

I do not yet know sufficiently clearly what I am, I who am sure that I exist. So I must henceforth take very great care that I do not incautiously mistake some other thing for myself.

Descartes, Meditations on First Philosophy, 1641



JANET CARKEEK
JEANNE DUNNING
GREGORY GREEN
MITCHELL KANE
HIRSCH PERLMAN
VINCENT SHINE
TONY TASSET

Curated by Barry Blinderman

August 19 through October 9, 1987



University Galleries Illinois State University Normal, Illinois 61761

Acknowledgements

The idea for *Anxious Objects* began with my enthusiasm for the works of certain artists included

in an exhibition entitled *The Non-spiritual in Art: Abstract Painting 1985-????*, curated by Hudson, the director of Feature in Chicago. I decided to present the work of these artists for my opening exhibition as director of University Galleries at Illinois State University. The title is borrowed from Harold Rosenberg's prescient book of essays *The Anxious Object*, published in 1964, reflecting the late author's striving for a re-definition of art in an era in which "... the entire social basis of art is being transformed."

I would first of all like to thank Janet Carkeek, Jeanne Dunning, Gregory Green, Mitchell Kane, Hirsch Perlman, Vincent Shine and Tony Tasset for their enlightening responses to my questions about their art, and for making their work available on such short notice. Thanks are also due to Robbin Lockett, Feature and Dart galleries in Chicago, and Laurie Dahlberg, Assistant Director of University Galleries, for her help in all facets of the exhibition's organization; to my staff, graduate assistants, interns and students, for their multifarious energies and talents; to Ed Forde, Chairman of the Art Department at ISU, for his unwavering support and unerring wit; to John Walker, for his creative catalogue design and patience; to Jim Searcy at Bloomington Offset, for his generous assistance; to Sherman Peck, for his technical wizardry; to Christina Nordholm, for her suggestions and inspiration; and lastly, to Hudson for introducing me to the work of these artists.

Barry Blinderman, Director University Galleries September 17, 1987

For Gabriel (who's walking)

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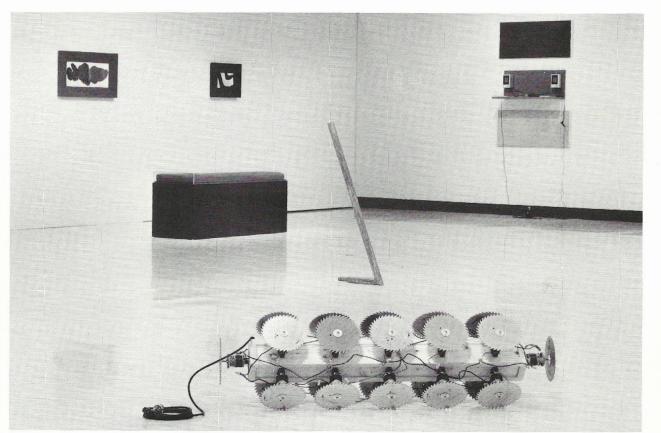
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installation view: Tasset, Shine, Kane and Green

On Art, Nature and ... We forsee a time when the promise of the Information Age will be realized. People will participate in a worldwide Telecommunity through a vast, global network of networks, the merging of communication and computers. They'll be able to handle communication in any form — conversation, data, images, text — as easily as they make a phone call today.

The science is here now, The technology is coming along rapidly. But only with compatibility will the barriers to Telecommunity recede.

Telecommunity is our goal. Technology is our means. We're committed to leading the way.

- from "The way beyond Babel," an advertisement for AT&T, @ 1987

Technology is the great equalizer. Corporate ad soothsayers promise "better living through science." All problems can be overcome, all differences resolved. In effect, the electronics revolution has supplied us with a colossal external nervous system that enables us to tune in the world, soon to be Telecommunity, at a glance.

... It is plain that in no other period has the visible world been to such an extent both duplicated and anticipated by artifice. Surrounded by artistic copies of presidents, scenes, famous events, we become in the end largely insensitive to the distinction between the natural and the made up. The ghostliness of an environment loaded with doubles thus augments the fascination which substituting the image of the thing for the thing itself and vice versa has held for painting since artists, somewhere around the middle of the nineteenth century, lost their patience with mere picturing.

— Harold Rosenberg, "The Game of Illusion," 1964

Yet technology, in its boundless dissemination of information and simulated nature, yearns constantly for Nature. Contemporary artists, ever the proverbial "antennae," have been acutely sensitive to this yearning, and have at times used technology as a tool for shattering the very cultural illusions that the consortium of media and technology promulgates. And it is no wonder: Art has historically sought the illusion of nature as persuasively as science has. It knows the territory.

Perhaps it takes the paradoxical distancing of a technology that seeks to bring us so close together in order for us to truly see nature anew. By looking through technology's precisely ground yet deceiving lens, we can see beyond these fields of concrete, these forests of posts and wires, these seas of reproduced images, and mediate on Nature and the nature of art.

Modern art always projects itself into a twilight zone where no values are fixed. It is always born in anxiety . . . It seems to me the function of modern art to transmit this anxiety to the spectator, so that his encounter with the work is — at least while the work is new — a genuine existential predicament. Like Kierkegard's God, the work molests us with its aggressive absurdity . . . It demands a decision in which you discover something of your own quality.

