

MATERIALS MANIPULATIONS

DECEMBER 18—JANUARY 29

"People carry their landscapes with them the way travelers used to cart along their porcelain chamber pots. The stronger their sense of form the more reluctant they are to part with either."

Harold Rosenberg, *The Tradition of the New*, Horizon Press, New York, 1959.

The artists in *Materials/Manipulations* incorporate familiar objects from their immediate environment into their art. These materials are manipulated by non-studio processes, such as sewing, stringing beads, crumpling and wrapping. The textures, objects, and methods, although removed from their ordinary uses, are still recognizable to the viewer. The works chosen for this exhibition demonstrate the range of materials and methods artists are employing today.

Materials are often chosen from what is at hand. Rachel bas-Cohain recorded the characteristic stains made by different herb teas upon different papers in order to achieve the effect she seeks. Alan Sonfist arranged leaves collected on his weekly trips to the countryside.

Everything Americans buy is super-packaged with the expectation that the wrappings be discarded. From what was destined to be dropped into the fullest trash cans in the world, Robert Rauschenberg selected paper bags and corrugated cartons; Thomas Lanigan Schmidt chose Reynolds Wrap and Saran wrap; and Arman encapsulated food packaging. Often the original function of the objects is denied. Robert Rauschenberg's paper bags stand empty on the floor as do his cartons on the wall. Christo's couch is no longer meant to be sat on. Raphael Ferrer's kayak hangs in space far removed from water. Alan Shield's snow sleds are meant to be seen indoors. Arman's dollar bills can not be exchanged for merchandise. Denial of function makes us see the objects anew.

Autobiography is inherent in these works. Raphael Ferrer spent his childhood on the island of Puerto Rico, and the pieces in this exhibition relate to the sea: the kayak, the oar, and the navigational maps. Alan Sonfist's "Collection Bags" are a diary of his emotional states at certain moments in his life. Thomas Lanigan Schmidt builds an altar, reflecting the strong influence of his Catholic background.

Although these works include familiar material objects, they impart a sense of mystery. Where is the exotic land mass that Raphael Ferrer has superimposed upon a navigational map? What really exists under Christo's wrappings or under Arman's imbedding materials?

Commonplace materials manipulated by simple processes emerge as art. The work is autobiographical yet ironically mirrors contemporary society. Whether it be packaging materials, elements from nature or everyday household items, a reincarnation takes place. From the ordinary is created the extraordinary.

CATALOGUE

Artist's statements were provided by the artist, exhibition or other source.

Measurements were taken from the permanent collection of the
WHITNEY MUSEUM OF AMERICAN ART

Measurement given in inches

Height provided with dimensions in parentheses

ARMAN

DEL TAs 1969

Troies in polyester resin 48x48x4

Courtesy of Andrew Crispo Gallery

GARBAGE NEW YORK 1969

Garbage in polyester resin 40'x20x4'

Courtesy of Andrew Crispo Gallery

VENUS 1970

Monny in polyester resin, 35x16x10

Courtesy of Andrew Crispo Gallery

MILES DID IT 1974

Musical instruments in polyester resin, 36x16x4

Courtesy of Andrew Crispo Gallery

Artist's statement in Henry Martin, *Arman*, Harry Abrams

I didn't discover the principle of *accumulation*, it discovered me. It has always been obvious that society feeds its sense of security with a pack rat instinct demonstrated in its window displays, its assembly lines, its garbage piles. As a witness of my society, I have always been very much involved in the pseudobiological cycle of production, consumption, and destruction. And for a long time, I have been anquished by the fact that one of its most conspicuous material results is the flooding of our world with junk and rejected odd objects.

RACHEL BAS COHAIN

ODE TO CECILE ABISH 1974

Tea stains on Japanese paper and sheetrock 36x36x36, 3 pieces

Lent by the artist

TEA WALL WITH JARS 1974

Herb teas, paper, sheetrock, photographs, 84x48x36

Lent by the artist

TWO SIDED TEA WALL 1974

Herb teas, paper, plaster, sheetrock, 72x102x12

Lent by the artist

My present work is concerned with the record of an event, left behind after the event. For example in one series, a cord is hung along a prepared sheetrock wall form (papered or plastered), the upper end of the string is in a jar of tea. A spread tea stain remains to record the event even when the wick no longer wicks the liquid and the stain is dry.

CHRISTO

WRAPPEO COUCH (PROJECT) 1973

Fabric, twine, charcoal, colored pencil, 22x30

Lent by the artist

WRAPPEO COUCH 1973

Couch, rope, plastic, fabric, 79x39x40

Lent by the artist

PACKAGE ON HAND TRUCK (PROJECT) 1973

Charcoal, colored pencil, pencil 22x30

Lent by the artist

PACKAGE ON HAND TRUCK 1973

Handtruck, fabric, rope, 52x30x31

WMAA, Gift of Mr. and Mrs. Albrecht Saafffield

David Bourdon, *Christo*, Harry N. Abrams, Inc., New York, 1973

Christo's art suggests the latent functions and mysteries of all packages. Wrapping plays on basic fears and desires, even if we know for a certainty the identity of the contents, the sight of a shroud or bundle is enough to elicit a nagging doubt about the exact purpose of the wrapping. We tend to regard wrapped objects as either lifeless or, at best, dormant. A wrapped object is removed from use, but this does not preclude a future existence and consequently our expectations are aroused.

