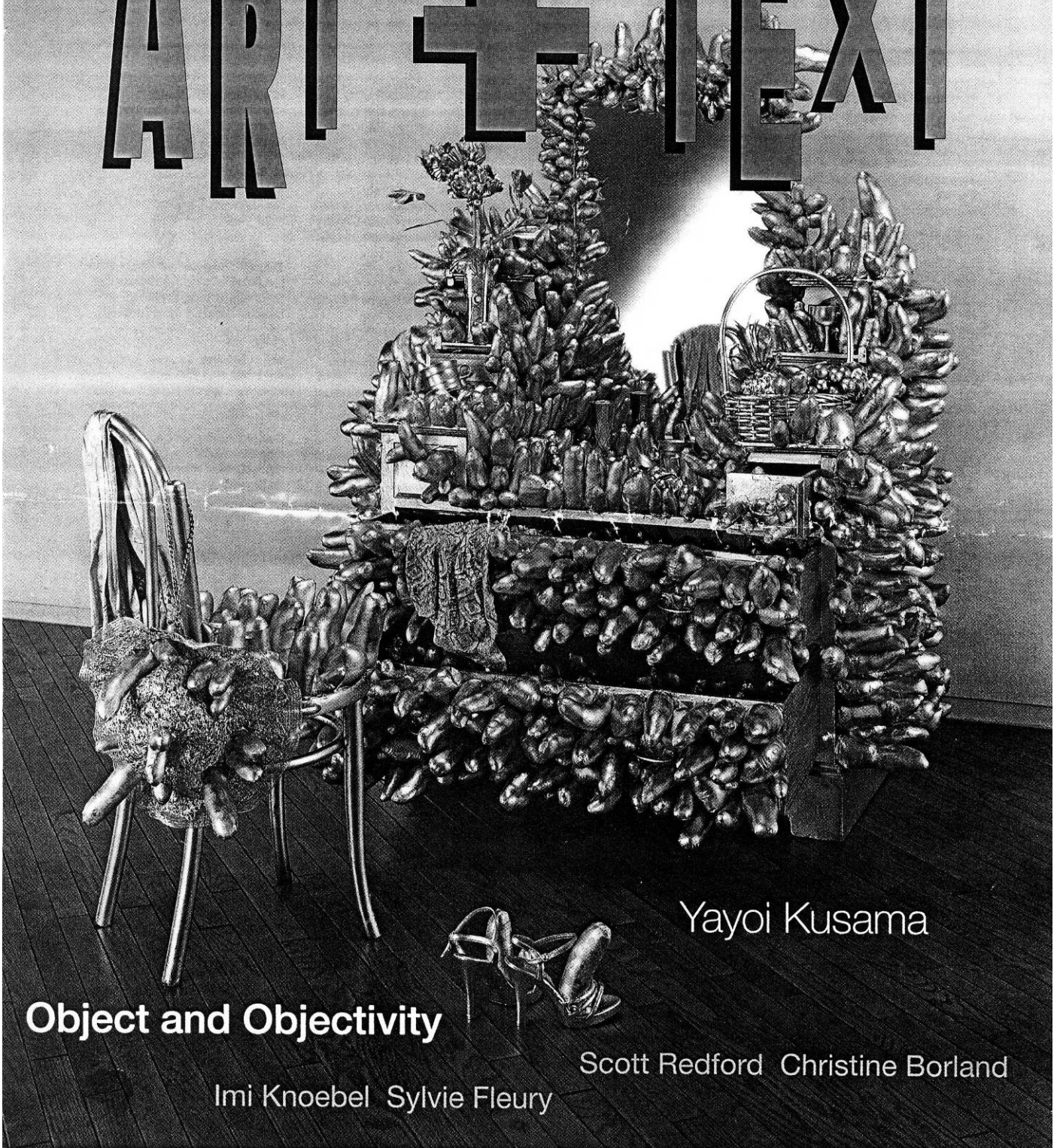


ART + TEXT



Yayoi Kusama

Object and Objectivity

Imi Knoebel Sylvie Fleury

Scott Redford Christine Borland

They are also laden with references to New Zealand culture and history, and evocative titling further complicates interpretation. In *Acts II*, spades, rifles, hammers, and other tools of settlement and warfare, make an ironically biblical comment on the instruments of imperialism. *Mimi* (Maori for "urine") is the title of Parekowhai's kit version of Duchamp's *Fountain*. These different connections pose questions about the relationship of history to art and education—who sets the rules and curriculum, and who abides by them?

In one of the show's more contentious works, *Kiss the Baby Goodbye*, Parekowhai literally "recasts" borrowed iconography. A mammoth cast-steel kit version of Gordon Walters's 1969 *koru*-based painting *Kahukura* dominates the show. A seemingly unresolvable controversy continues to surround Walters's use of the *koru* motif in the sixties and seventies. However, Parekowhai's re-appropriation of Walters's painting renders ironic, and transcends, the terms of this controversy.

