

Artists Space

COMMITTEE FOR THE VISUAL ARTS, INC.
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PICTURES

The name given to this show, which featured the work of Troy Brauntuch, Jack Goldstein, Sherrie Levine, Robert Longo, and Philip Smith, was "Pictures." To anyone looking at the pictures by these artists, it was apparent that they had nothing to do with the current notion of representation, usually designating naturalism. Their pictures were about the suspension of pictures, which exist as worldly filters, that are not transparent to meaning, resisting analysis, yet remain as lures to a kind of evocative suggestion.

Sherrie Levine exhibited a series of 36 drawings of silhouettes of Washington, Lincoln, Kennedy, a woman, and a couple, in tempera on graph paper, entitled "Sons and Lovers" (1976-77). They constitute an anti-narrative. There is a flurry of activity, the profiles of the presidents change in scale, there are opposing contrasts of color; the last drawings in the sequence introduce the woman and the couple. Levine's series represent the idea of a certain kind of freedom in their shunning of formal or narrative constraints, of the Duchampian alternative, wit, a freedom which uses its undercurrent of alienation, independent of the possibility of public comprehension. The inability of the casual viewer to simply read the pictures was heightened by Troy Braun-

tuch's reproduction of three drawings by Hitler on empty fields of red, each of whose placement created a desolate elegance. Brauntuch had also silkscreened a photograph of a Greek sculpture of Venus, her disembodied apparition on the field echoing her allusive glance and hard beauty.

An important source for this use of the field as a means for understanding representation was film. Robert Longo presented slabs of aluminum, embedded with figures in relief. His figures were isolated from film stills such as Penn's *Missouri Breaks* and Fassbinder's *American Soldier*. Jack Goldstein not only suspended photographic figures, falling, in fields of color, but also in his films used a purged environment to render solitary activities. Philip Smith exhibited large oil pastel drawings of disparate figures, mostly family types, cut out like silhouettes on a dark background. In the works of these artists one's field of vision is saturated with the appearances of images whose domain is not three-dimensional space, but the mind. In "Pictures," the illusions don't reside in representational techniques, but in the intellectual assumptions that are brought to them. (Artists Space, September 24-October 29)

Sherrie
Levine,
Sons &
Lovers,
1976-77.

Fluorescent
tempera
on graph
paper, 22 x
28".

Courtesy
Artists
Space.



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