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New York can still boast more art activity than anywhere else, but anyone looking for innovative work had better steer clear of the commercial galleries, for in the current recession most dealers are playing an extremely safe game. As a result, younger artists look to the publically funded spaces for support, or improvise and find their own means for getting the work out into some kind of public space. Unfortunately, little attention is paid any of this by the press and the audience tends to remain a small group of artists and friends who live in the neighborhood. A wider public, one interested in new art, never hears of anything until it receives the sanction of the establishment.

By simply reporting on a cross-section of these low-key events, this column will attempt to attract the attention of that wider public. At the same time, a record of things as they happen may help bring the range of current interests into focus. In the long run it ought to be possible to build a set of critical distinctions out of this information. Should that happen, this publication will have served its purpose.

NEW YORK

SEPTEMBER

Artists Space

Janelle Reiring asked Christopher D'Arcangelo, Louis Lawler, Adrian Piper and Cindy Sherman to participate in a show designed to address the issue of how art is presented and, as a result, how it is seen and understood. D'Arcangelo sought an obtrusive invisibility. He had his name removed from the announcement, left the

pages ascribed to him in the catalogue blank, and pasted three copies of a short statement about art world politics to the gallery walls. Lawler borrowed a small nineteenth century oil painting of a race-horse, hung it on a glass-panelled partition, and lit it with two theatrical spots aggressively turned out towards the main gallery. In a back room Piper hung a black and white photograph of a group of grim faced black men. While looking at this the viewer was harranged by a taped monologue in which Piper, with some humour, rehearsed the thoughts of a posit-ed art enthusiast facing such an installation.

Instead of examining the packaging of the art objects, Sherman dealt with the packaging of the sales and support staff, infusing her analysis with a blend of nostalgia and fantasy. She was present in the gallery every day, dressed up in Fifties clothes, complete with wigs and accessories, so as to look like any one of those starlets who fill the offices and shops of old movies. She also makes photographic pieces in which her imaginary characters act out obscure melodramas in motel rooms, dark corridors and beach porches. In these pieces Sherman pursues the personal as well as the public implications of the conventional structures of presentation and representation.



Cindy Sherman, *Untitled*, 1978.

NOVEMBER

Artists Space

A show in which two artists shared an interest in obsessive work lightened by a touch of whimsy. Richards Jarden joins matches together by wrapping them in cellophane, weaving the resultant translucent strips into table top sized mats. By adding small amounts of colour he inserts images and letters which shimmer on the verge of illegibility. In the smaller gallery Donald Lipski arranged thousands of tiny objects, dangling them from pins stuck in to the wall. The objects ranged from paper clips to little plastic toys and were simply left to gather dust.

DECEMBER

Artists Space

Everyday life in America is Michael Smith's source material and subject matter. His latest performance, *Down in the Rec Room*, uses a mixture of vaudeville and television to evoke the emptiness of suburban life. Smith is a natural clown whose delivery is both hilarious and poignant. He is also a great dancer, and when he mimics that odd mixture of innocence and lewdness in Donny and Marie's disco dancing he approaches brilliance.



Michael Smith, *Down in the Rec Room*, 1978.