RAFAEL FERRER

MAOAGASCAR 1972

Crayon on navigational chart, 44x60

Courtesy of Nancy Hoffman Gallery

KAYAK 1973

Corrugated steel, rawhide, skin, glue, paint, wood, 19½x14x120

Courtesy of Nancy Hoffman Gallery

CAPTAIN'S OAR 1974

Synthetic polymer on wood, 84x5½x1½

Courtesy of Nancy Hoffman Gallery

Artist's statement in Rafael Ferrer exhibition catalogue, Institute of Contemporary Art, University of Pennsylvania

I think my work is very personal. Friends have said that I keep revealing myself in it. I think it's probably true. It's not conscious, but it's pleasurable to find that you're putting your life together again. Some time ago I found my life as a drummer was an entity apart from my life as an artist that things didn't relate. Now, everything seems to be pulling itself together, including my memories of childhood in Puerto Rico—the galvanized corrugated steel, a liking for certain primitive kinds of architecture that are organic, in the sense that they grow daily in terms of the space in the slums of Puerto Rico, rather than being designed totally by an architect.

ROBERT RAUSCHENBERG

OLYMPIC/LAOY BORDEN 1971

Cardboard and plywood, 78x47½x12½

Lent by the artist

UNTITLED 1973

Cardboard, canvas, leather, 57x76

Lent by the artist

UNTITLED 1974

Mustin, paper bags, 19x84x16

Courtesy of Castelli Gallery

For over five years I have deliberately used every opportunity with my work to create a focus on world problems, local atrocities and in some rare instances celebrate men's accomplishments. I have strained in collecting influences to bring about a more realistic relationship between artist, science, and business, in a world that is risking annihilation for the sake of a buck. It is impossible to have progress without conscience. In doing this, I have had to concentrate almost exclusively on gloom and filter joy, investigate cruelty and suspect all changes. This is my responsibility, but it is exhausting.

After a while, a desire built up in me to work in a material of waste and softness. Something yielding with its only message a collection of lines imprinted like a friendly joke. A silent discussion of their history exposed by their new shapes. Labored commonly with happiness.

BOXES

ALAN SARET

FLEXIBLE NETWORK SCULPTURE 1970

Ribbon, raffia, rubber, vinyl coated copper wire, 48x48x48

Lent by the artist

FLEXIBLE NETWORK SCULPTURE 1974

Copper and galvanized wire, 48x48x48

Lent by the artist

I am often asked what I work in

I answer that all materials are one material which is the spirit from which they rise

THOMAS LANIGAN SCHMIOT

PANIS ANGELICUS 1973

Seran wrap, reynolds wrap, scotch tape, magic marker, staples, 120x72x30

Collection of Horace and Hollis Solomon

ART/RELIGION FAITH AND FEELING, SEEING AND BELIEVING

Art should be to religion, what religion should be to art, like the intuitional exchange of give and take which leads either love to marriage or marriage to love and or vice versa.

This depends quite naturally upon the consciences and/or basic aesthetic philosophies of the reciprocal individuals, i.e. artist(s) and spectator(s). The response varies in accordance with politico-socio-economic factors as well as cultural and subcultural taboos and restrictions. Either adding to or subtracting from the conjugal or communitive intuitional success of the work in question.

Or as my favorite writer, Mona Robson says, "Timing is everything."

ALAN SHIELDS

AJAX 1972-74

Synthetic polymer on cotton belting, wood, beads, 96x96 diameter

Courtesy of Paula Cooper Gallery

HOLE IN THE WALL 1974

Synthetic polymer on snow sand 23 ½ diameter x 4 ½

Courtesy of Paula Cooper Gallery

ELEPHANT WALK 1974

Synthetic polymer and beads on snow sand 23 ½ diameter x 4 ½

Courtesy of Paula Cooper Gallery

CIRCLE OF LOVE CORN 1974

Synthetic polymer on snow sand 23 ½ diameter x 4 ½

Courtesy of Paula Cooper Gallery

Artist's statement in *Alan Shields*, Saatchi & Saatchi, Lawrence Co. Inc., April 1974

I think that a work of art is a very thing that is made to demands of the viewer and the artist.

ALAN SONFIST

COLLECTION BAGS 1949-73

Velvet and assorted natural objects, 7 bags, 6x6

Lent by the artist

TREE TRACINGS: ANDOVER TREES 1951-73

Natural resin and lampblack on canvas, 78x120

Lent by the artist

LEAF PAINTINGS 1952-73

Leaves and encaustic on paper, 40x30, 3 pieces

Lent by the artist

My body is my museum, it's my history. It collects and absorbs observations—interactions. It is the deciphering of these recordings that I project into the outside world. My boundaries define the world of Art. I clarify my own common boundaries in relationship to the outside whether it be the room I exist in, the country I exist in, the universe I exist in. By adding other awarenesses, I am constantly redefining my boundaries and projecting these awarenesses into my art.

This exhibition has been organized by Catherine Coleman, New College-Hofstra University; Janet Kardon, University of Pennsylvania; Linda Kent, University of California at Los Angeles; Robert Lamb, City University of New York; Abigail Turner, Sarah Lawrence College; and Faythe Weaver, Ohio State University, students in the Whitney Museum's Independent Study Program.

The Downtown Branch Museum is operated under the direction of David Hupert, Head of the Whitney Museum's Education Department. The administrative coordinator is Toba Tucker. The Participants in the Independent Study Program this semester, in addition to the above, are: Ruth Cummings, Boston University; Hillary Johnson, Cornell University; Michael Leja, Swarthmore College; and Charles Wright, Princeton University.

The Downtown Branch of the Whitney Museum of American Art, located in the Uris Building at 55 Water Street, is supported by the business community of lower Manhattan. The Independent Study Program is supported by the Helena Rubinstein Foundation, the Andrew W. Mellon Foundation, and the National Endowment for the Arts. The Museum is open 11-3 Monday through Friday. Admission is free.

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