" is the latest offering of group shows in temporary venues curated by me. The title stemmed from the tremendous amount of meaningless word shuffle in the art world, among other disciplines, that tends to undermine and stupefy language altogether. The intent of grouping together seven emerging artists and Vito Acconci, as set forth in the press release, was simply to create a forum for possible comparisons and contrasts. The range of the work differed as much as the artists, from porcelains to film, from seasoned veteran to MFA student. The point was nothing other than presenting a cross-section of art works in divergent media. Of course, something so seemingly straight forward was completely misconstrued by art press types like Kim Levin of the *Village Voice*, who stated the title was the most coherent part of the exhibit and that nothing tied the artists together. If she had the wherewithal to look, instead of casting a cursory glance before drafting a predetermined sentiment (in the form of a sentence fragment), she might have been surprised.

A tiny Polaroid from Acconci, dating from '69 and entitled jump, captured the moment at the apex of a leap as seen from the eyes of the jumper (presumably the artist). The image in the photo was a blurred landscape consisting of a field and some shrubbery. Little could Acconci have known at the time that this mode of representation would become a predominant aesthetic of '90s photographers. Spring forward 30 years to the video piece of Marco Brambilla entitled "Superstar", but don't let the title depreciate the experience. The video was produced by placing a trampoline in the center of a ring of 180 cameras

that produced a 360 degree image of a man seemingly falling from a building but never making what would be deadly contact with the ground. The still images shot by the multiplicity of cameras of the jumping figure was fed into an Avid editing machine to create the effect of a free-fall suspended just shy of fatality. What amounted to overkill was a shiny Cibachrome of the deluxe rig created for the shoot starring the Teutonic-looking actor idling on the trampoline head-to-toe in black, amidst the many crew members scurrying around the set.

Another Acconci titled rubbings consisted of a text panel and two photos mounted to foam core: one showed the lower portion of the artist's naked body with a medium size cockroach just beneath his finger, while the next panel pictured the results of that all too familiar act of grinding the unpleasant bug to bits, yet in this instance, the pest was killed between Acconci's finger and his lower stomach, rather than the usual foot-stomping method of execution. Don't inform PETA...it's a bug's life. What's appealing about Acconci's early body-related works was the sense of exploration without regard to beautifying or romanticizing the sense of self. The utter omission of a narcissistic point of view in Acconci's representations is the complete opposite of so many of today's luminaries of contemporary art that exult their physiques (from Barney to Mori) in the most aggrandizing fashion.

Laura Mosquera exhibited three paintings with similar subject matter, composed of figures floating on an abstract ground seen in the act of seeing each other and peering at monochromatic rectangular forms meant to represent art works. Accompanying the paintings were a series of offhand photographs with twenty-somethings lulling around art school galleries and studio spaces. The vacant stares and laid back posing that abounded in the paintings and photos I suppose reflect the mind-set of the MFA program students where the artist still attends. Though the works smacked of the here and now and crystallized a glimpse of present day young people, the lack of technique lessened their impact. In an act hard to fathom in its foreknowledge, Acconci did a performance in '69, called "Twelve Pictures", in which he stood on stage and reversed the glare of the audience by photographing them. Mosquera, in her paintings and photographs, takes a studied look at looking itself.

Bonnie Seeman makes handmade and painted porcelains that mimic muscles, bones and intestines, along with other body innards, in the form of quaint tea pots and gravy dishes. Of interest with these pieces in addition to the exquisite craftsmanship is the fact that they would, under usual

circumstances, only be viewed in a gallery specializing in ceramics. In art, as in most other enterprises, the notion of specialization is taken to extremes, rarely will an effort be made to blur distinctions and genres of work, rather than the typical groupings in preordained categories that is the norm. The level of caution and conservatism in the art world is mind-numbing. Whereas in the '60s artists began to seriously investigate the parameters of the body and how it related to the outside world, Bonnie Seeman's art is an attempt to pierce the veil of the skin and give us a taste of the vulnerable infrastructure that lies within and that many take for granted.

Brendan Cass makes soupy paintings with congealed clots of paint that somehow manage to become representational and abstract simultaneously. They are together alluring and nauseating and show much promise, considering how crudely they are made upon first glance. They quote artists from Max Kozloff to Donald Baechler and seem to originate from the notion that it is not easy to paint badly well. The lumpen globs of paint are sculptural in form and reference the misshapen bodies many of us inhabit.

Devon Dikeou presented a series of large scale photographs entitled cleaning the vermeer with the facade of a New York apartment building of the same name (The Vermeer) as the subject matter. The floor of the installation was a kind of faux sidewalk made from cement poured on masonite squares; and, the framing device for the photos utilized actual readymade metal storefronts. The image in all three of the pictures was of a maintenance man cleaning the "Vermeer" signage with a squeegee on an extended pole. To further make the point of the act of cleaning abundantly clear, a bucket with water and a smaller squeegee resting within, was placed on the floor like theatrical props. Was the work commenting on the art of restoration as a hapless blue collar exertion; on the commercialization of distant art world figures as presently appealing brands; or a reflection of the onetime bohemian nature of the Greenwich Village neighborhood as a remote thing of the past? Any of the above readings could have been plausible in an installation characterized by an austere formal beauty and materials usage that brought to light the usually overlooked architecture of the street.

I exhibited two videos of my own, none of which were in and of themselves particularly outstanding; the first, entitled *Tic-Tock*, consisted of a cropped view of my lower face continuously making the sound of teeth sucking. Meant to be vexatious, the offensive noise is one some people relentlessly

make without ostensibly being aware, and regardless of whether or not they have something stuck in their teeth (for instance, my father is a virtuoso practitioner). Unfortunately, the manner in which the piece was shot, not to mention the content, owed more than a passing debt to Nauman. The initial idea seemed good, but if the slacker execution was geared toward showcasing the hideous close-up of the mouth sputtering the continuous clucking sound, it would have been better. Video number two, called *C: The All Commercial Network*, showed what little effort one can expend pawning something off as art. The tape was simply a loop of TV commercials in all their glory, from polished Mercedes adverts that co-opted images of Toulouse Lautrec morphed into the role of car mechanic to the usual late night tits and ass fare on cable. When I mentioned this to a movie-producing friend from California, he thought I was serious and wondered if I had taken any meetings with TV execs in furtherance of getting the idea up and running. Post Crap indeed.

Kenny Schachter

New York, New York

1999

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