

REPEATS OF THE WORD "ENGINE" IN A GRID PATTERN, WITH THE WORD "ENGINE" IN LARGE RED LETTERS IN THE CENTER.

HALLWALLS  
Contemporary Arts Center

November 7 to December 12, 1992

Curated by  
Ken Gonzales Day and  
Andrew Perchuk

Designed by  
Alexander Ku

Edited by  
Elizabeth Bigham

# OBJECT CHOICE

ELIZABETH BERDANN

JULIE CARSON &  
KATHLEEN MCCARTHY

LARRY CLARK

KEN GONZALES DAY

JEANNE DUNNING

MARY BETH EDELSON

SUSAN HORNBEAK-ORTIZ

CLIFFORD LECUYER

CARY S. LEIBOWITZ

MARLENE MCCARTY

DONALD MOFFETT

# INTRoDUCTION

SARA KELLNER CURATOR

**F**or the past six years, Hallwalls Contemporary Arts Center has presented **WAYS IN BEING GAY**, a biennial festival of visual, performance, media, and interdisciplinary works by and about lesbians and gay men. Beginning November 1 and ending December 1, this festival has grown rapidly into a series of over fifty events held not only at Hallwalls, but all over the city of Buffalo — at community centers, hospices, AIDS service organizations, universities, theaters, movie houses, and bookstores. Interested groups and organizations have been meeting

at Hallwalls for months and an overwhelming number of artists from all over the country have presented their work to be considered for the festival. They are all to be commended for their commitment to **WAYS IN BEING GAY**.

I am very pleased to feature **Object Choice** as Hallwalls' exhibition for this festival. The artists in the exhibition are sexual beings with identities as rich and diverse as their work. They explore the social and political ramifications of their own object choices in a manner that offers an opportunity to challenge rigid



ELIZABETH BERDANN, **ASSHOLE**, 1988

#### HALLWALLS CONTEMPORARY ART CENTER

concepts of personal and cultural identity.

My thanks to curators Ken Gonzales Day and Andrew Perchuk for all the time, effort, and good humor they have put into the exhibition and this catalogue. They are welcome additions to the long list of participants in Hallwalls' Visiting Curators Program. I am also grateful to Alex Ku for donating the design work for this catalogue. Thanks also to the lenders to this exhibition: Stux Gallery, Matthew Marks Gallery, Marlene McCarty, Ealan Wingate, Metro Pictures,

A/C Project Space, Feature, and Luhring Augustine Gallery. Finally, my thanks to the artists and to the volunteers and staff of Hallwalls.

Hallwalls' Exhibition Program is supported in part by the New York State Council on the Arts, The National Endowment for the Arts (a federal agency), The Andy Warhol Foundation for the Visual Arts, the County of Erie, the City of Buffalo, Mid-Atlantic Arts Foundation, and the members of Hallwalls. Hallwalls is a member of the National Association of Artists' Organizations (NAAO).

# OBJECT

ELIZABETH BERDANN

## CHECKLIST:

ASSHOLE, 1988

AT REST, ERECT; MAN'S, WOMAN'S, 1990 • Oil on copper, engraved brass, and nails

MY RIGHT NIPPLE ENLARGED AND

Freud theorised that “natural man” was “polymorphous[ly] perverse” and therefore libidinally unconstrained, and further suggested that “the sexual instinct is in the first instance independent of its object.”<sup>1</sup> In his analysis of early

childhood sexuality, Freud also wrote that in the first stages of infancy the child identifies with the mother as self, only later making a distinction from the world around it. In turn, the nourishing breast becomes the first desired object, a gesture which for Freud exemplified a

# CHOICE

KEN GONZALES DAY AND ANDREW PERCHUK

Oil on copper, wood, gold leaf • 4" diameter (framed) • Courtesy of the artist  
2" x 63" • Courtesy of the artist

REPEATED 20 TIMES, 1989 • Oil on copper, 20 pieces • 95" x 7" • Courtesy of the artist

certain mutability of choice, particularly as the "object" of desire clearly shifts from one stage to the next.

In its simplest form, "Object choice" refers to erotic genital preference. While human sexuality manifests itself in many ways,

Freud referred to all non procreative sexuality, including homosexuality, as "perverse". It should be kept in mind that Freud was mimicking the strict biological rhetoric of the period which saw sexual activity as the only means of insuring the survival of the species. From a functionalist per-



and displace traditional readings, thereby undermining stereotypes and misrepresentations.

