

THE COLLECTION OF
Contemporary Art from
JASON RUBELL



Exhibition Itinerary:

March 1-May 19, 1991
Duke University Museum of Art
Durham, North Carolina

October 1-November 10, 1991
Illinois State University Galleries
Normal, Illinois

January 11-February 22, 1992
The Gallery of Contemporary Art
University of Colorado at Colorado Springs

September 2-October 11, 1992
Freedman Gallery, Albright College
Reading, Pennsylvania

October 25-December 18, 1992
Kresge Art Museum
Michigan State University
East Lansing, Michigan

January 8-February 14, 1993
Moody Gallery of Art
University of Alabama
Tuscaloosa, Alabama

March 27-May 28, 1993
The Arts Center Gallery
College of DuPage
Glen Ellyn, Illinois

September 7-October 15, 1993
University Gallery
University of Delaware
Newark, Delaware

November 15, 1993-January 15, 1994
Wichita Falls Museum & Arts Center
Wichita Falls, Texas

Exhibition tour coordinated by Barry Blinderman, Director of
University Galleries, Illinois State University

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IN THE FUTURE, EVERYBODY
WILL ACT IN THE GAP

BETWEEN [ART AND LIFE] FOR 15 MINUTES.

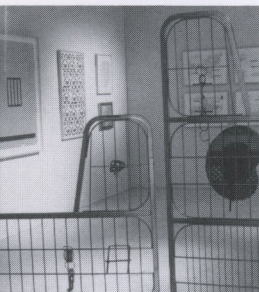
Everybody looks alike and acts alike, and we're getting more and more that way . . . how many painters are there? Millions of painters and all pretty good. How can you say one style is better than another? You ought to be able to be an Abstract Expressionist next week, or a Pop artist, or a realist, without feeling you've given up something . . . All you have to do is read the magazines and catalogues. It's this style or that style, this or that image of man—but that really doesn't make any difference.

—Andy Warhol interviewed by G.R. Swenson, 1963

The fact that the material is re-used is, in truth, the paradox. It ceases to be waste.

—Robert Rauschenberg interviewed by Andre Parinaud, 1961

In the past several days I have spent considerable time observing, discussing, and walking through an artwork by Cady Noland called *Genre Scum*. Until recently, except for a harried glance at a crowded Whitney opening, this artist's work has been a relative abstraction I had seen via installation shots and magazine photos. Now, thanks to a young art collector named Jason Rubell, *Genre Scum*'s presence has become very real, even palpable, to me, its modern Americana-festooned cattle feedgates insolently daring me to cross the proverbial line chalked on sidewalks by many a schoolyard tease. That line—shall I say, between art and life, spectator and player, innocent bystander and accomplice—has been drawn and re-drawn throughout the modern era by artists, playwrights and filmmakers seeking to grasp an ethereal concept known as Reality. Although tamed somewhat by the patina of time, works such as Pirandello's *Six Characters in Search of an Author*, Duchamp's peephole nightmare, *Etant Donnes*, Resnais' labyrinthine *Last Year at Marienbad*, and Warhol's deadpan refabrications of *Brillo* boxes reverberate still as we enter the threshold of the Virtual Era. We might ask how archaic forms of expression like painting and sculpture will survive in a GameBoy culture that will soon enable us to see, hear, feel, and manipulate a "world" generated by thousands of computer polygons conveyed through fiber-optic cables to headmounts and data-suits.



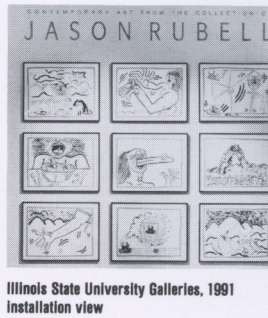
Noland, *Genre Scum* (Installation view)

Rauschenberg's often-quoted statement: "Painting relates to both art and life. Neither can be made. (I try to act in the gap between the two.)" has become as much of a guideline for the current state of the artworld as Warhol's quip: "In the future, everybody will be famous for 15 minutes." The particularly 20th century phenomenon of substituting the representation of something for the real thing, and vice-versa, is carried even further by philosopher Jean Baudrillard's assertion that "the real is not only what can be reproduced, but that which is *always already reproduced*." For a generation of artists who are, in Keith Haring's terms, "babies of the Space Age raised on television," and who also were weaned on Pop art in the broadest sense, recycling media images and former art styles can produce disorienting effects, not unlike pointing a video camera at the TV it's connected to, and witnessing the pulsating visual feedback.

