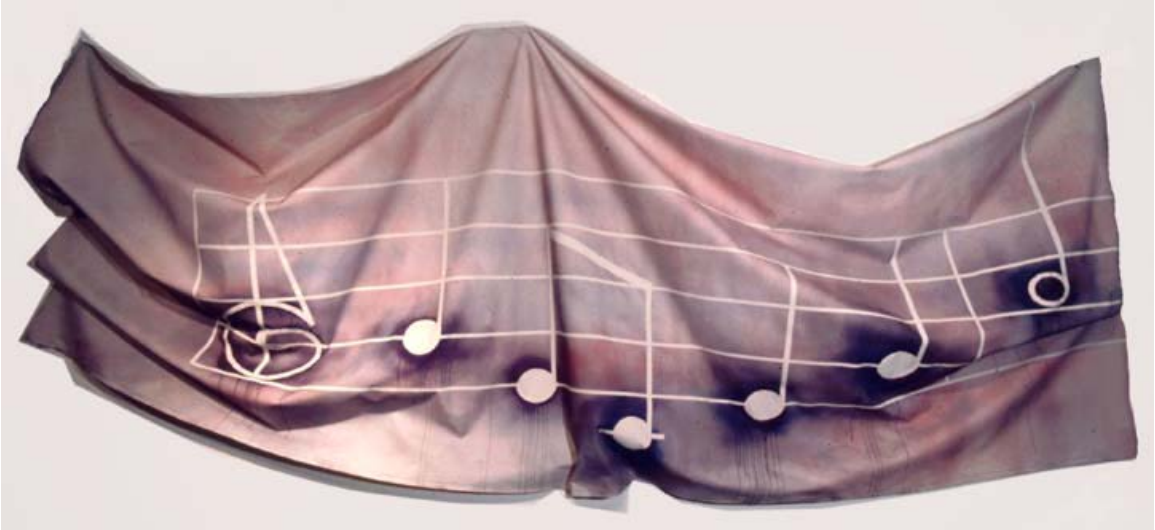
ROOTS OF THE 1969 WOODSTOCK FESTIVAL

Nina Yankowitz Recalls Woodstock's Group 212



December 30th, 2010 by Julia blelock

A 1968 Draped Painting by Nina Yankowitz: "Oh Say Can you See?"
The Woodstock Festival of 1969 was officially named the Woodstock Music & Art Fair. According to Michael Lang in *Roots of the 1969 Woodstock Festival*, the inclusion of "art" in the festival name was a nod to Woodstock, NY's status as an art colony—beginning in the early 1900s with Byrdcliffe and the Maverick Festivals, and later with organizations like Group 212. Recently I spoke by phone with Nina Yankowitz of nyartprojects about her days at Group 212. A 1969 Fine Arts graduate of the School of Visual Arts, Yankowitz doesn't recall where she first heard about the fusion collective, but she says that word about it was on the street in NYC's Greenwich Village. Nina loved Group 212's fearless collaborative spirit, and remembers that she first installed her draped paintings on the trees in the surrounding Group 212 landscape. She says that Group 212's propulsive and adventurous style of mixing music, painting, sculpture, photography, electronic sounds, poetry, and performance art opened her up to embrace new technologies and emerging artistic disciplines. For example, she met Ken Werner, a musician, at 212 in the summer of 1968, and she recalls their collaboration. Werner made an audio rendition to realize Nina's desire to include sound that would mimic the musical score, *Oh Say Can You See*, on her draped canvas. This embodied the concept of hearing and *seeing* sounds as they unfolded from her draped paintings. The installation was exhibited later that year at Kornblee Gallery in New York City.

Nina Yankowitz (in Foreground) Dancing at Group 212

Yankowitz remembers running to catch the bus to Greenwich Village from South Orange Junior High School in New Jersey. She would sneak out of school to attend performances by Dylan and Hugh Romney at the Cafe Wha in the Village, returning without her delinquency having been discovered. Her later Woodstock experience put her in touch with many new and exciting musicians and artistic collaborators. She met people like Sunny Murray, Dave Burrell, and Chuck Santon—an artist who spent most of his time at Robert Wilson's Byrdcliffe, devoted to experimental workshops/productions. She also met musician Juma Sultan, and it was he who encouraged Nina and a friend to dance while Juma, Archie Shepp, Sunny Murray, and Dave Burrell were jamming. She remembers the music director wanting to "pull the cane around our necks!" Juma also took her to Byrdcliffe to meet Bob Dylan, and they, with others from the community, attended a Sound-Out at Pan Copeland's farm. Yankowitz recalls people jumping through the fences, lying on the grass and watching acts like Tim Hardin and Ritchie Havens.

One detail eludes Nina about her time at Group 212. She remembers a friend there who created marvelous performances based upon the myth of Icarus. He also made beautiful photographs with his box camera.

~Weston Blelock

STANZE A PROGETTUALITÀ POSTUMA

Questa sezione comprende progetti, anche nella forma di schizzi, suggerimenti, oppure di partiture, disegni, programmi. Ciascuno dei progetti non ha ancora avuto una realizzazione, per motivi tecnici e/o concettuali. La maggior parte di essi sono inediti.

This section includes projects, also in the form of sketches, suggestions, or scores, drawings, programmes. Each one of the projects has not yet been realized, for technical and/or conceptual reasons. Most of them are unpublished.