**Elizabeth Berdann's** paintings are a project in reclaiming one's own identity through an obsessive recreating of anatomical minutia. In "My Right Nipple, Enlarged and Repeated Twenty Times", Berdann has literally created twenty different depic-

ture pleasure outside the genitals is a meticulously rendered painting of an anus, set within an elaborate gilded frame. The recurrent theme is Berdann's fascination with paintings depicting her own features, her reclaiming of her own body and reinvention of the female nude outside the male gaze. Berdann reconstructs her own body, inch by inch, and reencodes the sexualized object.



JULI CARSON AND KATHLEEN MCCARTHY,  
SLEEP OF REASON SERIES, **DORA**, 1992

Also concerned with the shaping of identity, the work of **Juli Carson & Kathleen McCarthy** points not to the restrictions of sexuality but to the possibil-

1992 • Embroidery on Antique Linen • 22" x 29" x 19" • Courtesy of the artists

tions of her right nipple. Berdann returns to the first object of childhood identity to fetishizing an object associated with societal constructions of female sexuality.

Another work in which Berdann intentionally relocates sites of

ities opened up by the recoding of gendered schema. Their work is positioned between two feminist traditions often considered dichotomous — conceptual based post-structuralist work and the material oriented craft based work that originated directly in feminist political activism. For



UNTITLED, 1990 • Photocollage, unique, framed • 41 3/4" x 87" • Courtesy the

## LARRY CLARK

24 YEAR OLD KILLED FATHER WHEN HE WAS 16, 15 YEAR  
WOMAN, NATE, G-STREET LIVE, 1992 • VHS Videotape •

the Sleep of Reason Series, Carson and McCarthy embroidered antique bedding and sheets, carefully folding their work into pristine stacked units laid across the floor. On each stack, the top pillowcase contains quotes from psychoanalytic texts, fairy tales, or lines from pop music.

Embroidery has been for centuries a medium standing for the archetypally feminine and at the same time has been a tool for teaching women their role and acceptable code of conduct in society. For this reason, this and other craft based media have frequently been attacked



LARRY CLARK, UNTITLED, 1992

Artist and Luhring Augustine Gallery, New York

OLD RAPED BY MOP HANDLE, 13 YEAR OLD HAS 2 YEAR AFFAIR WITH 35 YEAR OLD  
Courtesy the artist and Luhring Augustine Gallery, New York

and dismissed by those who would challenge the constraints of traditional femininity. By positioning themselves within the medium McCarthy and Carson challenge the belittling construction of women's work and thus reconfigure engendered modes of cultural production.

In exploring the ways that the sexual identities of teenage boys are shaped by forces outside their control, the works of **Larry Clark** focus on an objectifying manipulation. The adolescent male is Clark's unwavering object, and as such becomes a battleground where



KEN GONZALES DAY, COLONIZING THE BODY, 1992

KEN GONZALES DAY

UNTITLED

Jeanne Dunning • UNTITLED • all 1988 • c-print • 15" x 12"

UNTITLED

SAMPLE 2, 1990

UNTITLED WITH BEARD, 1990 • Laminated cibachrome • 21 1/2" x 17"

JEANNE DUNNING

human desire is more weapon than vice. Many of the accounts of seduction and vice in Clark's works come from newspaper clippings and are combined with the artist's own photographic portraits of teenage boys. Clark has recently begun to play with video, presenting tapes made

from Donahue, call-in programs — one is about teen age hustlers, another about a teen age boy who killed his abusing father, and still another is a recording of a man discussing being sexually abused by his father. These pieces define themselves against our own memories of sexual



JEANNE DUNNING, *UNTITLED*, 1988

COLONIZING THE BODY, 1992

Mixed Media Installation • Dimensions Variable • Courtesy of the artist

Courtesy of the artist and Feature, New York

Cibachrome mounted to plexiglass, frame • 18" x 15" • Courtesy of the artist and Feature, New York  
Courtesy of the artist and Feature, New York

awakening, pointing to the difficult issues surrounding adolescent sexuality and who controls it. As in earlier works like the Teenage Lust Series, Clark continues to set the adolescent male body against the desires of adults, forcing the viewer to confront his or her own knowledge of

how popular culture and the media shape our attitudes towards sexuality.

