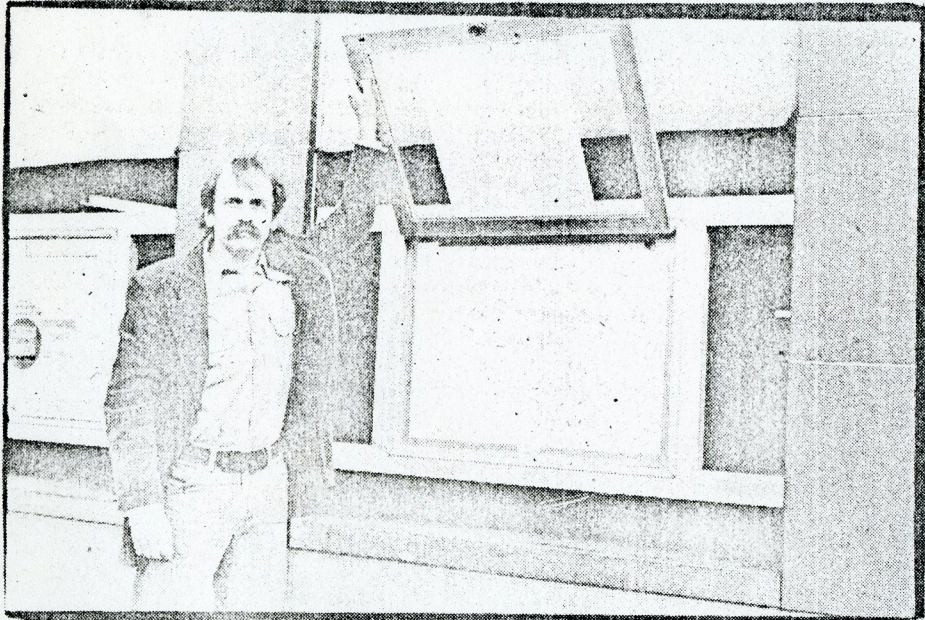


Artful Dodger

Gerald Marzorati



Photos by Sarah Longoria

Dennis Adams and one of the ten display cases — the city giveth, and the city taketh away

Hearst Heist

At dusk on Monday last, Dennis Adams, a 30-year-old conceptual artist, left his Tribeca loft and headed uptown. His destination, as on two other evenings during the previous week, was a city-owned parking garage on Eighth Av. between 53 and 54 Sts. The trek had nothing to do with automobiles — he was heading north to check on an artwork he had installed one week earlier (for a two-

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ganizers meet and work out an agreement to share the space. They set up a schedule whereby the two would-be curators of the cases would rotate shows every month or so and refurbish the display windows — paint the boxes and install new locks. They would choose all the work, Jazwinski's only stipulation being that no nudes be shown. "We asked him if he [Jazwinski] wanted to review the work beforehand," Gildav said last week. "He said, 'No, just no nudes.'"

It was Gildav, naturally, whom Adams first called last Monday night to tell him the works were gone and that, as unbelievable as it then seemed to him, the city had confiscated the pieces. "I felt raped," Adams said.

Gildav assured Adams he would look into it. The next morning he phoned up Jazwinski and, unable to reach him, left a message. By the middle of the afternoon, though, he'd received confirmation that a crew of city workmen had been ordered to remove the pieces Monday afternoon. No, the parking bureau spokesman didn't know why, but he'd "look into it." The 10 photos and pieces of text, if he was interested, were on their way from a city warehouse in Queens to the garage. Adams was to pick them up. No, they could not be reinstalled.

The artwork, Adams later explained, grew out of his ongoing interest in the Patty Hearst case, an interest manifest in the dozens of pictures of the kidnapped coed tacked up around his loft.

Subject in Common

"It was a narrative piece," he said of the work. "It dealt with the breakdown of language." Each of the five pieces of text, mounted on white sheets of Plexiglas, "could relate to the picture positioned to the left of it or the picture on the right," creating a subtle incongruity for the viewer, since the pictures shared little with each other save their common subject, Patty Hearst. The photos and a good

Returning to his desk, he phoned up mayoral press aide Mark Marchese, an old crony from his days as a reporter in City Hall's room 9. Sleeper had a question to ask of his old colleague: "Had these things been authorized?"

It didn't take Marchese long to find out. He rang up another press aide, Victor Ross, in the Bureau of Parking. "I just wanted it checked out, that's it," Marchese says of his role in the affair.

Just what happened next is known only to the keepers of the Parking Bureau's myriad files. As of Friday the bureau wasn't even ready to acknowledge they'd received an outside call about the matter. Three days after fielding Marchese's call Ross was still arguing that the works had been hauled away because the artist had no authorization to use the cases. (This despite the fact that more than six shows had been mounted previous to Adams'.)

Not a Sponsor

A day later Ross shifted gears. "Yes, he was authorized," he said. But, he now argued, Adams' posters advertising the show "incorrectly" identified the Dept. of Transportation (under which the parking bureau falls) as a sponsor of the show. "We weren't a sponsor," he said. "We just gave Gildav the use of the cases." Thomas J. Guthrie, Deputy Commissioner of Parking, had ordered the works removed, he said. Neither story, he acknowledged, explained why the city was refusing to re-install the works.