CLAUDIO AMBROSINI (Italia)
JACKI APPLE (USA)
EUGENIA BALCELLS (Spagna)
DAVID BEHRMAN-PAUL DE MARINIS (USA)
STEVEN BERKOWITZ (USA)
MARIO BERTONCINI (Italia)
JOEP BERTRAMS (Olanda)
K.P. BREHMER (Germania)
MICHAEL BREWSTER (USA)
LEIF BRUSH (USA)
JOHN CAGE-JOHN FULLEMANN (USA)
NICOLAS COLLINS (USA)
ALVIN CURRAN (USA)
DAL BOSCO-VARESCO (Italia)
HUGH DAVIES (Inghilterra)
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RICHARD FELCIANO (USA)
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BILL FONTANA (USA)
DIETER FROESE (Germania)
JOHN FURNIVAL (Inghilterra)
RAYMOND GERVAIS (Canada)
JOCHEN GERZ (Germania)
MALCOLM GOLDSTEIN (USA)
WILLIAM HELLERMAN (USA)
KAY HINES (USA)
MARTIN DAVORIN JAGODIC (Francia)
HOWARD JONES (USA)
JULIUS (Germania)
HERWIG KEMPINGER-GOGO KHATIBI (Austria- Iran)
TAKEHISA KOSUGI (Giappone)
CHRISTINA KUBISCH (Germania)
RONALD KUIVILA (USA)
ANNEA LOCKWOOD (Nuova Zelanda)
ALVIN LUCIER (USA)
JACKSON MAC LOW (USA)
PIERRE MARIETAN (Svizzera)
TOM MARIONI (USA)
ALBERT MAYR (Italia)
GIANNI MELOTTI (Italia)
ROBERT MORAN (USA)
DAVIDE MOSCONI (Italia)
MAURIZIO NANNUCCI (Italia)
MAX NEUHAUS (USA)
PAULINE OLIVEROS (USA)
HANS OTTE (Germania)
JACK OX (USA)
CHARLEMAGNE PALESTINE (USA)
WALTER PRATI-WILMA BACCHESCHI (Italia)
TERRY RILEY (USA)
F.M. RUPRECHTER (Austria)
SARKIS (Turchia)
ALAN SCARRITT (USA)
GIANCARLO SCHIAFFINI-LORENZO TAIUTI (Italia)
DIETER SCHNEBEL (Germania)
URS PETER SCHNEIDER (Svizzera)
JILL SCOTT (Australia)
JACQUES SERRANO (Francia)
PAOLO «SILVER» SILVESTRI (Italia)
KARLHEINZ STOCKHAUSEN (Germania)
AKIO SUZUKI (Giappone)
ROBERTO TARONI (Italia)
NINA YANKOWITZ (USA)

N.B. Laddove le illustrazioni sono sprovviste della didascalia, si intende che il progetto è riprodotto nella sua interezza.

N.B. Wherever the illustrations are not provided with any indication, it is intended that the project is reproduced in its entirety.

NINA YANKOWITZ

Questo lavoro si basa sulla pittura, sui testi filmici e sulle partiture sonore, come espressioni di forma.
Pannelli dipinti, aventi per tema suoni vocali, descriveranno vari scenari sonori e verranno appesi alla parete a diverse altezze. I pannelli tentano di rivolgersi allo spettatore giungendo, attraverso diverse aree del corpo, alla sua percezione. Ciascun pannello avrà contemporaneamente il proprio testo audio che parlerà con le voci multiple che sentiamo dentro di noi durante una qualsiasi azione. Queste voci multiple saranno rappresentate visualmente dal tono, dal colore e dalla chiave musicale.
Ad esempio, un pannello strutturato visivamente per penetrare il corpo dello spettatore all'altezza del ginocchio avrà simultaneamente sei bande vocali. Lo scenario che creerò sia visivamente che con gli audiotapes si delinea come tentativo di provare le sensazioni create da suoni visivi e vocali, profondi e risonanti. Il testo audio sarà composto di tre scenari differenti e simultanei con tema il ginocchio. Una voce – veloce, dura, bassa, *staccato* – dice: «Li piglio per i ginocchi». Nello stesso tempo si sentirà un'altra voce ampia, lunga e ondulante: «La pelle del ginocchio può essere morbida e...». E ancora una voce dai toni decisi ma bruschi e concisi dirà: «Il ginocchio è la zona (segue la definizione del vocabolario)...». Le altre tre bande trasmetteranno assieme i testi delle prime tre, imitando attraverso un sistema di contrappunto, i suoni di queste voci differenti.
Un'altro esempio è un pannello che entra nello spettatore attraverso le labbra. Questo pannello potrebbe servirsi dell'applicazione di colore in modo altamente cosmetico. Allo stesso tempo le voci, sia in modo letterale che imitando questi suoni vocali, raggiungeranno una proiezione lunga, dolce, ampia, ondulante e languida.
In base allo spazio disponibile per l'installazione, ogni singolo scenario, progettato per quel particolare spazio, potrà funzionare come una scena individuale di un'unica sceneggiatura.

This work deals with issues of painting, filmic texts and sound scorings, as embodiment of form.
Painted panels, all painted with sounds of voices as their theme, will depict various scenarios of sound and will be hung at varied wall heights. The panels will attempt to address the viewer by entering his or her perception through different areas of the body. At the same time, each panel will have its own audio text that will speak with the multiple voices we hear within ourselves during any particular act. These multiple voices will be represented visually through pitch, color and key.
For example, a panel that is visually structured to enter the viewer's body at knee level will have six simultaneous voice tracks. The scenario that I create both visually and with audio tapes will be determined in an attempt to experience deep, resonant visual and vocal sounds. The audio text will have three varied and simultaneous scenarios of and about the knees. One voice- fast, hard, low-piched, staccato - will say: «I'll get 'em in the knees». Simultaneously, another voice will say in a long, undulating, sweeping tongue: «The skin of the knees can be soft and...» Still another, a third, voice can be heard saying in short, choppy but firm tones: «Knees are the area (A dictionary definition follows)...» The other three tracks will run simultaneously with the text(s) of the first three tracks, mimicking in a counterpoint system the sounds of these various voices.
Another example may be a panel that is designed to enter the viewer through the lips. This panel will perhaps make extremely cosmetic use of color application. At the same time the voices, both literally and by their mimickery of these vocal sounds, will achieve a long, sweeping, soft, undulating and languorous projection.
Depending upon the installation space, each individual scenario, designed for that particular space, can function as an individual scene within an overall script.

P R E S S R E L E A S E For Immediate Release

AMERICA HOUSE CENSORS WOMEN ARTISTS; CANCELS EXHIBITION IN WEST BERLIN

America House, Berlin, a U.S. government sponsored cultural center, has cancelled a scheduled exhibition of works by 47 leading American women artists. The cancellation came after 30 of the participating artists requested that statements expressing their views on the war in Vietnam be displayed alongside their works during the exhibition period. A majority of the statements strongly condemned American policy in Indochina.

