

When ideas and theories dominate the drawings, we often lose that sense of quickly established rapport with what the artist has to say. William Holman Hunt's study for his series *The Light of the World* is contrived and as lifeless as the inflated, sentimental pre-Raphaelite notions that inspired it. If only Hunt had possessed a little of the wit of Paul Klee and taken "an active line on a walk, moving freely . . ." as Klee did with *Lady Apart*, for example.

As the concerns become more cerebral, the instant communication vanishes. Intriguing as the concepts are, the viewer's responses are slowed by the necessary visual investigation and mental hopscothching required for Sol LeWitt's and Agnes Martin's drawings.

The admiration we may have for the arcane content of Martin's and LeWitt's work is very different from the spontaneous (primary?) response we feel for drawings where the subject matter links us at once to the artist's perception and skills. Seurat's conté crayon drawings are really about light and air. It is the figures that tell us this. The pressure of the crayon on pebbled paper, the softened edges that blur the figures slightly say it all. An art student looking at these drawings summed it up wonderfully when he breathed a reverent "Wow!" It was the sort of reaction that is painfully absent today. This lack is especially noticeable in responses to present-day realism which are near the brink of boredom. Drawing shows such as these just might aid in the rescue.

Elizabeth McClelland is a writer living in Cleveland.

A Flickering Presence in Academe

Four Faculty Exhibit/Seigfred Gallery, Ohio University/Athens/November 1-19

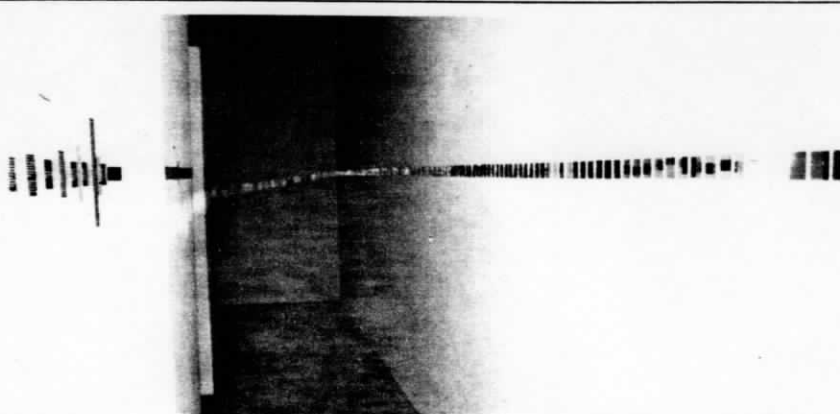
By Leslie Curtis

*When I point my finger at the moon,
don't mistake my finger for the moon.*
Yong Soon Min, *Voice Over Flicker*

Apparently each of the four artists had been given one wall of the gallery, and the result was indeed four one-person shows. No unifying theme existed among the works of the four. Two artists, Mary Manosus and Daniel Williams had just returned from professional leave. The newer faculty members, John Thompson and Yong Soon Min, exhibited works similar to ones recently shown both in and out of Ohio. Thus, the exhibit was something of a homecoming: the results of recent research were on display as well as newer experiments in progress.

Both Mary Manosus' drawings and Daniel Williams' photographs remained safely within the bounds of traditionally accepted media. Manosus' pastels were done in Mexico where she spent her leave. Even in the bright colors of the dusty medium one could feel the dry heat of the place, and through the tactile character of the chalk, the vitality of her impressions. Williams' photographs were divided into two series: one dealt with the interrelationships between photography and collage; the other involved his itinerant observations of Emancipation Day(s) commemoration. The first series was wittier and more interesting in its formal manipu-

Yong Soon Min, *Voice Over Flicker*



lations, but the second more consistently integrated content with form in expressing a fuller impact. Both of these artists revealed academic competence; however, neither maintained the levels of excitement to be found in the work of the newer faculty. Moreover, it was through extensions of and breaks with tradition that John Thompson and Yong Soon Min achieved their effects.

