

ARTISTS SPACE

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Mike Henderson - Paintings and Drawings
Beverly Semmes - A Sculptural Installation

Selected by Connie Butler

April 19 - May 19, 1990

Opening Reception: Thursday April 19, 6-8pm

Gallery Hours: Tuesday - Saturday, 11-6pm

Clocks, globes, weather maps, crossword puzzles and the written word are some of the images that Mike Henderson incorporates into his paintings and drawings. He engages in a visual investigation of the conventions surrounding these images.

In his exhibition at Artists Space, Mike Henderson uses these seemingly unrelated cultural symbols in puzzling combination. In some cases he executes these images on three-dimensional constructions, calling attention to the artificial nature of this surface-oriented subject matter. With all of the objects represented in the paintings and drawings Henderson's humorous approach exaggerates the difference between the illusion of the surface and the physical and emotional situations that they actually represent.

In Short Story II, 1989, the three dimensional construction takes the form of an open book, suggesting that our relationship to the large, generic, institutional clock painted in the center of the open pages is as tenuous as is our relationship to language. In Dumb Book, 1988 a small open book offers this message, "little letters that say nothing".

Mike Henderson attempts to arrest our passivity, to politely guide us into an awareness of our looming contemporary problems by using familiar imagery. In Map V, (The Black Sea), 1989 he includes not only that sea but a map of all of the waterways of the world. In one corner are the words "The Black Sea", in the opposite corner, an institutional clock. In Puzzle, 1989, he combines his globe and clock paintings on either side of a crossword puzzle. He poses a conceptual relationship to be "solved" by the viewer.

Beverly Semmes' sculptural installations represent in an elegant but humorous manner our relationship to objects in our natural environment. Her oversized sculptures made of copper, aluminum, hay and chicken wire are at once beautiful and absurd.



With an obsessive attention to detail in some works, Semmes literally weaves a compelling, impenetrable surface that surrounds an implied but unseen interior. In others the viewer is offered a structure that is so entirely penetrable to the eye that it seems to exist as suspended color alone.

With a keen sense of materials Semmes constructs ill-shaped "hedges", "trees", "clouds", and "ground" that exist, together with woven photographs on the walls, as an installation. This combination locates us in a well-groomed English garden, but through the incongruities of the complex surface and the size and shape of the sculptures, relocates us in an alienating, surreal environment.

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