

NEW WORK/NEW YORK

at the Gallery of July and August
Woodstock, New York

curated by
The New Museum
Marcia Tucker, Director

INTRODUCTION

New Work/New York is the second exhibition to be curated under the auspices of The New Museum. The New Museum, begun in January, 1977, is a not-for-profit organization formed to exhibit work and disseminate information about art and artists from 1970 on.

We intend to show works of art which have not yet gained public visibility or acceptance and to present them within a critical and scholarly context.

The New Museum's first priority is to focus on living artists and the work they make; to this end, we are providing information about lesser-known artists on a national level. We intend to move from our present office to a temporary exhibition and office space by the end of the year.

THE NEW MUSEUM

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open by appointment only

Contributions are tax-deductible

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NEW WORK/NEW YORK

While much of the work done in New York City during the past few years appears to be polemical in nature, there are many relatively unknown artists who avoid polarization around such issues as objective vs. conceptual, monumentality vs. intimacy, abstract vs. figurative, form vs content, mainstream vs. eccentric. These are artists for whom the form of the work may alter according to the demands of its content, and for whom the question of the situation of their work in an esthetic context is not relevant. Their work consequently cannot be categorized according to an outstanding formal or stylistic issue. They, and their work, remain anachronistic and idiosyncratic to the extent that neither can be polarized. This is evident in the fact that none of these artists belongs to a "school", that the work cannot be analyzed or understood in terms of a prevalent esthetic, and that each work appears as highly individualistic and resistant to interpretation. It is as though we were dealing with personalities, attitudes, and modes of behavior in each work, rather than simply with formal issues.

Marianne Stikas' paintings are made within the traditional painting format, that of the rectangular stretched canvas. This format provides a neutral foil, an arena within which sumptuous colors and evocative, animate markings vie in an activity which belongs as much to the physical gestures of the hand as to the primal language of vision. Each element in the painting--dots,dashes, drips, elliptical shapes, shadows and ghost-like contours, squiggles and smudges--seems alive and charged with its own energy and meaning. The painted elements thus become traces of violent activity, humorous nuances, luminescent forces. How far, Stikas' paintings seem to ask, can one extend the function and meaning of a mark without becoming symbolic, or literal? How is it possible to make a painting whose meaning resides not in the formal elements of which it is composed, but in the animate character and activity of those elements?

In Claudia Schwalb's work, activity is also a central focus, but it is the single, focused activity of imbalance, the loss of equilibrium. In the murky, clotted, tiny paintings that immediately preceded the series exhibited here, the physiognomy of seeing provided a viable form and subject for the work; small scale, by forcing intimacy, allowed the viewer to focus intensely, then to be thrown off guard by the lack of seductiveness in both color and form. This is

directly opposed to the usual anticipation created by miniature; we expected intimacy, which implies a certain degree of preciousness, and our expectations were defied. The new works, consisting of small round or elliptical canvases located tangentially within wood or metal elliptical "frames", have the same terse color as the earlier work, but the later canvases have still another circular form tangentially located within them, creating an imbalance within an imbalance, and a kind of three-dimensional drawing in space. The pieces seem to be in the process of shifting physically in the same way the earlier paintings appeared to shift optically.

Edward Flood's work concerns movement of a very different kind. Large, compelling projectile forms, seen in planar succession, thrust from the wall into the room. On the wall a gestural painting provides the arena from which the three-dimensional forms emerge; the shadows cast by the rounded, fin-like shapes are an active, though elusively changing, part of the piece. Flood's new work is frontal, but every movement made in relation to it causes extreme change in the illusory dialog between painting, sculpture and shadow. There is something hauntingly ephemeral about the seemingly neutral, yet optically intense, opaque color that defies the physicality of the forms themselves. Here the sculptural aspect is both planar and projectile, the paint both flat and viscous, the shadows illusionistic yet weighty, so that each element of the work seems to affirm and deny its own nature at the same time.

Jonathan Santlofer's paintings are two-part works, consisting of both a stretched and an unstretched panel, one above the other. They hover between the realm of two- and three-dimensional objects, since the configurations and areas of color disassociate themselves from substance and become qualities. The two panels relate to each other by virtue of the continuity between their color and images, rather than sharing a pictorial dimension of implied depth. The paintings are unified by form and content, but not by space, so that they become abstract visual equivalences for time and space. Time images and the color cannot be located or concretized in the manner of most pictorial elements. The paintings contain no suggestion of the hand; rather marks appear to have come into existence by themselves. The ground color has an amorphous, endless quality of space, which pushes the eye away from a resting place and forces attention to the qualities of time, gravity, velocity and energy created within the painting.

