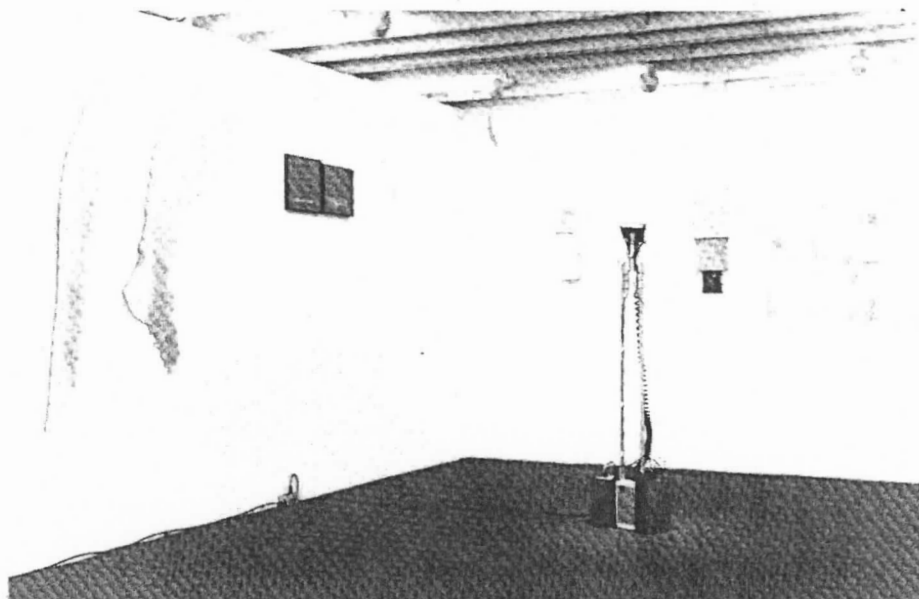


Matter Anti-Matter: Defects in the Model Group Show

Many postmodern theorists from Michel Foucault to Jean Baudrillard to Frederic Jameson recognize capitalism's need to normalize and control in the name of progress. Artists Didi Dunphy, Peter Fend, Felix Gonzales-Torres, Rene de Guzman, Cady Noland, Alan Rath, and Jon Winet/Margaret Crane, showing under the rubric "Matter Anti-Matter: Defects in the Model," attempted a variety of resistive strategies to capitalism's challenge.

Several of the artists investigated how news media transmits information that numbs the population and renders it powerless to effect change. Winet and Crane's *The Inaugural Address* presented framed images of the Capitol rotunda and other sites of power with a wall text relating a message about big government taking care of us. Noland's giant photocopies of text about Abraham Lincoln's personal possessions pointed out media's fascination with fame, especially after the death of the individual. Gonzales-Torres' stark framed photostats of captions such as "Helms Amendment 1987," "Anita Bryant 1977," "White Night Riots 1979" and others suggested how events are reduced to bits of information drained of their original significance. Especially strong was his *Double Fear*, a black and white photo transfer of ten different sized circles that seemed like apertures for viewing a human mob scene. Actually the mob scene was interspersed with magnified views of the HIV virus, but they seemed indistinguishable, implying a certain ideology at work in AIDS reporting. Rath's small cathode ray tubes reflected our mesmerization by television: one of the tubes blinked "0" and "1" alternately at varying rates, another contained an eye gazing in various directions, and the third showed a static grid test pattern.

Other artists worked with materials used in mass production. De Guzman's *Trope* was a canvas-wrapped block sitting atop a particle-board block. The rectangular forms made from common building materials seemed like miniature versions of normalizing institutions such as schools, prisons and psychiatric hospitals. Dunphy's "Zipper Paintings" were ten rectangular pieces, each in a different pastel monochrome with a zipper running



Installation view of "Matter Anti-Matter: Defects in the Model." Foreground: Alan Rath, *Watcher of the Skies II*; on wall (l to r): Peter Fend, *California After the US*; Felix Gonzalez-Torres, 1988, 1987, *Double Fear*; Rene de Guzman, *Trope*, *Untitled*, *Humus*.

down its center. Besides playfully jabbing at Barnett Newman, these works brought to mind Allan McCollum's surrogates, generic works of art that self-reflexively examine their status as consumer objects.

Peter Fend proposed an alternative to the status quo instead of just exposing "defects in the model." His unusual aeronautical charts mounted on laminated Plexiglas restructured California based on ecological principles: *California After the US (Current Slope)* and *California After the US (Gulf Basin)* ignored present political boundaries. Although Fend's maps appeared overly fanciful, they reminded us that those who draw charts and maps and gather data contribute in determining how questions and answers are framed. According to Foucault, this will-to-knowledge translates into power.

Unfortunately most of the work in the show didn't live up to the inflated rhetoric of its press release: "As imperatives of mass manufacture redouble in their intrinsic application and reapplication of formula-based consumption and absorption, so the urban landscape becomes reactive with a physiognomy that leaves its foundations exposed." Visual banality and conceptual one-liners pervaded the exhibition such that

each individual's work would have trouble holding up on its own. This especially applied to the work of Noland, Gonzales-Torres (the framed photostats) and de Guzman. Alan Rath wasn't represented by his strongest pieces that indict technology, and Dunphy's zippered canvases were humorously allusive but hardly "critical of the varied syndromes currently operative in a culture which present us with the very real vision, and, possibility of an increasingly opaque future."

—Alfred Jan

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MATTER ANTI-MATTER



DEFECTS IN THE MODEL