WYSTAN CURNOW

"QUEER SPACE"

Storefront for Art and Architecture, New York
June 18 - July 30, 1994.

"Queer Space," an exhibition at the Storefront for Art and Architecture, brings to mind that cliché—or was it a speedreading tip?—about staring at the edges to catch the middle. This unwieldy amalgam of fourteen projects, accompanying panel discussions, installation design, video, performance, and site-specificity constitutes one of the most confounding and provocative exhibitions mounted this season. Precariously scheduled in bracketing the Stonewall 25 anniversary, the exhibition was really about marginality, and proposed, as did the commemoration itself, alternative ways of reading urban space. The negotiation of the built environment around questions of power was central to the organizers, a curatorial team of Beatriz Colomina, Dennis Dollens, Cindi Patton, Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick, Mark Wigley, and Hugh Urbach. The exhibition and accompanying programs were the culmination of

discussions, faxes, and text about the fluid and multivalent definitions of otherness as they deflect upon and are legible in the built environment.

The dizzying array of subjects, sites, and media covered by this exhibition of primarily theoretical projects, is a sign of a rich dialogue that has emerged out of the fields of architecture, feminist and queer theory, with, and no less importantly, public art and urban and cultural critique. The fact that this complex project, and hence the Storefront

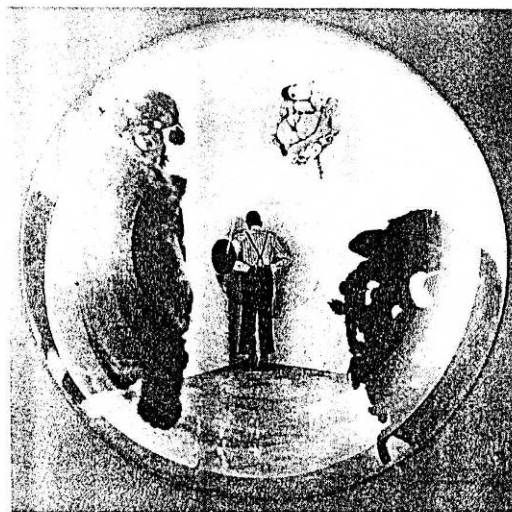
exhibition, suffered from highlighting largely white, middle-class investigations, follows then as a redundancy within the field of architecture.

The projects represented did manage to steer the ambitious viewer from the edges to the invisible and inevitable crux. That is, "all space is queer," and it may or may not be contingent upon whoever is inhabiting it. The projects ranged in degree of theoretical rigor. Michelle Fornabai's investigation of cult architecture structured around the nowhere space of the James Dean crash site was particularly vivid in its intention and obfuscating in its articulation. *The Walls Speak: Passage from Queer Places*, a collaboration by Robert Ransick and Blake Goble, was a bedroom/passage installation exploring the psychological space of queer experience.

All projects were somehow generous. Particularly disarming in its simplicity was *Who We Are and How We Live* by Benjamin Gianni and Mark Robbins, in which 3x5 snapshots of domestic interiors, the collective response to a classified ad seeking the gay and lesbian community of Columbus, Ohio, were accompanied by personal texts evidencing the banality of their suburban and urban domestic equations. The potentiality for empowerment through self-representation and the de-eroticization of queerness were

editions of ten, so it is far more affordable than the originals whose image it encases. Indeed, the exhibition would seem to suggest that an image of an art work, whether projected in slide form in a darkened gallery or enclosed in a crystal bubble, might be more desirable than the art work itself. Lawler does not appear to be engaged with discourses of surrogacy or simulation here so much as the phantasmatic nature of commodities. The wit of her chosen vehicle, suggesting a collection in miniature for the solitary viewer, does not disguise the ruthlessness with which everything can be made an object of and for aesthetic consumption. Vicarious possession is still possession.

INGRID PERIZ



Louise Lawler, *Untitled (Martin & Mike)*, 1992



REPOhistory Artist Collective, poster, 1994

important and underarticulated subtexts of the exhibition.

'Open' 'Space', a project by Canadians Martha Judge and Gordon Brent Ingram, also explored the problematized relationship of gays and lesbians to public space. Erotic lesbian imagery montaged on empty public monuments were both formally restrained and in-your-face. Ingram's exploration of the discontinuity of memory through a photographic exploitation of personally charged, fetishized sites—public and private—was poignant as it was monumental. REPOhistory, a New York-based collective, also addressed the queering of history through the reclamation of sites of activism and proactivity. A series of pink