The exhibition was originally shown at the Kunsthaus in Hamburg April 14 - May 14 and was organized by Sybille Niester, president of GEDOK, a German feminist artist organization, founded by Kathe Kollwitz.

A general statement, reading

> We, American women artists participating in this exhibition, are outraged at the inhuman war the U.S. government is waging against the people in Viet Nam, Laos and Cambodia. We can exhibit in America House in Berlin only if this statement is prominently displayed along with our work. We are willing to show in this building in the spirit of cultural cooperation between the German and American people. We are part of the international cultural and artistic community which stands for peace and against America's war in Indochina.

was signed by Cecile Abish, Alice Adams, Pat Adams, Lynda Benglis, Blythe Bohnen, Maude Boltz, Mary Frank, Nancy Graves, Joyce Kozloff, Jeanne Miles, Mary Miss, Louise Nevelson, Howardena Pindell, Sylvia Sleigh, Joan Snyder, Nancy Spero, May Stevens, Stella Waitzkin, Barbara Zucker.

Individual statements were signed by Lilly Brody, Annick du Charme, Agnes Denes, Martha Edelheit, Ronnie Elliot, Buffie Johnson, Lila Katzen, Kiki Kogelnik, Lil Picard, Hannah Wilke, Nina Yankowitz.

The cancelled exhibition was scheduled to open in America House, Berlin on June 15, and was then to travel to America House, Munich.

For further information call (212) 226-5304 or 226-2977

THE NEW YORK TIMES, SUNDAY, DECEMBER 5, 1971

Cheops Would Approve

By JAMES R. MELLOW

AT 59, Tony Smith is one of the most impressive of contemporary sculptors. Originally an architect, designer and painter (he worked for a time with Frank Lloyd Wright), Smith began producing sculpture relatively late in his career. The large mock-up structures derived from geometric forms and constructed of plywood painted black, which Smith began exhibiting in the mid-sixties, however, clearly established him as an important figure in American art, an artist with a talent for sculpture that was monumental in scale and environmental in its ambitions.

The Museum of Modern Art is currently showing a large-scale indoor sculpture which Smith designed expressly for the museum's ground-floor gallery fronting 53d Street. Titled "81 More," it is comprised of a low triangular-shaped pedestal whose measurements are governed by a basic triangular module —the module slightly over four feet per side—its surface scored and subdivided into the 81 triangles from which the sculpture derives its name. Atop this, 15 tetrahedral forms, again based on the same module, have been positioned in a rigorously prescribed order. The sculpture is painted earthy red rather than Smith's usual black. (The color, according to the sculptor, relates to the red in certain paintings by the Mexican muralist Orozco.) Although originally intended for the indoor site at the Modern, Smith now envisions the piece as being the scale model (one-fifth the size) of a possible environmental sculpture for an airport.

"81 More" is so inherently rational, so rigorously disciplined in its forms that it leaves one with a profound sense of the ideal relationship that can obtain between geometry and art. There is no technological mystique involved—the mathematics of the piece are relatively simple and straightforward—but the geometry provides a kind of faultless system which makes the forms of the work "compose" perfectly from every vantage point.

One has to make the effort to visualize the sculpture in its intended scale—a spacious plaza with its pyramid-like forms stretching down vistas of broken light and shadow, a kind of surreal Egyptian dream-scape. Smith's inspiration for the sculpture—and for some recent projects shown in drawings—is an archeological site closer to home, however: the modular architecture of the Pyramids of the Sun and Moon in Teotihuacán, Mexico. In any event, it is visually striking as a sculpture and would be awesome as an architectural environment. Less wayward in its forms than some of Smith's earlier pieces, it provides a handsome example of that unusual combination of strictly disciplined forms and romantic associations with archaic sites that seems to be one of the remarkable features of Smith's talent.

NASSOS DAPHNIS

A similar rage for order and purity of form marks the exhibition of modular paintings by the veteran geometric abstractionist Nassos Daphnis now on view at the Castelli Gallery, 4 East 77th Street. (Daphnis's screenprints are being shown concurrently downstairs at Castelli Graphics.) The most successful modular series here, I think, is based on a hexagonally shaped canvas unit subdivided into wedges of bright color (two reds, blue, yellow, black and white), the color sequence strictly maintained in each unit. The modular sections are joined together to create quite different overall configurations, the largest —a series of interlocking star-shapes, open at their centers—measuring approximately 9 feet high by 19 feet in width.

The formal variety that Daphnis achieves in these paintings, both with the external format and the internal structuring of the patterns, is stunning. A second series, shaped from a modular rhomboid in a narrower range of colors, is somewhat less effective—the basic form is not so adaptable. But both series display a craftsmanship that is impeccable and conceptual ideas that are brought to a high order of perfection. The exhibition, I think, is one of Daphnis's strongest to date. Like Smith's sculpture, it serves to remind one that in an imperfect world, a radically "pure" art remains a kind of ultimate romance.

NINA YANKOWITZ

The paintings of Nina Yankowitz, who is having her second one-man show at the Kornblee Gallery, 58 East 79th Street, present an entirely different order of experience. Miss Yankowitz first paints or spray-paints her canvases in usually soft, dusty colors or pale stripes. Then, without benefit of conventional wooden supports, the painting is tastefully draped and stapled to the wall. The result is something more like a decorative wall hanging or drapery, relating the work to the kind of unusual modern tapestries one sees nowadays rather than conventional easel painting.

As outlandish as this type of work might sound, there is something seductive about it. The most effective piece in the show is a 9-foot-high painting of pleated canvas in mauve-pink, fancifully draped, somewhat feminine—a painting *en déshabille*, as it were. Less successful is a stitched and pleated canvas that looks a bit too much like an elegant curtain left to gather dust in an abandoned house. The pale, ghostly colors are, one suspects, necessary; anything brighter would tend to make the work look too much like bolts of drapery fabric. Still the most interesting feature of the work is the manner in which the artist manages to hold the ground between old-fashioned easel painting and some new species of handicraft.

