

ARTISTS SPACE

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PROJECT: ERAWA-ERA WAS

An installation by Ralph Paquin and Ann Stoddard

Organized by Dana Friis-Hansen, MIT List Visual Arts Center
April 19 - May 19, 1990

Opening reception: Thursday April 19, 6-8pm
Gallery hours: Tuesday - Saturday, 11-6

ERAWA-ERA WAS is a collaborative multi-media installation of phantasmagoric "tableau vivants" introducing four characters of the enigmatic "Modern Man" struggling to adapt in an everlasting world of technology, information saturation and natural phenomena.

Ann Stoddard and Ralph Paquin are Massachusetts artists who, in 1984, were involved in ACME (Art Communication and Media Experiments), a group committed to collaborative media events and environments. In 1985 the two of them began collaborating on their own multi-media spectacles.

In 1988, during a six-week residency at the MIT List Visual Arts Center, Paquin and Stoddard created a multi levelled environment/installation for live and electronically-programmed performance entitled BEGIN - BOTTLED TIME - IN - A FOURTH WALL - RADIO - R-E-M-O-T-E - ALUMINUM SEEDS - IN A MIND'S EYE - SECRET PATH - FIND...... This installation included a tide of electronic garbage on an island of refuse, a ramshackle shed, a steel elevator tower, a moving billboard, paper fish circling the ceiling and a dreamy cloud of arms which descended on a steel track.

ERAWA-ERA WAS, Paquin and Stoddard's first major project in New York City, continues the artists' strategy of "inventing characters and animated allegorical vignettes--spectacles of creation, destruction and transcendence--to make some sense of the wonders and terrors of our world"(Friis-Hansen). The installation at Artists Space will combine both industrial and hand-made objects to make up surreal landscapes of suspended "earth skins", metallic quilts, thickets of thornbushes and flocks of cloud-like "Furies" overhead.

ERAWA-ERA WAS, when spelled backwards, might rhetorically ask, Was Our Era Aware? The Artists Space installation is part one of an epic work in progress. Included in the installation are electronically programmed performance elements in the form of a 12 minute cycle of lighting effects, sounds, text and film



loops. Some of the characters introduced are the "persistant swimmer", a film loop of a mechanical swimmer interrupted by a mysterious toxic spill and the "Interpreter", a monumental mechanized head, interjecting a wistful monologue. Paquin and Stoddard's concern for our future and the future of our children resonates throughout the work as they draw on contemporary dilemmas and the marvels of nature and science to comment on the state of our era.

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Artists Space is a member of the National Association of Artists Organizations (NAAO) and Media Alliance.