Only a lie but what a lie. So tell me, what is *really* the difference between Neo-expressionism and Neo-Geo, Neo-Surrealism and Post-Abstract Abstraction? Which is more expressionist, Jenny Holzer's statements "ANY SURPLUS IS IMMORAL . . . HUMANISM IS OBSOLETE . . . TRUE FREEDOM IS FRIGHTFUL" etched in a granite bench/tombstone, or Keith Haring's sumi ink drawing of a baby sitting on a scale propped up by a peg-legged evangelist's cross? And was Haring's incorporation of the powerful aura of day-glo paint as a background for his frenetic pictograms so different (or any less hip) than Peter Halley's use of the same paint as a reflection upon the hyperreality of consumer-obsessed culture? Isn't the ambiguity, nostalgia, and sense of displacement characterizing 80s art contingent upon principles affecting the entire semiotic spectrum, if not the culture at large? How else can we explain our freeze-frame, VCR remote-control yearning for past eras, be it the 50s, the 60s, or, God forbid, even the 70s?

Jason Rubell has stood in the crossfire of this cultural implosion, withstood the shrapnel, and collected some pretty substantial artifacts of a very turbulent and confusing period in the history of art. If his choices seem eclectic, somewhat unfocused, this, too, is symptomatic of a time during which a new movement was declared with the dawning of every season. But, as it is with many things, the more you look the more similarities and cohesiveness you find: No matter how hot, cool, simulated, real, post-conceptual, or post-hypnotic art is, it is nevertheless a yearning to find meaning in our experience through the obsessive desire to create symbolic objects. Trying to distinguish between one "school" of contemporary art or another is, in the long run, like differentiating between Jesus, Krishna, or Buddha. The bottom line is that they are all working for the same company.

Barry Blinderman



THE COLLECTION OF *Contemporary Art from* JASON RUBELL

TRUTH IN ART?

In 1983, Peter Halley, an artist and critic, wrote an article for *Arts Magazine* entitled “Nature and Culture.”¹ The article examined what Halley described as a sharp transformation in the ideological basis of contemporary bourgeois culture. The shift involved a change in general attitudes concerning the belief in a cure for what had been described historically as the alienation of the individual within the industrialized world. Halley argues that, from the end of World War II up until the late 1970s, individuals found their lost “vitality” and “spontaneity” rejuvenated in what he terms “soul,” a term appropriated from African-American culture.

In the early 1980s, a new generation of artists and critics like Halley opposed the emphasis on “soul” as the cure for the lost individual. This younger generation, born in the postwar period, interpreted the emphasis on soul “as a means by which bourgeois culture has consolidated its position by denying its historicity. To say that a work of art is spiritual is to attribute to it universal, timeless value, and to suggest that the society which encourages and validates works with such attributes is itself timeless and universally valid.”² Furthermore Halley claimed that “the practice of art from World War II to the end of the last decade (1970s) was dominated by ideas derived from phenomenology, existentialism, and Jungian transcendentalism.”³

Such influences were adopted in response to the horrors of World War II, and in this climate Clement Greenberg defined “Modernism” in terms of the artist as a “master” or “spiritual genius.” Halley argued that the artists who emerged in the 1980s—the so-called Post-Industrialist era—substituted the earlier emphasis on phenomenology with a new focus based on sociology and politics. These artists, Halley continues, replace “the cult of originality” fashioned by the apologists for modernism with “myriad variations on the theme of repetition.”⁴ This concept of variation in repetition constitutes one of the principle organizing themes of Post-Modernism in which the appropriation of all aspects of history becomes available for simulation by the artist. The conditional change

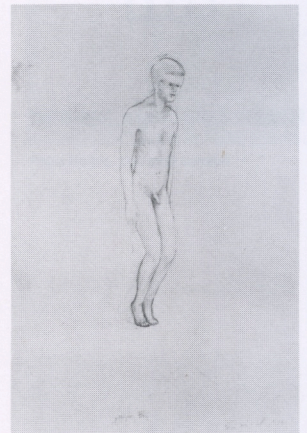
that Peter Halley discusses in "Nature and Culture" is one example of the criticism that prevailed in the early 1980s, criticism that claimed the end of Modernist ideology and heralded the consequent rise of Post-Modernism.