Don Dudley's pieces, which are neither painting nor sculpture, have no images at all. Whereas Santlofer's images are used in such a way as to deny their own substance, forcing attention to non-pictorial functions, Dudley's work creates rather than contains its context, by altering the space within which it is situated. The work, which consists of small homosote modular blocks, each of uniform color, has no internal variation or marking. The only variation in a finished piece is found in the color relationships between modules or a series of modules, and in the configuration itself, created as the blocks are installed in a space. Their meaning is found in an exterior rather than an interior dimension, the content beginning at the outside edges rather than within the framework of the piece. Dudley's straightforward pieces magically transform a space through subtle manipulations of color and placement. In recent years, he has minimized the means he uses to achieve poetic effect: he has made the modular elements smaller, their surfaces matte rather than reflective, their color relationships more immediate and perceptual. What is seen is simple and direct; what is felt is the delicate, intense ambience in which the content of the work resides.

Until recently, Jack Solomon painted and drew for many years within a traditional format. The new, thickly encrusted pieces shown here suggest bas-reliefs and archeological artifacts. The color is not applied color, but is physically and visually inseparable from the shape of the object. Likewise, the texture of the object is inseparable from its color and its shape. Yet even as powerfully evocative forms, they are mysterious and incomprehensible. Their overt resistance to interpretation and their tactile seductiveness create a constant state of tension in the work. It is emotionally compelling, visually disarming, and intellectually elusive.

Each of these six artists is working within a self-defined area, which shifts not according to extrinsic factors, but according to personal and individual investigations. That their work has not had wide public exposure in New York City may be in part because it is not part of an existing style or ideological mainstream. Each in his or her own intensely individual way is pursuing a dynamic vision. In the process, each is creating a unique aesthetic context out of reach of even the most current critical categories.

Marcia Tucker

EXHIBITION CHECKLIST

DON DUDLEY

Untitled, 1977
Acrylic on homosote
90" x 16"
Lent by the artist

Untitled, 1977
Watercolor on paper
23" x 29"
Lent by the artist

Untitled, 1977
Watercolor on paper
23" x 29"
Lent by the artist

EDWARD C. FLOOD

R.G., 1976
House paint and wood on wall
Dimensions variable
Lent by the artist

Untitled, 1976
Watercolor on paper
15" x 22"
Lent by the artist

Untitled, 1976
Watercolor on paper
15" x 22"
Lent by the artist

Edward C. Flood is represented by Pamela Adler Associates,
New York.

JONATHAN SANTLOFER

Stretched/Unstretched IV, 1977
Oil on canvas
Upper panel, 36" x 72" (stretched)
Lower panel, 36" x 72" (unstretched)

CHECKLIST (Cont'd.)

JONATHAN SANTLOFER

Stretched/Unstretched V, 1977

Oil on canvas

Upper panel, 12" x 33" (stretched)

Center panel, 10" x 33" (unstretched)

Lower panel, 12" x 33" (stretched)

Lent by the artist

CLAUDIA SCHWALB

Spring Board, 1977

Oil on canvas with wood frame

24" x 36" overall

Lent by the artist

Top, 1977

Oil on canvas with wood frame

17" x 24" overall

Lent by the artist

D. JACK SOLOMON

Lay-To, 1977

Mixed media

29" x 10"

Courtesy of Pamela Adler Associates, New York

Manicure, 1976

Mixed media

26" x 11"

Courtesy of Pamela Adler Associates, New York

Myron, 1977

Mixed media

8" x 32"

Courtesy of Pamela Adler Associates, New York

CHECKLIST (Cont'd.)

MARIANNE STIKAS

Untitled, 1977

Acrylic, colored pencil, and pastel on canvas

72" x 84"

Lent by the artist

Untitled, 1976

Watercolor and colored pencil on paper

22½" x 30"

Lent by the artist

Untitled, 1977

Watercolor and colored pencil on paper

22½" x 30"

Lent by the artist