In "Colonizing the Body," **Ken Gonzales Day** utilizes an assemblage technique similar to Clark as a thematic trope mimicking the formal Beaux Arts

Salon exhibition, complete with emerald green velvet covered panels mounted on matching green walls and molding. Unlike any museum exhibition, this piece addresses sexual diversity in two traditions in North American history. In the first panel, an elaborate text scrutinizes prevailing notions concerning Freud's conception of "perverse" sexuality and homosexuality in particular. In the second panel, a text is superimposed over a Satry and a



MARY BETH EDELSON,  
**GET IT**, DETAIL, 1992

American acceptance of sexual diversity within specific parameters. Gonzales Day presents sexuality as a pastiche of free-floating signifiers — placing images over

images, text over images, lightboxes, movie stills, photos, magazines, playing cards, and a diorama depicting pre-colonial sexual practices.

The singular images of **Jeanne Dunning** are a

study of the fetish and an examination of the masquerade of femininity. In a series of untitled

#### MARY BETH EDELSON

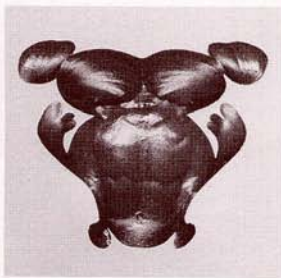
ATHENA OF THE HALLWAYS: PINK, 1992 • Silk screen on chiffon • 85" x 41"  
GET IT, 1992 • Silkscreen on chiffon • 12' x 12' • Courtesy of A/C Project Space, New York

Kolhamana kachina mask. The text examines the Native American "Berdache" traditions, focusing on the Pueblo Indians of New Mexico. The panels present two contrasting solutions to diverse sexual practices: the restrictive Judeo-Christian tradition, countered by the Native

photographs from the late 1980's Dunning focused on different parts of the female body in exacting detail. This series is largely comprised of headshots of individual women against neutral backgrounds. All of the women conform to traditional norms of beauty, and the photographs

would be standard portraits except that the composition is almost determinedly bland—the clothing, background, background, and recede completely.

The one recurring element that stands out is the varying amount of each woman's facial hair. This not only raises the question of societal constraints for women to conform to predetermined stereotypes of feminine beauty, but also points to the fetish associated with women's hair. While



CLIFFORD LECUYER,  
DEMON NO.3, 1992

“Get It” is as directly confrontational as Dunning's work is oblique. Luxurious swatches of orange chiffon hang on the wall to form a grid, with a

silkscreened image of Gena Rowlands holding a gun pointed at the viewer on each square of fabric. This work is certainly a humorous comment on the notion of “possessing the phallus”: especially in

Lacanian theory, the phallus is a free-floating signifier not possessed by either gender but