It was against this backdrop that my initiation into the world of contemporary art was shaped. In 1983, I was unaware of these discourses concerning nature and culture that had arisen within the art community. The first movement that I fully comprehended as a youth was Neo-Expressionism, which was considered a sub-category under the eclectic umbrella of Post-Modernism. In the late 1970s this group of painters, which included Julian Schnabel, Francesco Clemente, David Salle, and Eric Fischl, entered the New York art scene. Their work recalled the style of New York School painters of the 1940s and 1950s and could be characterized by the expansive size of the canvas and the vibrant brush stroke. The Neo-Expressionists added the new dimension of realism to the intensely worked canvases, posing a sharp contrast to the abstracted canvases of the New York School artists. The works attempted to convey much of the same "machismo" and heroism associated with Halley's "soul" generation. Schnabel's massive paintings with crockery and a bravissimo brush-stroke, Clemente's watercolors referencing Hindu/Buddhist sensuality, and Fischl's canvases filled with suburban eroticism conveyed a post World War II, neo-Romantic sense of universal truth and power. These were objects created by the "genius" artist for the alienated bourgeois. These artists offered the spectator an oasis of the absolute in a mundane world.

My belief in the absolute power of art was formed by my experience of Neo-Expressionism (my parents were avid collectors of this period). These paintings shaped my belief that art contains objective truth. I saw the object, in these early years, as a spiritual icon that contained answers to the complexities of life. These objects were complete and needed no further analytical accompaniment or guide. This notion of the mystical powers of art was the dominant influence on my personal art ideology until I began to read and expand my art historical background.

In my quest for the spiritual in art I decided that the first work I purchased must contain these mystical values. I desperately wanted to start my collection with one of the Neo-Expressionist artists, for in my mind they represented the ultimate truth in painting. But, by 1983, these artists were already in vogue and their prices were far out of my league. Therefore, I shifted my attention to a younger group of artists who were affordable yet who still expressed those ideas that I considered essential.

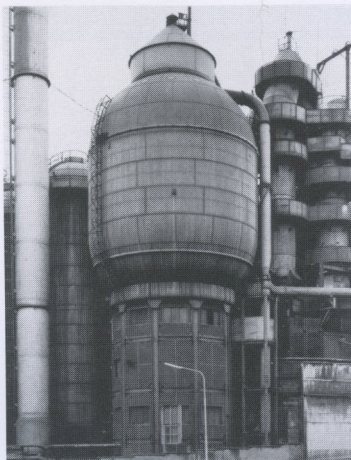
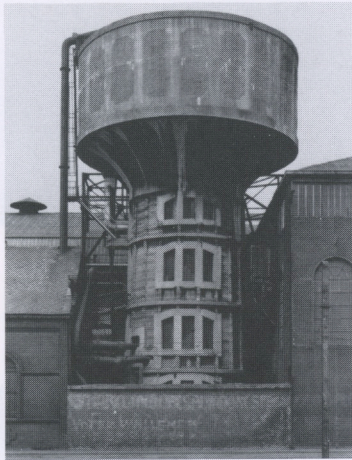
It was against this background that my parents took me to Pat Hearn's Gallery. They thought that Pat Hearn, a young gallery owner in the East Village, might have an artist to whom I might respond. Also, her gallery was new, one whose emerging artists were categorized as "Post-Modernist." She exhibited a wide array of works, some of which showed Neo-Expressionist



Eric Fischl, *Jumping Boy*



Bernd and Hilla Becher, *Untitled (Watertower)*



of artistic disciplines. Since 1959, Bernd and Hilla Becher have photographed a large number of industrial machines and buildings. They have succeeded in transforming the otherwise non-aesthetic aspects of these objects by enhancing their banal qualities to further stress their role in an industrial landscape. They have taken the most dilapidated and run-down water towers and mills, structures not usually considered as works of art, and created an aesthetic dialogue. Through the use of a series of photographs that range from single images up to over thirty, the Bechers are able to convey through repetition the banality of unique images that come from the same "species" of industrial building. Through their photographs, the Bechers salvage these old buildings, providing an almost encyclopedic collection of industrial images. The Bechers represent a continuation of a tradition of German photography that began with August Sander and that continues through the work of younger German photographers such as Thomas Ruff, Andrea Gursky, and Thomas Struth. The Bechers teach at the Dusseldorf Academy of Art, chairing the department of photography. Along with Gerhard Richter, they have an enormous influence on the philosophy of the academy. They believe that art forms can evolve into multiple genres. Artists such as Jiri Georg Dokoupil and Katarina Fritsch, former students at the Dusseldorf Academy, reflect this belief in a crossover between disciplines.