- Leo Steinberg, "Contemporary Art and the Plight of Its Public," 1962

Given the speed and sophistication with which the formal characteristics of new art modes are appropriated by the artisans of media, the art object, including masterpieces of the past, exists under constant threat of identity... Confronting this situation, the anxiety of art embodies the freedom of art to remake itself at will... This can only mean that the art object persists without a secure identity, as what I have called an anxious object.

— Harold Rosenberg, The Anxious Object, 1964

As various in concept and medium as the works by the seven artists in this exhibition may be, there are several threads of similarity among them: (1) an ambivalent fascination with, reference to, or incorporation of modern objects or photographically generated material, (2) a conscious beckoning of the viewer's participation and interpretation, (3) an avid awareness of the interstices of art, language, nature and technology, and (4) a questioning of culturally established codes of perception and signification.



I saw a woman on "David Letterman" a few nights ago who worked in an assembly line in a potato chip factory. And she had a collection of potato chips that she had picked out because they looked like other things to her. She was incredibly serious about this collection. She had a potato chip that looked like Mr. Magoo and one that looked like Pegasus. I got to thinking that maybe I'm not even an artist, but more like that woman — finding landscapes in pieces of wood.

Janet Carkeek's luminous "Time Accumulation" seascapes are hand colored enhancements of landscape-like lines and patterns she finds in pieces of plywood selected in her haunts of lumberyards. Typically, two rectangular planks of wood with contrasting grain are joined, their horizontal juncture implying a horizon. Pastel and ink are subsequently applied.

Rather than portraying nature through the Renaissance "window," from a photograph, or even from the imagination, Carkeek paints right *over* nature. With the meticulousness of a schoolchild who is careful to color within the



Janet Carkeek, Time Accumulation Series #2, 1987 (Detail)



Jeanne Dunning, Untitled, (stick), 1987

Catalogue of the Exhibition

Janet Carkeek

*Time Accumulation Series #2, 1986 ink and pastel on wood 14¼ x 54 x 1"

Time Accumulation Series #6, 1986 ink and pastel on wood 14% x 42 x 1"

Time Accumulation Series #7, 1986 ink and pastel on wood 14% x 42% x 1"

Land, Sea and Sky Series #1, 1987 ink and pastel on wood 10 x 40% x 1"

*Land, Sea and Sky Series #2, 1987 ink and pastel on wood 10% x 40% x 1"

all works courtesy of Feature, Chicago

Jeanne Dunning

*Book, 1986 concrete, stand 46 x 19 x 17"

Untitled (dead leaves), 1987 C-print and frame 11% x 13 x 1"

- *Untitled (stick), 1987 C-print and frame 11% x 16% x 1"
- *Goblet, 1986 concrete, shelf 14 x 22 x 7"

Book, 1986 concrete, table 39 x 19 x 12"

all works courtesy of Feature, Chicago

Gregory Green

- * The political system conceives and propagates the myths and illusions that maintain the proper response., 1987 mixed media 60 x 84 x 19"
- *Subservience to their demand for increased power and survival has become the accepted model., 1987 mixed media 90 x 48 x 15"
- * Their control of our perception is total and sacrosanct., 1987 mixed media 90 x 48 x 24"
- *Assault (seventeen blade floor piece), 1987 mixed media 14 x 14 x 51"

all works courtesy of Dart Gallery, Chicago

Mitchell Kane

*Chuck Norris with Red and Black Stripes, 1986 oil on wood, ink on poster, neoprene rubber, graphite on paper 108 x 144 x 12" *Transformation of an Agricultural Product, 1986 oil on canvas, metal brackets, wood, compact disc player, 2 discs 60 x 36 x 12"

Untitled (Volksgeist II), 1986 oil and encaustic on wood, Scottish wool blanket 25½ x 48 x 27½"

Untitled, 1987 enamel on canvas 43 x 35"

all works courtesy of Robbin Lockett Gallery, Chicago

Hirsch Perlman

- * Untitled, 1987
 photograph and fiberboard
 59 x 40 x 8"
- * Untitled, 1987 b/w photograph, photopaper, wood and plexiglas 23½ x 19½ x 2½"

Untitled, 1986 Sony Watchman, photograph 24 x 84 x 15"

all works courtesy of Feature, Chicago

Vincent Shine

- * Untitled, 1987
 plaster and mixed leaf on polystyrene
 21 x 20" diameter
- * Untitled, 1986 shellac and plaster on polystyrene 46 x 13 x 2"

Untitled, 1986 graphite, steel 22 x 9 x 6"

Untitled, 1986 epoxy and graphite on fiberglas 11 x 14" diameter

* Untitled, 1986 steel 48 x 17 x 19"

Untitled, 1986 steel 63 x 1%" diameter

all works courtesy of Robbin Lockett Gallery, Chicago

Tony Tasset

- *Domestic Abstraction, 1987 hide, painted wood frame 14½ x 19 x 2" courtesy of Feature, Chicago
- *Domestic Abstraction, 1987 hide, painted wood frame 17½ x 31½ x 2" courtesy of Feature, Chicago
- *Seated Abstraction, 1986 lucite, lacquered wood, leather 22½ x 54½ x 19½" courtesy of Christine Burgin Gallery, New York City

^{*}Reproduced in the catalogue.

Measurements are in inches, height precedes width, precedes depth.