Given the queer fate of easel painting in recent years —canvases have been splattered, punctured, shredded, shot at, twisted into every conceivable shape—there is no reason why an artist shouldn't attempt to pleat and drape his pictures. On the other hand, Miss Yankowitz's present work doesn't quite offer convincing enough reasons why anyone should. At the moment, her paintings seem to fall, a bit too modishly, into the bright-idea category.

ARTFORUM Feb. 1972

NINA YANKOWITZ, Kornblee Gallery; SAM GILLIAM, Museum of Modern Art;

Clearly, NINA YANKOWITZ shares the acute sensibilities of the younger generation of New York artists — one is tempted to say, of the generation of the School of Visual Arts' artists — a sensibility which, in a short time, three years at most, has been subject to, in Yankowitz' case, the purification of the devices she came upon and claimed for her own while still a student there. These devices — non-stretcher supported canvas, peculiar methods of joining, sprayed color, and Expressionist maculation — if not entirely immediate to the corridors and studios of SVA were also the issues being argued in the galleries from 1968 on, issues which continue in her work although, to the vast improvement of that work, she has relinquished the extraneous notes of an abstract illusionism.

Granting art today as possibly being the objectification of a pictorial/sculptural sensibility, a concession I only begrudgingly make, then the essential loveliness of Yankowitz' work is beyond contest, although the devices of her art seem to me to be outmoded. Enlarging her eccentric Constructivist postulates to now include pleating, folding, and puckering, her wall cloths present a kind of drapery not divorced from the procedures and effects of complex curtain manufacture, Austrian shades for example. It is intriguing that Yankowitz can still convince us of her ambitiousness while employing her Constructivist ploys ornamentally rather than structurally. The Olitski-like flushes and exhilarations remain in her work although they are now keyed darkly, so that the convention of paint as light or atmosphere which comes to us from the early '60s, is only tenuously alluded to. In certain works in which these curtains are splayed or banded to the wall, one sees that Yankowitz is capable of real eccentricity but her lack of aggressiveness indicates that she remains on a sill which, once crossed, will bring her beyond mere stylistic hold.

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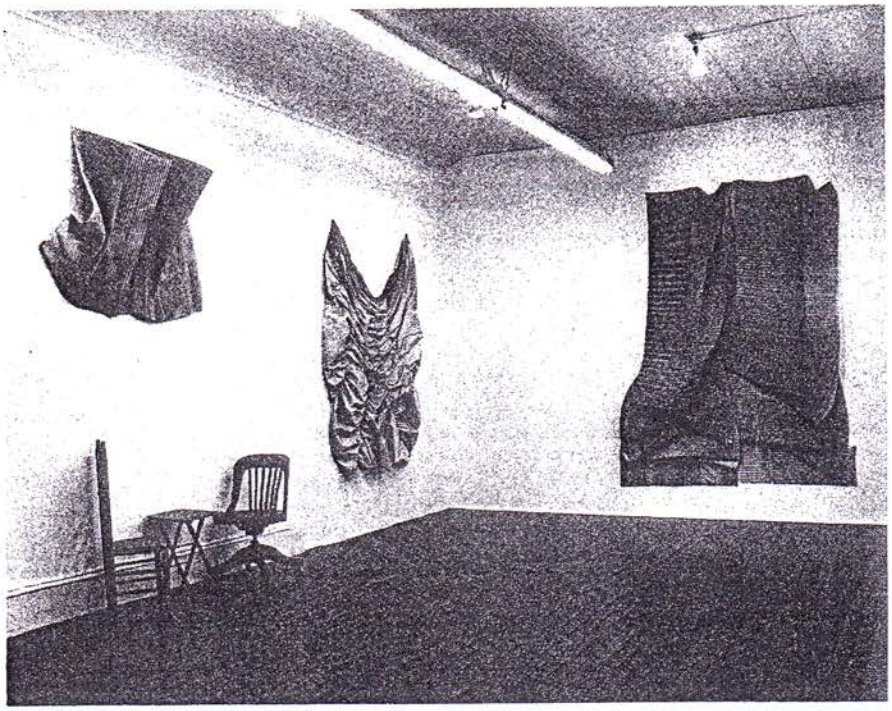
These remarks are apposite to the draped and speckled color paintings, SAM GILLIAM's project for the smaller downstairs exhibition rooms at the Museum of Modern Art which have become, since this past summer, perhaps the museum's most interesting exhibition halls, what with Mel Bochner following Keith Sonnier and Gilliam now following Bochner in this space. I note the architectural problem presented by these rooms because each of the artists has attempted to answer in some way the architectural riddle posed by them, solutions which have been reported on at length in *Artforum*.

Gilliam has made a kind of snaking bunting or twisted banner sequence for the corridor. The generally baroque configuration of his work with its reliance on knotting and large tying indicates that Gilliam's solution is the one most immediate to conception of the architecture of the room which functions (in relation to his eccentric splashed over Constructivism) as a container or spatial frame for the artists' extremely inherited artistic syntax — the painting as stage set or decor. See the work of the Berman brothers.

In the front chamber Gilliam has set up a few "real" architectural elements to support these drop cloths of fat field painting: wooden panels, a thick wooden rod. Again one sees that these new elements are placed there as a means of supporting the drapery.

What is invalid in Gilliam's work is that fustian operatic effects are superficially couched in the terms of audacious modernity. Oddly, it is not modernity which is betrayed but baroque sensibility which, after all, has been the only authentic note of the numerous thin episodes of Gilliam's many museum-sponsored appearances these last two years.

—ROBERT PINCUS-WITTEN



Nina Yankowitz, installation view, Kornblee Gallery, 1971.

ARTFORUM DECEMBER 1972

ROSENQUIST AND SAMARAS

THE OBSESSIVE IMAGE AND POST-MINIMALISM

ROBERT PINCUS-WITTEN

During the Minimalist phase of the art of the last decade sculptural form tended towards a simple expression of planar shapes. Often, when projected spatially, such forms satisfied an architectural condition while answering a pictorial ambition. In this way, painting, sculpture, and architecture tended to coalesce. It is the work of Frank Stella more than any other painter that provides the paradigm.