WORK IN EXHIBITION

Untitled (Watertower), 1983

Black and white photo, 16" x 12"

Three individual photos

Nayland Blake

Born in 1960 in New York, Nayland Blake currently lives in San Francisco, California. He received his B.F.A from Bard College and his M.F.A. from the California Institute of Arts. He had his first exhibition at New Langston Arts, an alternative space in San Francisco, where he is now on the board of directors. He has been responsible for introducing to the Bay Area some of the newest art trends produced across the country. In 1989, he had his first commercial exhibition at the Mincher/Wilcox Gallery in San Francisco, followed in 1990 by a one-person show at the Richard Kuhlenschmidt Gallery in Santa Monica and Petersburg Press Gallery in New York. In 1990, he also took part in the "Cologne Show" and, that same year, was one of the artists participating in *Mind Over Matter: Concept and Object* at the Whitney Museum in New York. In his work, Nayland Blake uses ordinary images and objects to convey the conflicted sexuality of the late twentieth century. He questions the freedoms found within human sexuality and those restrictions, both physical and psychological, which restrict these freedoms. In the work *Untitled* (1989), he displays a set of novels, the *Omen* and the *Exorcist*. One can see that the books have been read and physically handled, yet the plexiglass enclosure makes them inaccessible. This lack of access is physical, and, more importantly, psychological. Popular culture has made these books into the stereotypical horror novels. Reading them is not crucial since society has already "read" them for us. By knowing the horror held within this plexiglass case, we as viewers wish both to experience it by reading and, at the same time, to run away from it. These conflicts between reward and punishment are a central aspect of Nayland Blake's work.

WORK IN EXHIBITION

Untitled, 1989

Books in plexiglass box, 7 1/2" x 5 1/4" x 5"

Untitled, 1990

Metal first aid kit, Walkman, headset,
personalized cassette, stickers, rear view mirror;

10 1/2" x 13 1/2" x 7 1/2"

Ross Bleckner

Born in 1949 in New York City, Ross Bleckner graduated in 1973 from the California Institute of Art. He first exhibited in 1975 at the Cunningham Ward Gallery and in 1979 he showed with the Mary Boone Gallery in New York as part of the Neo-Expressionist Movement. It was not until the mid-1980s, however, that Bleckner found another group of artists who shared his concerns. He was a pivotal figure in the emergence of the Neo-Geo Movement in 1985. Bleckner, a painter, has been involved in this new movement more for his conceptual than artistic ties. Bleckner's work since 1985 has dealt with issues particularly linked to the AIDS epidemic. His works from 1986, especially the "stripe" paintings, create a sense of individual loss and regret. Similarly, as with the Neo-Geo artists, Bleckner depicts the individual as lost in our commercialized or "commodified" industrial culture. In the late 1980s, Bleckner's work came to symbolize the enormous anger, frustration, and, above all, loss that the AIDS epidemic had inflicted on the art community. His paintings are a direct confrontation with death, a death that is vividly apparent in New York City as a result of AIDS. As well as acting as a spokesman for the movement, Blecker is also a teacher and collector of the young generation. His collecting involves the purchase of art from emerging artists with whom he feels a particular artistic bond. His collecting has led to close relationships with many of these young artists.