Asked on Friday if he had been phoned by a City Hall aide who had been contacted by a spokesman for the Hearst family, Ross replied: "Look, there was no censorship involved."

Arthur Jazwinski, for his part, dodged calls for most of the week. By Friday Ross, the press aide, was saying: "I don't think he's coming back. He's in the hospital now, and then he's taking a job in Birmingham, Alabama."

The 10 pieces Dennis Adams picked up at the parking garage last Tuesday after-

At dusk on Monday last, Dennis Adams, a 30-year-old conceptual artist, left his Tribeca loft and headed uptown. His destination, as on two other evenings during the previous week, was a city-owned parking garage on Eighth Av. between 53 and 54 Sts. The trek had nothing to do with automobiles — he was heading north to check on an artwork he had installed one week earlier (for a two-week run) along the Eighth Av. side of the drab five-story structure.

As he shuffled through the midtown rush-hour throngs, he thought about how his "10-window" work entitled *Patty Hearst: A Second Reading* (five large photographs of Patty Hearst and as many journalistic texts, each placed in a separate glass display case) "really worked well" at this hour of the day, the backlit eye-level cases catching the commuters' attention as they hustled by. He would take a quick look for himself — maybe check the locks, "see if everything was okay" — and then head back downtown.

They were gone. The cases were empty. "I couldn't believe it," Adams, an Iowan with a farmboy build, remembers thinking as he turned the corner and spotted the empty cases. "All the locks had been drilled out with power equipment — I could see the metal shavings. The pieces were gone."

Thus began — at least by New York art

world standards — a wild and woolly tale, complete with oddball intrigues, bureaucratic bunglings and a host of less than cultured (but ever so artful) characters, including lead players from City Hall and the powerful Hearst family.

Adams, not surprisingly, gave little thought to cloak-and-dagger stuff — he went to call the cops. Before he found a phone, however, he bumped into a parking attendant leaving his tiny office in the southwest corner of the garage. Adams asked: Did you see anyone fooling around with the display cases? The attendant turned away. Adams, puzzled, pressed him. Finally, after several exchanges, the attendant offered: "A crew from the city came. They took them."

Allocated Space

Adams didn't get it. The city, as he understood it, had provided him with the space for his project. Earlier this year his friend Mark Gildav, a painter, had approached him about doing a work for the display cases which, Gildav told him, had been allocated to him and to an artists organization by the Bureau of Parking. Last spring Gildav and Ken Kaczmarzck, the organizer of Bobsband, an artists exhibit-organizing group, had written (unbeknownst to one another) to Arthur Jazwinski, chief of the parking bureau, suggesting that the 10-window cases, then empty, be used for art exhibitions.

Jazwinski, in turn, suggested the two or

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Marvin Sleeper, public relations officer for the Hearst Corp., made it part of his job to know plenty about Patty Hearst. Along with their scores of publications, the Hearsts recently have been churning out a load of copy calling for the release of the publishing empire heiress. As Sleeper returned from lunch last Monday afternoon (the Hearst offices are a few blocks north of the parking garage), he knew that the photographs and statements about her that caught his eye — especially the famous bank holdup still of Patty as Tania — were not what his boss wanted thousands of New Yorkers to peruse.

"Patty with a gun," he later said. "I couldn't understand what that was doing on a city building."

If he couldn't follow the way the city reasoned, he surely knew how it worked.

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The 10 pieces Dennis Adams picked up at the parking garage last Tuesday afternoon had been left in a pile and damaged. The mounted photos were dog-eared, ripped and bent; the Plexiglas-mounted texts cracked and chipped. Adams had spent his own money on the works, subsidized only by a \$125 grant from the Committee for the Visual Arts, the downtown group that runs Artists' Space.

But "it's not the work I'm worried about, it's the ideas," he says. "This is an apolitical work. I just didn't like the way it was conducted — Gestapo-like."

Gildav and a spokesman for the Committee for the Visual Arts agree that the affair was an unfortunate one, peppering their interviews with words like "confiscation" and "censorship." Adams says he may look into suing the city over the matter.

Says Cultural Commissioner Henry Geldzahler, whose jurisdiction over city-sponsored art doesn't extend to this program: "The city should keep a prudent distance from judging the content of art work it shows." ●

Patty arrives in handcuffs, an unidentified shoulder in right foreground, someone reading on 8th Avenue



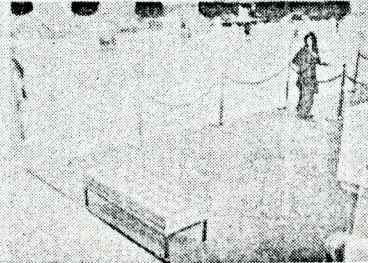
A motor vehicle, three unidentified females wearing black and white uniforms, Patty holding unidentified object below waist



Long, dark hair on her shoulders, Patty, second from right, poses with classmates at the time of her confirmation.



Long, dark hair on her shoulders, she looks to the left, a gun silhouetted against landscape.



Patty looks at SIA member on far left; turns, second SIA member enters, Attorney looks at Patty, covering the right side of his face with photograph.