John Thompson showed a piece originally conceived at ARTPARK during his residency there last summer. These materials were part of a kind of "architectural environment" set up at ARTPARK which eventually included "color coordinated costumed performances" outside his composition. In his written statements placed beside the O.U. installation, along with photographs of the original structure, Thompson claimed that his conception, with appropriate modifications, was adaptable to both interiors and exteriors. It didn't quite make it here. The original architectural symmetry, set against a backdrop of nature, was given a contrast not possible within the cubic space of the gallery. In this re-assembly, allusions to portable furniture and architectural forms like deckchairs and tents suggested the possibilities for transformation. But the concrete gestural manifestations of his nomadic expressionism, frozen signatures of torn and painted cloth, jagged nails, bold brushstrokes, ceramic fragments, and patches of foil, were subjugated to the gallery's restrictive geometry. Furthermore, the rigid symmetry of the piece itself contained vestiges of a Cubist scaffolding inconsistent with the old and new expressionist vocabularies ranging from Pollock to Schnabel. There is a great, festive freedom at stake in Thompson's work, and this gallery installation imperiled the very qualities that liberated it at ARTPARK.

The most stunning piece was *Voice Over Flicker* by Yong Soon Min. Three four-foot wide piers were placed equidistantly and about four feet away from, and parallel to the gallery wall, thus creating a narrow corridor. On the gallery wall, Min placed a continuous row of small, square mirrors. Opposite these, on the piers, she alternated rectangular strips with messages typewritten in black on white and reversed white on black. These worded passages contained allusions to various media including sound, film, poetry, and visual art. Autobiographical references were also included. In fact, traditional artistic vocabularies were redefined in personal terms. Positive/negative shape relationships became metaphorical expressions of being and nothingness. Black and white value tones became expressions of mood, detachment, and objectivity, suggesting the significance of *Chiaroscuro*, the title of a similar work by Min.

Spatial perspective became a means of both specifying and generalizing human

experience, moving towards a vanishing point or expanding to encompass the whole visual field. These bands of words and reflected images became eye-level orthogonals which joined forces to break through barriers traditionally erected between language and the visual arts. The result was an interpretive playground of textual and optical stimuli, with occasional encouragements to sound: for example, the viewer was invited to read the following passage aloud:

I wish I were what I was when
I wanted to be what I am now.

All this in combination with the animated fragmentation of mirror frames not only alluded to film, but invited the viewer into a type of participatory cinema.

While the actual physical properties of the piece, limited to black-and-white, silvery mirrors, straight lines, and rectilinear shapes suggested superficial relations to Minimalist forms, the possibilities for personal revelation and self-reflection belied such notions. In fact, the differences between Minimalist coldness, and Post-Modernist warmth and directness hinged on the use of mirrors and the intimate scale. The words and viewer's reflections came into focus only when seen close up. This both encouraged an intimacy between the viewer and the work and included human imagery missing in Minimalism, where anthropomorphic significance was denied, and materials, even mirrors, were often employed for only their alienating effects. Min's use of scale and materials exploited both aspects of the mirrors in question. The mirrors were analogous to eyes or windows, but the eye in its function as mirror/window of the soul often yielded up disorienting glimpses of the void, these functions clearly occurred in a human context. Thus the void, suggestive of man's alienation in the modern world and a byproduct of an existential examination of self -- what Min calls the "vertigo of nothingness" -- was only one aspect of the piece. This was brought into context by the magical human presence which moved about Min's space-time corridor, in the same way man moves in his life on earth, not always understanding the plethora of stimuli which engulf him, but a flickering presence nonetheless.

Ironically, it is this human directness achieved by Min working out of a Minimalist context that Thompson's "expressionist" work lacked. In spite of all the immediacy of gesture in Thompson's work, the final compositional arrangement took on a hermetic quality which was difficult to penetrate. One must wonder if, in the Post-Modernist period, the age of information science, such direct access can be justifiably denied.

Leslie Curtis is a doctoral student in art history at Ohio State University.