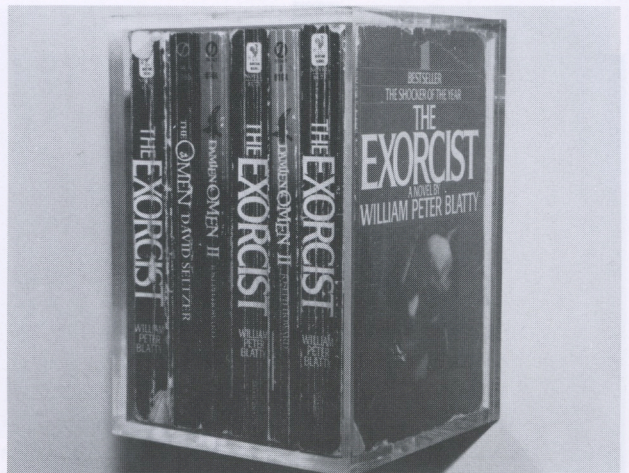
WORK IN EXHIBITION

Untitled, 1988

Oil on canvas on paper, 16" x 12"

Richmond Burton

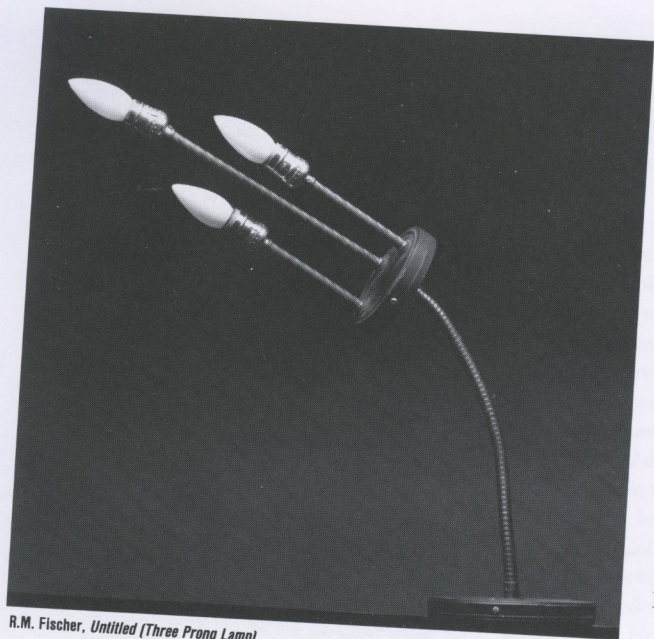
Born in 1960 in Talladega, Alabama, Richmond Burton received his B.A. in 1982 from Rice University, Houston, Texas. In 1984, he received his Bachelor of Architecture degree from Rice. Burton had his first one-person show in 1987 at the Postmasters Gallery in New York. In 1990, Burton had a joint show with the Simon Watson Gallery in New York and the Daniel Weinberg Gallery in Los Angeles. That year he also exhibited for the first time at the University Art Museum in Berkeley, California. Much of the inspiration for Richmond Burton's geometric abstract canvases derive from the works of Piet Mondrian and Kasimir Malevich. Over the last five years Burton has made a conscious effort to study and create sketches of both Malevich and Mondrian's works in an effort to master the intricacies of these artists' unique styles. The meticulous process involved in the reproduction of these historical images has had a significant influence on his style and technique. Burton has transferred the precision of reproduction into his own art forms. Burton's architectural degree (Rice