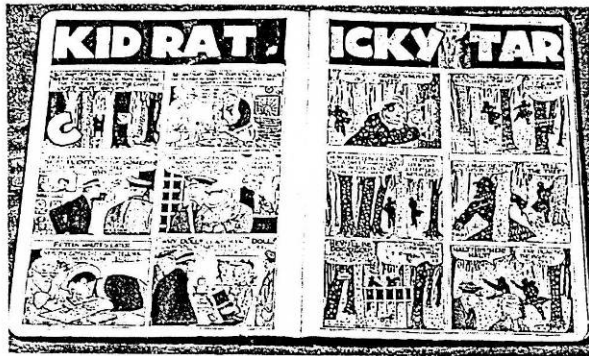
triangular signs named sites throughout the city, outing the disappeared histories of gays and lesbians whose personal lives were politicized. Adam Kuby also activated the public space of the exhibition. An altered park bench, itself a site of struggle, was placed outside the exhibition space, aligning the histories of gay men with African American civil rights. Artist Maura Sheehan's cross-dressed, gilt-lined dumpster claimed the street outside the gallery for one day. The creation of a hybrid, third entity, existing as a nonbinary model for multivalence and fluidity in the margins of the city street, suggested newly queer territory.

Interestingly, no "real" architecture was in evidence.

While generally rejecting the "violence of categories," the curatorial bias against realizable structures was a stated move away from a perceived reliance on notions of occupation. This strategy lent greater weight to a project titled *Housewarming* by Jurgen Mayer, and the overall installation design by Paul Lewis, Peter Pelsinski, and Marc Tsurumaki which encompassed three stools, a bookcase and a table. Operating at several levels, Mayer's application of green-to-yellow temperature-sensitive coatings to contact elements in the gallery successfully balanced the textual presence in the space and inserted a tactility into the otherwise disembodied viewing experience. The title, *Warm*,

which has negative connotations in German, further encumbered the reading of Mayer's alteration. The installation design subtly interrogated the binary basement/public space of the gallery, a "queer space and one which is more straightened out." Using a system of cables to anchor furniture below the floor, the spatial setup of the gallery was interrogated. The slippage required in experiencing such space as queered inevitably empowered the viewer to negotiate the potential of architecture. After all, "neither queer nor space are neutral terms."

CONNIE BUTLER



Jess, *Tricky Cad Case I*, 1954

JESS

San Francisco Museum
of Modern Art
February 24 - April 24, 1994

The current traveling retrospective of Jess's oeuvre will introduce many people to the painting and collage of an artist often relegated to the status of a regional talent. For those examining his work for the first time, Jess's production will afford a new perspective on the use of the readymade. From 1944-46, Jess worked on the Manhattan Project to make plutonium for the atomic bomb. Still a nuclear engineer in 1949, Jess dreamt that the world

would end by 1975. He left atomic chemistry to pursue his love of art, enrolling in San Francisco's California School of Fine Arts. Initially intrigued by nonobjective painting, Jess produced haunting abstractions partially indebted to his teacher Edward Corbett's juxtaposition of dark tones with glowing color. Mysterious narratives soon emerged from Jess's abstractions, coaxed out from suggestive forms and the painter's submersion in fantastic fiction ranging from fairy tales to James Joyce.

Jess's growing commitment to the freedom of fantasy was shared by Robert Duncan, a poet involved in New York and Bay Area avant-garde circles. In

Berkeley and San Francisco, Duncan helped forge a literary renaissance shaped by Romanticism's focus on the mythic and the magical. Jess and Duncan began their domestic and artistic partnership in 1951, which lasted until Duncan's death in 1988. Together they devised a collage aesthetic that combined ancient and modern texts and images to form hermetic fantasies meant to resist confining societal directives.

Jess's engagements with the found object vary in structure. In 1952 he started "paste-ups": often large-scale collages composed of images (and sometimes text) from eighteenth- and nineteenth-century engravings, and contemporary magazines, posters, and puzzles. Jess's 1954 *Tricky Cad* series (humorously nonsensical alterations of *Dick Tracy* comics) literally demonstrates Jess's radically personal reconfigurations of public narratives. In 1959 he began "translations": copies after reproductions ranging from nineteenth-century scientific engravings to contemporary photographs, accompanied by personally significant prose or poetry excerpts and further privatized through the use of extremely thick paint, a tangible sign of the artist's physical presence. Finally in 1971, Jess

began "salvages": repainted pictures he had worked on previously, or had found in thrift shops, and which also include textual excerpts.

Jess and Duncan perceived the artist as a creator of restorative myth whose canvas or page functions as a site for personal, liberating reverie. In the creative process of constructing individual meaning from Jess's fantastic juxtaposition of readymade images, the viewer retreats into a private domain outside the public sphere which s/he cannot control. This dynamic mirrors Jess's and Duncan's own cultivation of domestic life, and demonstrates that Jess's debt to Romanticism extends beyond his interest in fanciful imagery. Like his romantic forebears, Jess celebrates the freedom of the individual and repudiates the regulated, restricted social being. Unlike his contemporaries in Europe associated with the Situationist International, Jess does not scramble readymade images and narratives as a means of political intervention. Rather than issue a direct challenge to this world, Jess's work creates a separate world for the creator and viewer to explore.

ANDREA FEESER