Courtesy of A/C Project Space, New York

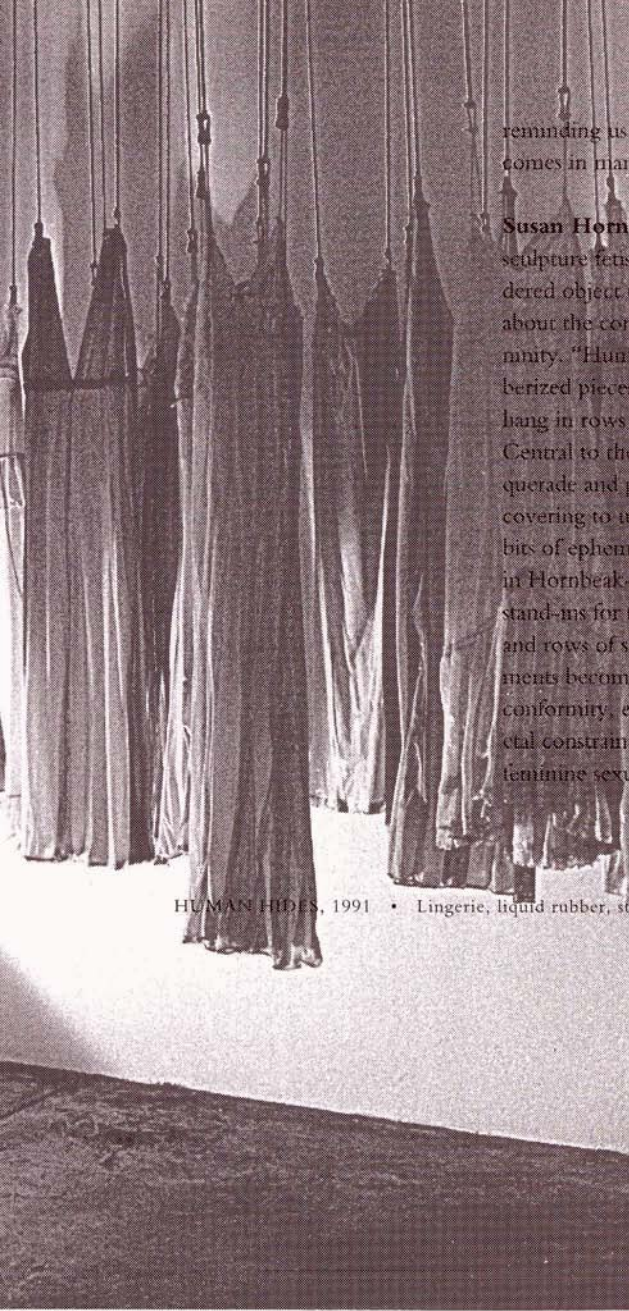
CLIFFORD LECUYER

DEMON Series, #1 through #10, 1992 • C-Print • 5" x 7" each • Courtesy of the artist

long tresses have long been considered the predominant acceptable symbol of female sexuality, facial or body hair runs counter to the fetishized nude that is the patriarchal standard of controlled sexuality.

**Mary Beth Edelson's**

rather linguistically linked to the site of power. Rowland's .45 caliber revolver is the most common pop-cultural phallic stand-in, and is reminiscent of Andy Warhol's "Double Elvis." This work repositions the female subject, the chiffon acting as a visual pun while at the same time



reminding us that empowerment comes in many guises.

**Susan Hornbeak-Ortiz's** sculpture fetishizes an engendered object to raise questions about the construction of femininity. "Human Hides" are rubberized pieces of lingerie that hang in rows from the ceiling. Central to the feminine masquerade and part of the act of covering to uncover, these flimsy bits of ephemera are transformed in Hornbeak-Ortiz's work into stand-ins for the body. The rows and rows of solidified undergarments become the markers of conformity, expressing the societal constraints against naked feminine sexuality. By rubberiz-

HUMAN HIDES, 1991 • Lingerie, liquid rubber, steel cables • 10' x 10' x 10' over

SUSAN HORNBEAK-ORTIZ, HUMAN HIDES, 1991

ing these objects, Hornbeak-Ortiz has weighed them down, transforming what are usually fantasy objects for mass consumption into signifiers in the search for a less prescribed identity. Hornbeak-Ortiz's work, reminiscent of the sculptures of Eva Hesse that countered the hard-edged militarism, of Minimalist sculpture, transforms the organic abstract forms of Hesse into encoded objects.

**Clifford LeCuyer's** work also embodies a transformation of form as fantastic silhouettes cut from the muscle-bound chests of body-builders turn into "Demons." These c-print montages appear against solid colored

backgrounds, which accentuate not only their playful shapes but also draw attention to the mutability of the human form. Intimate in scale, LeCuyer's tiny figures take on a precious quality; their glistening abdominal and pectoral muscles remind us of those who might warn us against the temptations of the flesh. LeCuyer's "Demons" embody these fears and are yet objectified to the point of abstraction with the saturated colors of the flesh filtered, tinted, tanned, and lit. These fetish images do more than document the physically fit, they are eroticized portraits of imploding masculinity, relocated within the homoerotic, and serve to question the nature of

Courtesy of the artist

SUSAN HORNBEAK-ORTIZ

masculine  
sexual identity.

**Cary S. Leibowitz's** self-effacing view of his own identity is continued in his new work in which he views mainstream "hetero" culture through the eyes of its antithesis, the "candyass". In this card table installation we find kitsch pre-fab ceramic candle holders, pots, vases, light switches, and mugs. Leibowitz has reconfigured his protagonist "Loozer" across a ceramic vase, and his well worn "kick me" pants aren't far behind. This cluster of camp includes some new themes like "bad names 4 cars, Shalimar, Tippy, Esther, Mr. Kenneth,"

identity in particular, by countering it with pop-culture's Marky Mark as the pinnacle of youthful hetero masculinity. It is the multiplicity of objects that is transformed into a metaphor of sexual identity and self-doubt, focusing our attention on the complete absence of positive role models for gays and lesbians.