Nayland Blake, *Untitled*, 1990



Ross Bleckner, *Untitled*

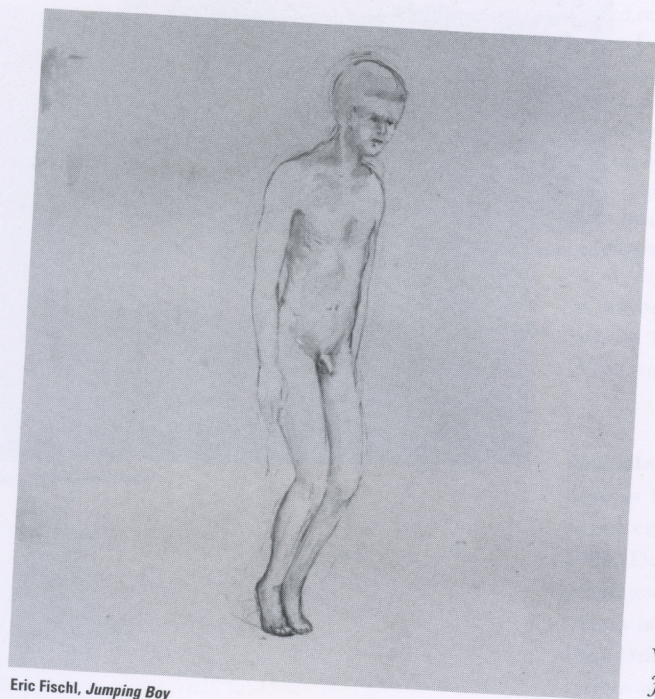


R.M. Fischer, *Untitled (Three Prong Lamp)*

locations for Fischer's first joint museum exhibition in 1984. Ron Fischer's lamp sculptures are influenced by the constructivist and assemblage traditions first established by Picasso and Braque. Later influences appear throughout the twentieth century, most noticeably in the Modernist constructions of Anthony Caro, David Smith, and Mark De Suvero. Fischer's assembled lamp sculptures appear humorous due to the combination of their medium and their function. Objects ranging from building construction materials to kitchen bowls create a surreal appearance for his objects. The sculptures refer to the whimsical and functionally absurd qualities of Jean Tinguely's quasi-mechanical water fountains. Fischer accentuates Tinguely's meta-mechanical sculptures with a more refined and advanced form of motion—light. Fischer's sculptures display fragments of a mass producing, industrialized society. Their strength lies in their ability to imbue the aesthetically marginal industrial object with a heightened aesthetic function.

WORK IN EXHIBITION

Untitled (Three Prong Lamp), 1982
Lamp, 32" x 7" x 7"



Eric Fischl, *Jumping Boy*

Eric Fischl
Born in 1948 in New York City, Fischl studied at the California Institute of the Arts at Valencia and received his B.F.A. in 1972. His first one-person exhibit took place in 1975 at the Dalhousie University Art Gallery in Halifax, Nova Scotia, in 1975, followed by shows at the Ed Thorp Gallery, Mary Boone Gallery, and Larry Gagosian Gallery, New York. In 1987, Fischl had a major retrospective show that traveled in the United States. After graduation, Fischl's early works were abstract, non-representational paintings but, by 1977, figures appeared in the work. These early figures represented an imaginary family, the Fischer Family, whose social situations became increasingly complex as Fischl developed. In 1978 when Fischl moved to New York, these paintings were replaced by single-image figures that depicted aspects of suburban American life painted in a loose, painterly style. These highly expressive paintings were typical of the works of such young artists, also working in New York at that time, as Julian Schnabel and David Salle who were later called Neo-Expressionists. Their art derived much of its painterly inspiration from German Expressionism, although Fischl's art, also has antecedents in the American figurative tradition of Winslow Homer, Thomas Eakins, and Edward Hopper. *Jumping Boy* (1979), a drawing study for a painting, represents a typical work from this period in its exploration of the deep, self-conscious aspects of suburban life. Often Fischl's sexual subject matter is visually shocking in that he depicts bedroom scenes and other private activities. Fischl explores highly complex feelings of erotic embarrassment, human guilt, and remorse.

WORK IN EXHIBITION

Jumping Boy, 1979
Graphite on paper, 34 3/4" x 23"

Katarina Fritsch

Born in 1956 in Essen, West Germany, Katarina Fritsch studied

until 1977 at the Kunstakademie in Dusseldorf. She completed post-graduate work under Professor Fritz Schwegler in 1981. Fritsch first exhibited in 1984 at the Galerie Rudiger Schottle in Munich, West Germany. In 1987 she had her first one-woman museum show at the Kaiser Wilhelm Museum in Krefeld, West Germany. In 1991 she will have her first museum show in the United States at the DIA Art Foundation in New York. Fritsch, a sculptor, derives her inspiration from her personal dreams, imagination, and fantasies. The careful and time-consuming production of her objects reflects her quest for the transformation of the perfect images of her imagination into the imperfect real world. Although in theory her objects (*Yellow Madonna*, *Black Cat*, *Bag of Coins*, *Silk Hankerchief*, *Brain*) are unlimited multiples, their very exactitude precludes any possibility for endless production. Each of the prototypes were several years in the making and her process of casting prevents the possibility that a large number of objects will be produced from any given mold. In 1987, for the Skulptur Projekte Münster, Fritsch produced a life-size *Yellow Madonna*, which she placed on the Salzstrasse in the town of Münster, West Germany. The public display of the *Madonna* so disturbed the Münster population that they destroyed the object within days of its installation. The almost day-glow yellow of the *Madonna*, forced a visual confrontation with this symbol and caused a variety of contradictory emotional responses. Fritsch's rejection of stereotyped relationships between the figure and its symbolic connotations cause her works to upset expectations and conditioned responses.