Until about 1968 painting was assumed to be an enterprise which was executed on a canvas surface, a surface stretched or tautly supported. In many instances, this requirement of a hard surface was met by employing a smooth panel or, occasionally, a wall. Subsequently, painting gradually lost its exclusively drum-taut nature. Just as the Minimalists questioned what constituted a composition (often answering this query in terms of unitary monochromatic images), so the canvas support changed and became a more casual appendage of the wall. At length, even the wall itself received the direct application of a pencil line or a pastel marking. Sol LeWitt is an example of the latter and Sam Gilliam and Nina Yankowitz of the former. Similarly, the brushstroke normally on the surface of canvas could now be regarded as freed from this traditional locus. It grew into autonomous elements often consisting of eccentric substances, such as neon, aerated plastic foams, rope, earth, rags, and various gelatinous materials, especially as seen in the work of Keith Sonnier, Bruce Nauman, Robert Morris, Richard Serra, Robert Smithson, Joseph Beuys, and the late Eva Hesse.

NINA YANKOWITZ's (Kornblee, *Nov. 20-Dec. 9*) pleated spray paintings show a concern, as art writer Lucille Naimer has noted, for the potential of canvas as a material. Her canvasses tumble off the wall into irregular shapes, shapes which are derived from different processes—sewing, steam pleating or folding. Yankowitz's fascination for certain aspects of clothes is incorporated into her latest work. She thinks of clothes as paintings for the body. In order for her to perceive this reality as painting, she must distance herself from three dimensional objects. Yankowitz's work is perceived as painting, rather than sculptural, three dimensional objects, because the outline of the hanging image is perceived as flat. In the steam pressed canvasses, the pleated physicality of the surface becomes pictorial by creating an even surface. The pleats gradually get bigger in the areas of most draping so that they cancel out the jagged outline of the sides. As a result, one is forced to perceive the outside line as straight, pushing the whole area inside into a two dimensional plane. Nina Yankowitz has achieved a synthesis of concept and sensual intimacy with material. Her work offers a challenging and highly rewarding visual experience.

DENISE GREEN

THE NEW YORK TIMES,

Sun - April 1, 1973

By PETER SCHJELDAHL

"SOFT as Art" is a fairly deplorable grab-bag of an exhibition of art works in soft materials that is currently at the New York Cultural Center. Destined to make the rounds of museums in three other New York City boroughs, it is the second such touring show sponsored by the city's Department of Cultural Affairs. The first one, called "Outsized Drawings," was a grab-bag, too, and inferior in over-all quality to "Soft as Art," but maybe its theme was sufficiently casual, a mere pretext for a show, its unevenness was tolerable. Not so in the present case.

The use of flexible materials — cloth, rubber, vinyl, rope and whatnot—has been an important feature of some of the most original and interesting art of the past several years. It is also a still-spreading phenomenon that could do with some serious attention to its characteristic forms and most original proponents. Which is not to say that the use of soft mediums in itself constitutes a homogenous esthetic. But the very diversity of recent soft-art work would seem to guarantee an illuminating and entertaining exhibition, provided that enough curatorial rigor be involved to give the thing some minimum taste and balance.

"Soft as Art" fails for the not very complicated reasons that too much of the work in it is bad and too much good or at least representative work—by established artists whose names come readily to mind—is mysteriously absent. It fails, that is, to give a decent account of its subject. The subject remains engaging enough, however, to make one accept "Soft as Art" as the occasion for some reflection. Theme shows being rare these days in our impoverished museums, we may never get a better one.

The contemporary use of soft materials is usually traced to certain assemblages made by Robert Rauschenberg in the late 1950s. (Rauschenberg is represented at the Cultural Center by an amazingly pepless self-imitation of recent vintage.) But certainly the most significant pioneer of the mode has been Claes Oldenburg, whose flabby foodstuffs, appliances and so on still exert a powerful fascination. In Oldenburg's hands, softness takes on a peculiar poignancy, a kind of deadpan, sad-sack humor with subtle erotic undertones. Beyond their blatant jokiness, his works exploit in an understated way a psychological tendency in us to identify softness with living things, particularly with flesh.

In the late sixties, Robert Morris and a few other artists began using flexible materials in a more direct, formal, abstract way, not as conveyors of metaphor but purely as themselves. The biggest and most satisfying piece in "Soft as Art"—a new version of a work Morris did originally in 1968—comprises three huge, overlapping sheets of thick felt mounted on the wall, their ends drooping with geometric symmetry onto the floor. A collaboration, as it were, between the artist and the force of gravity, this work straightforwardly enlists the properties of felt to produce an imposing, very *physical* presence. Another fine piece in the show, by Richard Serra, achieves a similarly forceful effect even more succinctly, with a single thick sheet of vulcanized rubber propped up on the floor.

Oldenburg's visual-tactile poetry and the "Process" formalism of Morris and Serra, among others, represent two sources of inspiration for contemporary work in soft mediums. Another, more diffuse source is a widespread interest, among young artists, in craft procedures like weaving and sewing, sometimes with romantic reminiscences of primitive tribal batiks and such. This craft business is treacherous, often giving rise to an esthetic muddle in which one's only distinct impression is that the artist is indeed very deft. The imagery in such works tends to seem, if not repellently hokey, at least vaguely second-hand.

Perhaps the most problematical of soft-art styles are those closest to painting, filially related to the shaped-canvas experiments of the sixties—most of which were pretty problematical themselves. The ambition to "extend" or otherwise modify the space of painting remains a common one, and the success or failure of such ambitions is frequently a hard thing to judge. The most attractive works in this vein at the Cultural Center are those of Nina Yankowitz—a canvas pulled into soft, bunched folds by areas of stitching and suavely spray-painted—and Al Loving—canvas torn into strips, tie-dyed and hung from the ceiling.

