

VALIE EXPORT, 01-04, 2001. BLACK-AND-WHITE PHOTOGRAPH, 29 1/2 X 24 1/2 IN. PHOTO: XAVIER CHALLUPNER, COURTESY KLEMENS GASSER & TANJA GRUNERT, INC., NEW YORK.

VALIE EXPORT

KLEMENS GASSER & TANJA GRUNERT, INC.

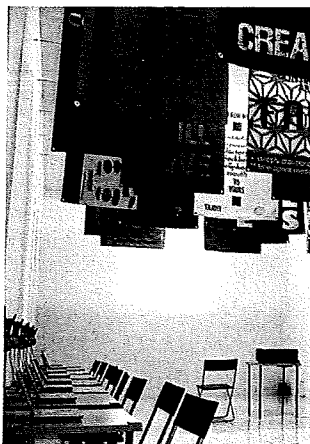
"Oil smoothes the troubled seas, but on land it causes slip-ups," VALIE EXPORT wrote in 1980. "The aim is to reassure and to humiliate. These are the lubricants society uses to bring about smooth communication, even at the price of letting countless perish." The wonderful, mystifying feminist Viennese Actionist has never been interested in the oily subtleties of "smooth communication." Not one to suffer humiliation or entertain political ambiguities, EXPORT in her recent New York solo got to the point immediately with the title "Dead People Don't Scream." The show opened with a series of photographs from 2001 contrasting women's faces with building facades—recalling her pivotal '70s-era "Body Configurations in Architecture" series—but the centerpiece was a room of video projections and sculpted heads that quickly had me cringing, thinking, and wanting to flee. Two walls flickered with projected photo stills of midcentury murders, suicides, and the dismembered. A third bore the heavy-handed projection of Duraflame-like flames. Audience to this *Faces of Death* cavalcade of images were 30 hollow upturned heads, sans faces, crafted in bronze, aluminum, or wax and perched on pedestals. As artless expressions of the show's title, the heads were mostly forgettable. Nevertheless: EXPORT's choice to forswear subtlety was the fiercest feminist act she could deploy in the '60s, when subtlety and its near sisters—silence and servitude—were demanded from women. Thus the blatant blare of EXPORT's newest work, although it initially induced a wince, seemed to harken, somewhat enviously, to a time when explicit confrontation was necessary and frequently triumphant. What the work lacked, however, was the formal elegance and inventiveness that make her early oeuvre so hard to pin down, or dismiss. —QUINN LATIMER

RENÉE GREEN

PARTICIPANT INC.

Renée Green's first solo show in New York in seven years comprised more than a dozen monitors and projections playing videos related to her continuing project Free Agent Media (FAM). Initiated in 1994, FAM encompasses interviews, travelogues, and site-specific sound installations. Her work has long investigated how creativity and pleasure can be marshaled toward greater political participation and social equality. Using various media, Green is able to find and nurture an international network of people invested in seeing dance, music, and other forms of popular culture as central elements of an oppositional politics.

One of the works in the series "Wavelinks" (1999–2002), *Activism + Sound & a Different Reality*, probes the close historic connection between music and progressive politics. In this video, Green profiles several activists in the electronic music scene who are trying to organize typically "underground" events to take place in broad daylight. Another series, "Relay" (2005), includes the video *Dream's Labor & Something More Powerful Than Skepticism* (2005), which features an extended interview with sociologist Avery Gordon, who discusses how to use a notion of commitment, as opposed to postmodernist ambivalence, to bridge creative work and political critique. The overall installation creates a merry environment, with bright banners presenting slogans such as *COMIENZA EL wow! (Start the wow!)*, which is a good synopsis of Green's interest in pleasure as an instigator of new modes of collective experience. —EVA DIAZ



RENÉE GREEN, *UNITED SPACE OF CONDITIONED BECOMING*, 2006. MIXED MEDIA, DIMENSIONS VARIABLE. INSTALLATION VIEW, PARTICIPANT INC., NEW YORK. COURTESY THE ARTIST.



HOWARD HODGKIN, *OLD SKY*, 1996–97. OIL ON WOOD, 15 1/2 X 17 1/4 IN. PHOTO: PRUDENCE CUMING ASSOCIATES, LTD., COURTESY YALE CENTER FOR BRITISH ART, NEW HAVEN, © HOWARD HODGKIN.

NEW HAVEN

HOWARD HODGKIN

YALE CENTER FOR BRITISH ART

Hot on the heels of a career-spanning retrospective at Tate Britain, Sir Howard Hodgkin's latest exhibition was limited to paintings made between 1992, the year he was knighted, and the present. For an artist known to work on a panel for several years before it leaves the studio—and even, on occasion, borrow it back from its owner for further revision—this qualifies as recent work.

The installation at the Yale Center for British Art highlighted Hodgkin's tentative experiments with an inflated scale. The market pressure toward trophy-size paintings was hard to disregard. On formal grounds, such enlarged works as *Autumn* and *The Body in the Library* (both 1998–2003) paled in comparison with the many exceptional but diminutive paintings on view. Hodgkin continues to use found wood supports, which here shifted from the scale of a kitchen cutting board to that of a tabletop. At such exaggerated size, his signature gesture, a rough border of color painted directly over the frame, produces pictures that, like a quick glance out the window, float politely in the visual field.

The artist's small, intimately scaled panels, on the other hand, have a tighter layering of frame on frame that suggests the malleable space of a Windows operating-system display. Speaking on BBC Radio 4, Hodgkin explained the appeal of his paintings: "A very small picture can become almost like a lump that you can hold in your hand." The touch screen of an ATM might be more like it, as the works seem to oscillate between visual and tactile demands. —BEN CARLSON

PHILADELPHIA

FRED FOREST

SLOUGHT FOUNDATION

Why haven't we heard of Fred Forest? Born in 1933 in Algeria, the new-media pioneer was among the first to use television and radio broadcasts as a platform for art, in the late 1960s. He produced France's first video installation in 1969, founded the Sociological Art Collective in 1974, ran for president of Bulgaria's neocommunist television station in 1992, and was the first artist to both sell an artwork and get married online. Perhaps it's because of his lawsuit against the Centre Pompidou (for failing to reveal the cost of its collection), which cooled his relations with his adopted home country, or his stubbornly unsellable work (like his electromagnetic field for Documenta 8 in 1987). Whatever the reason, it's a pity. This retrospective, his first in the US, presented documentation and descriptions of nearly 40 years of work, most of which engaged mass media as its medium. Over the years, Forest bought blank space in newspapers for readers to fill with "free public expression"; broadcast moments of pure blue on television (a screen on the Fritz mimics Yves Klein's *IKB*); and filmed collectors at auction as they bid on the video he was filming of them at that very moment. His communication hijacks were not only in sync with '60s and '70s new-media and instructional art but were also precursors to today's crowd-sourcing and media interventionists. The ephemeral networks of information and communication that now dutifully saturate our lives were anticipated by Forest more than 30 years ago, in all their artful (and subversive) potential. —LYRA KILSTON



BRUCE NAUMAN

SAN FRANCISCO

A ROSE FOR

UC BERKELEY

Walking around Nauman retrospective posters advertised in the sixties redefined undeniable truth. Overdue. It's including a 1 and early color and some of neons, installations like repetitive B&M/PFA lived in the 6 spent his for Davis from 1 Francisco Art ties to the Br