

RECENT HISTORY

RASHEED ARAEEN
ART IN RUINS
MICHAEL CORRIS
CRITICAL DECOR
RACHEL EVANS
SERGE KLIAVING
MARIKO MORI



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CURATED BY ART IN RUINS

THE HERBERT READ GALLERY
12 October-1 November 1991
Monday-Friday 10am-5pm
Saturday 12-5pm

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In 1989, for the D&S exhibition (Difference & Simulation) in Hamburg, the contribution of artist John Armleder was to request that a work of his exhibited two years earlier at the Kunsthalle (one of the three sites of the D&S) be re-made by students of the local art academy. It was shown in the D&S in exactly the same location, only one floor above, as it had been exhibited previously.

For "Recent History" we have selected a number of works by different artists which have recently been exhibited or disseminated in different contexts, to explore a concern with "the re-use value of art" and to reflect on the apparently limited shelf-life of contemporary art as an industry. To paraphrase Warhol, today's promotional culture attempts to consume the life of the artwork in a brief glance; whilst the academy of art, for the most part complicit in these operations, reproduces gossip as art history and fashion as the "progress" of styles.

This situation is exemplified by the obsession with the next "New Generation", an extension of the North American cult of youth; and it is worth noting that for "Recent History" we have consciously chosen four "generations" of artists working today: from Rasheed Araeen and Michael Corris (a former member of Art and Language); Art in Ruins and Serge Kliaving; to recent graduates Critical Decor and Rachel Evans; to Mariko Mori who is currently a student.

Critical Decor whose "Business as Usual" presents abstraction as decor, production as industry, contrast the glamour of fame, where Business-as-Usual becomes a trompe l'oeil to disguise the squalor of recession, and "white Eurotrash with no future". Rachel Evans, recent graduate of the Royal College of Art, was invited to be photographed for a "Hot Property" feature in Blitz magazine for which she decided to make a "self portrait/artwork" which was then disseminated through the media of instant consumption which led (amongst other things, no doubt) to its reproduction in a French porno magazine.

Mariko Mori came to England from Japan to study fashion (having herself appeared on the covers of many magazines as a model). Her recent work deals with both questions of identity, and art as fashion. Much of Rasheed Araeen's recent work consists of a critical recycling of earlier work in different configurations, reflecting on his status as an artist and the ever-changing nature of the culture industries; whilst our own "Moderne Kunst" began as a "self-portrait" press photo for the D&S exhibition, which was reproduced in a German magazine, from which we then made an edition of postcards and then enlarged life-size and re-presented as an "original" artwork.

It is not our intention with "Recent History" to reinforce a comfortable certainty concerning the status of the artwork in reaction to the commodification of the culture industries, but to dramatise this uncertainty—through the inclusion of "reproductions without originals" (Rachel Evans, Art in Ruins, Critical Decor, Mariko Mori); reproduced originals (Serge Kliaving's framed invitation card of a painting for his recent exhibition at Templon Gallery in Paris); and recycling (Rasheed Araeen, and Michael Corris who has made work concerned with the transfer "from the site of production—the studio, to the site of consumption—the gallery", and whose new work is a recycling of his published criticism re-presented as artwork).

The work included in "Recent History" concerns itself with issues of identity, history, politics and the operating system of art. Whilst most calls into question the fetishisation of the identity of the artist, Michael Corris and Serge Kliaving utilise the "authority" of the artist to refer to recent history and question more directly the contamination of art and politics, and (like all of the work) challenge the myth of the autonomy of art from economic, political and social forces. The gallery, painted in decor colours becomes a showroom—"Recent History" as theoretical suicide in our promotional culture "sans frontieres".

Art in Ruins
May 1991