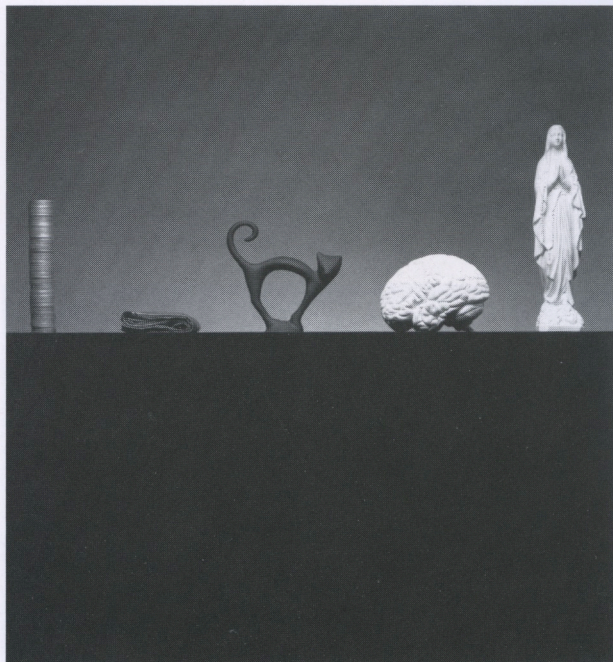
WORK IN EXHIBITION

Yellow Madonna, *Coins*, *Silk Hankerchief*, *Black Cat*, *Brain*, dates variable multiples, dimensions variable

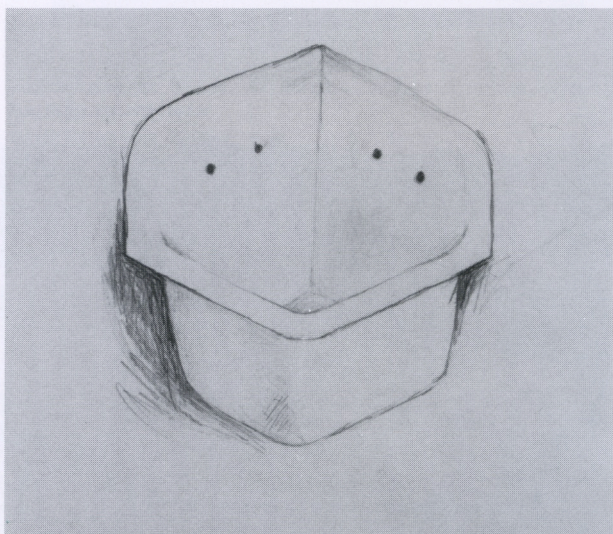
Robert Gober

Born in 1954 in Wallingford, Connecticut, Robert Gober attended the Tyler School of Art in Rome from 1973-1974 and received his B.A. in 1976 from Middlebury College in Vermont. Gober had his first one-person exhibition in 1984 at the Paula Cooper Gallery in New York, a show titled "Slides of a Changing Painting." In 1988 Gober had his first museum show at the Art Institute of Chicago and in 1990 held a retrospective-type exhibit at the Museum Boymans-van Beuningen in Rotterdam and at the Kunsthalle in Bern, Switzerland. Robert Gober used easily obtainable and familiar materials to construct non-functional objects such as sinks, playpens, beds, chairs, urinals, etc. While appearing to be what they are, these objects simultaneously upset expectations about their use and function as inherent contradictions are rampant—sinks without faucets, playpens slanted in odd directions, or drains without plumbing. These objects draw the viewers' attention back to Gober's earlier personal experience with objects. The works depict childhood memories that have been reintroduced and manipulated in his current experiences. Gober's work reveals his own personal fears and obsessions, emotions that can embarrass and expose him.

Untitled (Corner Sink Drawing) (1984), although lacking some of the physicality of the sinks themselves, still reveals the fragile anthropomorphic quality of Gober's work. The work displays the latent human characteristics found in many of Gober's non-functional objects. The open sink portals devoid of faucets or the drains without plumbing apparatus appear to be waiting for an



Katarina Fritsch, *Yellow Madonna*, *Coins*, *Silk Hankerchief*, *Black Cat*, *Brain*



Robert Gober, *Untitled (Corner Sink Drawing)*