Interestingly, much of the best (as well as, to be fair, some of the worst) soft-art work these days is being done by women, and one feels no hesitation in calling it "feminine." The sexual orientation of Hannah Wilke's "Venus Basin" — sheets of poured, pink-pigmented latex snapped together and drooping from the wall in a sensual lotus configuration—is certainly clear enough: what's surprising is its extraordinary loveliness and sweetness. Rosemary Mayer's beautiful "Veils VII" is alike in effect, though not in imagery. Its lyrical arrangement of fragile, diaphanous veils in pink, soft green, violet and gold has, for me anyway, an air of vulnerability that is deeply touching.

There are 23 artists represented in "Soft as Art." I have mentioned those whose work seemed to me to be well above average. My list would be longer if the organizers of the exhibition — Seena Donneson of the Cultural Affairs Department and Mario Amaya of the Cultural Center—had seen fit in their wisdom to tap the talents of John Chamberlain, Richard Tuttle, Lynda Benglis, Alan Saret, Ann Wilson, Christo, Terry LaNoue, Nancy Graves and Paul Thek, to name a few very likely candidates. As it is, the character of "Soft as Art" makes it a nearly perfect specimen of bureaucratic sorties into the arts: lots of energy and not an ounce of thought. It's worth seeing, but just barely.

the village VOICE, March 29, 1973

Hung, draped, and plopped

art

by John Perreault

Sculpture is not what it used to be. Soft works, either hung, draped, or plopped, if they do not predominate, certainly infest. Soft sculpture has rapidly become a favored mode, so much so that it is no longer startling. Works are no longer of interest merely because they are soft. The shock of innovation has worn off and we are left with an almost fully-formed vocabulary. Soft sculpture was an important innovation, opening up whole areas of expressiveness for sculpture, new materials, new forms, some close to painting and some, alas, too close to craft. Sculpture no longer has to be self-supporting or of rigid materials.

How did this come about? Duchamp's 1917 "Traveller's Folding Item," a typewriter cover, was first, but there is no doubt that Oldenburg's soft versions of ordinary objects were what did it. His giant soft black-vinyl fan, currently displayed on the new ground-floor gallery installation at the Museum of Modern Art, is a superb example. Soon, too, Eva Hesse began using string and latex in her works, and more abstract uses of soft materials in sculpture or as sculpture proliferated. You might say that just as sculpture got off the pedestal into the world of blunt objects, it began to climb the wall and hang in space like shredded painting.

At this point "Soft As Art" at the New York Cultural Center is an obvious show, probably just what is called for. It indicated the recent history of soft sculpture by judicious examples, and features the work of younger artists working with soft or relaxed forms in this context. Not all the work stands up when shown along with a Robert Norris felt piece, Richard Serra's arched slab of vulcanized rubber, and Oldenburg's 1964 "Bean Slices," but enough of it does to make a visit worthwhile.

Half the artists in the show are women, which is a success for those who have been insisting upon such representation. More important from my point of view is that of the younger artists represented the women come off the best. Brenda Miller's "Abscissa," a grid of sisal of different lengths, includes a diagram that reveals the system; there is a nice contrast between the conceptual clarity of the piece and the sensuous results. Rosemary Mayer's "Veils VII," although from 1971, is one of the best pieces of hers I've seen. Nina Yankowitz's stitched and sprayed canvas wall piece offers the space of texture, close to painting, but a cloth relief. I also liked Jacquelin Winsor's "Double Circle" and Jackie Ferrara's "Four Balls II."

The installation is one of the best I've seen at the Cultural Center, which is burdened with impossible spaces originally designed for Huntington Hartford's collection of 19th-century paintings. Hannah Wilke's "Venus Basin" of pink latex and snaps, for instance, suffers because it could not be attached directly to the Cultural Center's fancy walls and had to be mounted on a board.

"Soft As Art" is sponsored by the Department of Cultural Affairs, conceived by Cultural Center Director Mario Amayo, coordinated by Seena Donneson, and will travel to various points throughout the five boroughs this coming year.

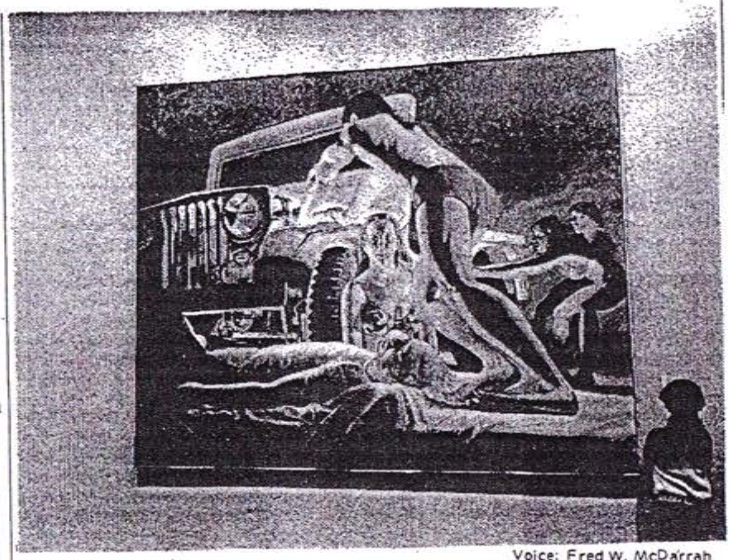
Two seasons stacked for baling

The Whitney Museum sculpture and painting Annuals, which used to alternate, have now been combined into a Biennial, the first of which is now completely installed on all five floors of the Whitney. More than 200 art works are jammed into the museum, on every floor, on almost every wall, in the lobby, in the garden (which I still think of as the Whitney moat), and, in two instances, in the stairwells. As far as I could tell there was no new art in the lavatories, the elevators, or on the roof, mercifully. It is all a bit overwhelming, even to me, even though I have already seen a great deal of it in the galleries throughout the past year. That much art in one place is bound to create some energy and some confusion.

The installation is the best that can be expected, given the situation, a large part of which no doubt involved fierce competition for space. I would not have wanted the job.

