

## K.H. Hödicke Raab, Berlin



K.H. HÖDICKE, *ELVIRA WITH MASK AND VACUUM CLEANER*, 1976. RESIN ON CANVAS, 190 X 150 CM.

Karl Horst Hödicke might not be a household name internationally, but in Berlin, where he has been influential in the state art school system since 1974, he is well known and deservedly respected. Albeit a tired label, he is recognized as the father of the Neuen Wilden and has enjoyed much success since the early 80s when some of his students, the neoexpressionist painters associated with the Kyeuzberger Galerie am Moritzplatz—Middendorf, Salomé, Fetting et al. hit the jackpot with New York galleries. Since then he has been branded an expressionistic painter, making it difficult to recall the wittiness of Hödicke's earlier conceptual work, which he showed with René Block in the late 60s and early 70s.

With the eventual demise of neoexpressionism, Hödicke's stature was also greatly diminished. But for many here, he is still a big-man-on-campus, and it is such status that undoubtedly led him and the Raab Galerie to believe there would be great interest in Hödicke's most recent Berlin exhibition. "K.H. Hödicke malt Elvira" is a selection of paintings over the past fifteen years featuring the artist's wife, Elvira Hödicke. From 1975 onward we see Elvira vacuuming, posing, sitting, descending, standing up, laying down, dressed up, undressed with child, without child. (Despite all this activity, her biography, tacked onto the end of Hödicke's own in the exhibition's catalogue, is alarmingly brief. The four lines granted her tell us when she was born, though not where, when she met the artist, when she mar-

ried the artist, and when she gave birth.) It's that woman-as-wife-as-model-as-muse-as-woman-as-wife thing—a theme supposedly "too personal" to show outside of Berlin where the artist and Elvira are surrounded by close friends. Throughout the exhibition, we see Hödicke's style evolving from gestural painting that is still tightly controlled to a much looser, free (read "wild") brushstroke dripping with streaks of paint. Much has been made of the reciprocity of influence between Hödicke and his students, and such an exhibition, which presents a single subject matter painted over several years, gives fans of Hödicke's painting a chance to assess these developments.

Catsou Roberts

## American Art of the 80s Palazzo delle Albere, Trent (Italy)

Most of the artists in "American Art of the 80s" have never or hardly exhibited in Italy, much less in remote Trent, and it was a sensible idea for curator Jerry Saltz to give in to the unavoidable didactic responsibility he had and put on a comprehensive, "quality" exhibition. The American 80s are now as firmly and irreversibly in the hands of historians and museums as Pop or impressionism, and this textbook rendition lays ground for a central, even-keeled position, somewhere between the politically demanding, cringing purists and those who wish the 80s had gone all the way, exploding art into a massified moneymaker like music or the movies. One "signature style" work by each of the fifty-four, big name artists have been coerced into seven medium-sized rooms, a deliri-



CADY NOLAND, *BASKET OF ACTION*, 1988. MIXED MEDIA, 28 X 28 X 33 CM. COLLECTION OLIVIER MOSSET.

ously overcrowded reenactment of familiar, historicized cliques, plus a room for uncooperative misfits (among them Cady Noland, her singular, tiny milkcrate spill—almost an anachronism—effectively warning of the sudden understatement and gloom at the close of the decade). The result is gratifyingly comprehensible and good-looking—to make a vulgar 80s analogy, like the roster of a dream auction sale circa 1988. While Saltz's just-the-facts portrayal may someday ring about as accurate as 1947 history books recounting World War II, "American Art of the 80s" documents the *survivors* (to use excruciating 80s terminology) who have maintained the public's interest in 1992.

Paradoxically, Saltz's catalogue text is most engrossing in his knowledgeable, skillful discussion of the 70s, while his subsequent treatment of 80s masters often relapses into the encyclopedic tone of the exhibition. His declared contempt for independent curators, art advisors, and above all, auction houses (the omitted art fairs evidently aren't even worthy of his disdain) belies how much more at home Saltz is in the earlier, homier 70s, refusing to acknowledge the decisive contribution these "despicable" 80s institutions made in sifting out the very names (virtually all a good sell) who made it into this safe if well-pondered version of the decade.

Gilda Williams

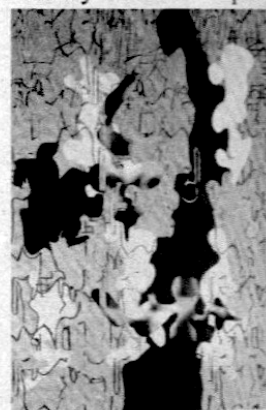
## Jan Frank/Peer Veneman Fodor Museum, Amsterdam

Officially this show was a collaboration between two Dutch-born artists, the Amsterdam sculptor Peer Veneman, and the New York painter Jan Frank. In fact, there were four Dutch artists contributing to the exhibition since Frank and Veneman chose to incorporate motifs from Mondrian and de Kooning into their collaborations.

Frank and Veneman began with drawings by Mondrian and de Kooning which they altered through photocopying and erasure. These altered drawings were then silkscreened onto plywood or paper to form the

ground for the collaboration. In their own work, both Veneman and Frank have been fascinated with the interplay between formalism and functionalism. Frank, for instance, has often adapted the designs of Frank Lloyd Wright and Charles Eames in his work, while Veneman often seems to be playing subtle jokes on bourgeois home decoration. Generally, both are interested in the complexities of contour.

The collaboration works are structured in layers. First, the Mondrian or de Kooning, then the subtly nuanced shapes of



VENEMAN/FRANK, *HARBORED IN HOLLAND*, 1992. PLYWOOD, PAINT, AND SILKSCREEN, 240 X 180 X 8 CM.

Veneman, finally the masses and calligraphies of Frank. In some of the plywood pieces, Veneman has cut out his shape, rather than painted it. Including an impressive series of drawings, the show was rounded off by several of the artists' individual works most notably Veneman's floor sculpture *Oh's and Ah's* and Frank's painting *Dog Days*.

Unlike the rash of recycling canonical works that we saw in the 80s, Veneman and Frank don't have any "political" agenda in their reuse of de Kooning and Mondrian. Rather, the older artists provided a basic starting point of agreement for the ensuing discussion between the younger ones. The common nationality of all involved gave the grouping a certain logic. Perhaps, finally, de Kooning and Mondrian fostered the viability of this collaboration not so much because of the visual properties of their drawings, but because their presence ensured that Frank and Veneman, would keep their respective egos in check, a necessity for any successful collaboration.

Meyer Raphael Rubinstein