Everyone complains about these Whitney surveys and I too have done my share of complaining, but the fact is that they have always been important shows. If they did not exist, they would have to be invented. The exposure for artists is absolutely necessary, for not everyone covers the galleries religiously or thoroughly. The Whitney surveys afford a kind of condensed art season that is of great service to the general public. The opening night celebration too is a kind of art-world ritual that makes the art world really feel like the art world.

The rigid distinction between painting and sculpture no longer applies, has not applied for a long time now, and finally the Whitney has acknowledged this. Theoretically this should have made room for the increasing number of works that are both painting and sculpture, somewhere between, or neither. In the first two instances there has not been much difficulty, although now the curators do not have to worry at all about whether something is or is not painting or sculpture. It is in the latter case that there is still a lack. This time around, however, there are videotapes by Robert Morris, Joan Jonas, William Wegman, Keith Sonnier, John Baldessari. There is also Peter Campus's excellent video camera/monitor/mirror piece called "Kiva." For the first time, too, there's an architectural redesigning a section of Binghamton, New York. So things are opening up a bit. Not one example of Conceptual Art is included, however. The Whitney surveys should be descriptive, rather than proscriptive. It may be true that Conceptual Art is not the wave of the future, but like it or not, a number of artists are producing valid works along these lines and they should have been represented. Also, not one example of Body Art or of Performances is present. Ignoring these forms just will not make them go away. It might be argued that the videotapes included this year cover these categories. I think not.



Voice: Fred W. McDarrah

ALFRED LESLIE'S "THE KILLING OF FRANK O'HARA"

art

by John Perreault

It may be that some effort has been made to play down trends this year, to discourage trend-sniffing and any charge of trend-setting. When an artist's work is selected for the Whitney survey there is no denying that this is a form of validation. That's why the pressure to get into the show is so enormous. If a certain style appeared to be in the majority, that too would seem to be a validation. It is a difficult problem. Big museums have been accused of art market impact. I think that is unavoidable. But there is a difference between taste-making and commercial manipulation, a charge that cannot be leveled at the Whitney as far as I can see.

The reason I am indicating this anti-trend factor is that I see no

Continued from preceding page

other way to explain why photo-realist and new figurative painting has been so slighted this year. If, as stated, the purpose of the show is "to survey the current state of American art," then this slight is inexcusable. Perhaps the curators responsible for the selection just do not like this kind of painting, but I find it hard to believe that they can like the acres and acres of fussy color-field painting that they have included. If the truth be known, the Whitney surveys are in no way as objective as they pretend to be.

For all its faults, however, the Biennial cannot be missed by anyone interested in current American art. All of the work is professional—which is saying a lot these days—and I'd say at least half of it is "interesting," a very high percentage indeed. If any trend is visible it is the one we already know: a pluralism of styles. This will make it difficult and confusing for anyone not willing to form a personal evaluation. One can no longer say that the best work is necessarily abstract. If anything, it would seem otherwise.

Sculpture is still going strong. The Judd piece in the lobby is successful and the huge works by Ronald Bladen and Tony Smith on other floors are spectacular. Carl Andre's stairwell piece is not at all as modest as it looks. Rafael Ferrer continues to come on strong, this time with an ice, leaves, tepee, large-drawing combination in the garden. Ira Joel Haber's "August in a Brown Brick Box," although oddly placed and cramped by the installation (an almost universal complaint), looks as good as it did in his one-man show at Fischbach this year. I could go on and on: Nina Yankowitz, Brenda Miller, Louise Bourgeois, Ree Morton, Ed Shostak all have works of note. I really liked George Trakas's new piece, too, a kind of motionless Rube Goldburg construction.

Drawing Today in New York is an exhibition of the work of forty artists who are currently living and working in metropolitan New York. This project, originally conceived as a teaching exhibition for Rice University, has been increased in size and scope for traveling. Each selection is the most recent drawing available and is indicative of the artist's current concerns. While the paintings and sculpture of most of these artists are well-known nationally, the drawings are not often seen west of the Hudson.

This is not a School of New York show. In fact, many artists generally associated with that school are not included because they no longer live in the New York area. This exhibition, rather, is a broad survey of the drawings of a varied group of important New York based artists. Many of these drawings have a direct relationship to larger statements in painting and sculpture. Still other artists in the show are represented by works which are concerned with drawing as a final statement. Whether these works are studies or end products, each one can stand as an independent work of art.

Although the definition of drawing recently has been expanded to include all work on paper, we have chosen drawings which are executed, in most cases, with traditional tools: pencil, ink, crayon and pastel. The drawings in this collection demonstrate skill, invention and sophistication. We were attracted by the presence of these works and shared the immediacy of the artist's perceptions. Furthermore, we follow the artists' thought processes and appreciate their intuitions.

We are grateful for the generosity of the lenders: Victoria Barr, Grace Borgenicht Gallery, Susan Caldwell Gallery, Leo Castelli Gallery, Chuck Close, John Civitello, Christo, Cunningham Ward Inc., Arne H. Ekstrom, André Emmerich Gallery, Rosa Esman Gallery, Fischbach Gallery, Allan Frumkin Gallery, David Hare, Nancy Hoffman Gallery, Ian Hornak, Hundred Acres Gallery, Max Hutchinson Gallery, Will Insley, Ray Johnson, Sidney Janis Gallery, Knoedler Contemporary Art Gallery, Kornblee Gallery, Janie C. Lee Gallery, Marlborough Gallery, David McKee Gallery, Robert Motherwell, the Pace Gallery, Ray Parker, Alice Neel, Deborah Remington, Joan Snyder, Sperone-Westwater-Fischer Inc., John Weber Gallery, Zabriskie Gallery, and William Zierler Gallery.

A very special thanks to John Civitello, Ian Hornak, and Ray Johnson who created drawings for the exhibition.

Patricia Hamilton and
Check Boterf,
Guest Curators

NINA YANKOWITZ

Nina Yankowitz's paintings are not paintings about painting; they are paintings about sound and the language of sound—a language that speaks first to the eye and then plunges to find its deeper mark. Based on an intellectual system, the form of these paintings is determined by the function of that language and by the patterns of the particular dialogue. It would seem ironic that in a decade of almost excessive rejection, Yankowitz should likewise choose to challenge the traditional notions of painting and yet arrive full circle at its most primary and ambitious goal: the communication of what it means to be alive.

Paint Readings, or *Voices of the Eye,* as the works are aptly termed, command an immediate interest because of their singular format and the unburdened clarity of their attitude and execution. When this interest wanes because it becomes difficult to understand the reasoning behind the images, the catalogue is conveniently at hand to ensure that both the system and the nature of their experience are not misunderstood. Any involvement with painting instinctively resents and suspects the necessity for explanations; nonetheless Yankowitz takes that risk, and not without success. With or without the text the work takes time, and though given the time an understanding could be reached without its aid, a simple explanation of the system and the experience which motivates its discourse is helpful and revealing. Instead of giving away some secret, the text is a key to the door out of which pours her light. The work is decidedly difficult, the result of an entirely unique imagination: her own invention.

The paint floats on the surface suggesting a movement in space apart from that surface; animated marks loose in a spatial plane, directed *ad libitum.* They lead the movement of expansion and contraction from one frame to the next; tuned to the song of the heartbeat they record the impulses felt through the cycles of a human experience: rise and fall, pound and purr, dance and death. Yankowitz has each frame following the previous, left to right, so that they can be read in sequence in the conventional reading manner. Together they make up one image and one statement.

As the shape, size, and energy of the marks are the building bricks of this calligraphic tower, the color plays a supportive role in further defining the exterior which houses their meaning. Here the prismatic dialogue is limited to a subtle range and the emphasis is placed on the degree of value. Darks and lights cluster, setting up an aggressive linear rhythm to which the colors quietly harmonize in their three- or four-pronged processional song.

"My *Paint Readings* are done on long, horizontal, porcelain-enameled steel or wood panels which are to be read left to right like verbal texts or musical scores. This procedure is called scanning. The paint is applied with brushes and squeeze bottles of varying nozzle widths. The paint is an acrylic-based material with special additives designed to give an absolute matted finish that reflects no light. The various ways I apply these colors make the viewer's eyes read or scan from left to right, from place to place. Each panel is divided into a number of frames. Each of these frames suggests a single frame through projection, as in a filmstrip or a cranked-out roll of film. I attempt also to explore synesthesia as classically defined: the transference of one sense impression into another, such as light to music. In my work it means to see sound in color."

Yankowitz has chosen to use sound to define the physical-emotional experience, and color and paint to make that sound visual. Following the course of this communication from beginning to end to better observe its transitions, a simple outline reveals that there is first the impulse, which becomes a conscious feeling or idea and is then turned into sound which gives it character and direction; from there it becomes color and takes shape in a variety of marks, to be reinterpreted by the viewer who turns it back into sound, into feeling, into impulse. Whether this is an unnecessarily difficult route (confusing the identity of the experience by first making it an audio and then a visual end) with too much distance between the point of departure and the destination is one question. The work is certainly bound to an equation: the impulse is the variable while the constants are subjectively limited. Insert an impulse, run it through the equation, and there is a tune that makes a pattern for a painting by Nina Yankowitz.

The only objection to these paintings seems naive in view of their intense power and inherent success. The paintings glow and transcend the system now weightless in their light. The work is of high quality, integrity, and seriousness, and the sincerity and science of the system are admirable. What is questionable is the need for that system. Can the outcome of such a system ever rise above the ground floor consciousness within its present limitations? Where is the jungle of feelings and ideas, color and paint, risk and revelation, out of whose chaos is born the real paint experience, the spirit and form of the adventure called art? These pieces are alive because Yankowitz has the power to instill that force in her work. Wouldn't the result be even more vital if she denied the system, abandoned the equation, and just realized the variables. (Stefanotti, *October 6-November 3*)

Addison Parks

Nina Yankowitz, Paragraph Voicings, 1979. *Acrylic on wood panels. Courtesy Stefanotti Gallery.*

Joan Braderman, *The Heretics*, 2009, stills from a color film, 95 minutes. Left: Detail of Joyce Kozloff's *Voyages*. Right: Lucy Lippard.

"IT BECAME VERY CLEAR TO ME that everything in my life, in terms of my art, I was going to have to fight for." So says artist **Nina Yankowitz** in *The Heretics*, Joan Braderman's info-packed documentary on the groundbreaking feminist art magazine *Heresies*. The film contextualizes the hurdles faced at the dawn of second-wave feminism: Prior to the 1970s, as interviewees attest, one of the highest compliments a female artist might get from teachers and critics was that she "painted like a man." Published from 1977 to 1992, *Heresies* was produced out of (still) scrappy Lower Manhattan by a sprawling collective of artists and writers drawn together to support and explore women's art in defiance of a curatorial and historical vacuum. Herself a *Heresies* veteran, Braderman reconnects with former participants, now living around the globe, including critic Lucy Lippard; filmmaker Su Friedrich; architect Susana Torre; artists Amy Sillman, Miriam Schapiro, Mary Miss, and Cecilia Vicuna; and twenty or so others, editing together their stories into a fast-paced, thematically chaptered montage.

Upbeat and affirmative, the documentary employs copious low-tech text and graphics sequences in keeping with the style of Braderman's canonical video-lecture projects like *Joan Does Dynasty* (1986) and *Joan Sees Stars* (1992). Though *The Heretics* ends with a nod to the present with a short sequence on third-wave feminist collective publishers LTTR, it's Braderman's portrait of another era that drives the film. The stories these women tell envision a radically different moment in art-world history, one in which questions of career and market are barely mentioned, and philosophical arguments are firmly grounded in street-level politics. Braderman's take is unabashedly utopian and celebratory but looks to the past for lessons rather than nostalgia. For as artist Emma Amos notes, "There are more women artists than there are male artists. More of them will get into the best programs. And then what happens? The boys still have the edge on us."

— Ed Halter

The Heretics *screens at the Museum of Modern Art in New York, October 9–15. For more details, click here. A website devoted to the film and* Heresies *archives can be found here.*