Referencing the diminution of female identity in a sculpture of monumental proportions, **Marlene McCarty's** "Pucker Up" consists of 550 inches of cotton fabric that hangs like a curtain on the gallery wall. The fabric is split down the center and each piece has a single whole cut near the seam. As in much of McCarty's

DECORATED READYMADES, (Sculpture), 1992 • Assorted ceramic sculptures on table

CANDYASS/CARY S. LIEBOWITZ

PUCKER UP, 1992

or the "Helen Frankenthaler Loves Marky Mark" light switch. Other themes are less oblique, such as the vase which reads "A dick in the hand is worth two in the butt," Leibowitz's work continues to comment on the otherness of the "candyass" persona, as a gay

ty's work, the short text surrounding each hole is both directly confrontational and humorously playful — one reads "Snatch Snack" and the other says "Putting Words in My Mouth." The choice of curtains refers not only to women's traditional role in the home but also

to the societal necessity of hiding women's sexuality. The text is a comment on the roles women are often limited to in our society — that is, the way society configures different female orifices. On the one hand, women are objectified as objects of male desire, their genitals seen as sites for the fulfillment of male pleasure. On the other, women's desires, thoughts, and needs as expressed orally are often ignored or dismissed in a patriarchal system.

Another biting yet ironic amalgam of object and text are **Donald Moffett's** three marbled ruby red bowling balls, enclosed in seethrough vinyl bags and dis-



CANDYASS/CARY S. LIEBOWITZ,  
UNTITLED, 1992

## MARLENE MCCARTY

Dimensions variable • Courtesy of the artist and Stux Gallery, New York

• Silkscreen on cotton • 120" x 550" • Courtesy of the artist and Metro Pictures, New York

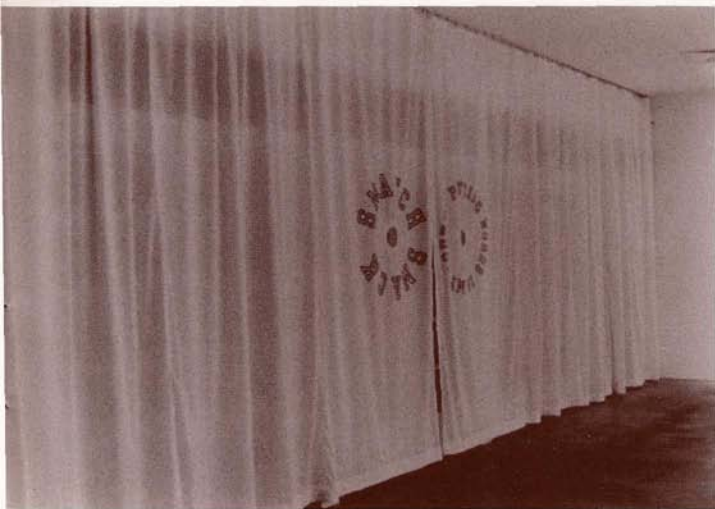
played on the gallery floor. In place of the three finger holes is a single orifice too large for any digit. Surrounding each hole is a graphic text — "CHOKE", "MON AMOUR", "GLORY", using the hole to replace the "O". These flawlessly manufactured objects become metaphors literalizing



SAMUEL BARRINGTON • Courtesy of the artist  
HISTORIC PERSONAGE • Courtesy Matthew Marks Gallery, New York  
ROBERT SALE • Collection of Marlene McCarty  
ROWLAND HILL • Courtesy of the artist  
W.F. WILLIAMS • Courtesy of the artist

**DONALD MOFFETT**

Three Bowling Balls; • CHOKE • MON AMOUR  
MY LITTLE SUNSHINE, 1991 • Polyurethane, paint



MARLENE MCCARTY, **PUCKER UP**, 1992



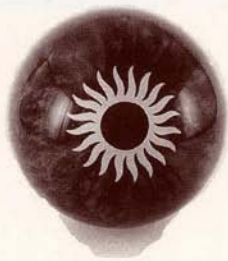
1991 • Ink, transfer type on paper • 16 1/2" x 15 3/8"

GLORY, 1991 • Polyurethane, Latex, Vinyl • Ea. ball 8" dia. • Courtesy of Elan Wingate  
8" x 8" x 4" • Courtesy of the artist

Freud's notion of inversion, reconfiguring masculine identity outside traditional codings. This transformation turns the finger holes of a bowling ball into a glory hole, inverting the phallus and playfully constructing a gay identity. In his series of military men, Moffett re-presents images

seemingly taken from illustrations in an 18th century military history. The top half of these works depict noble renderings of the individuals' military careers, while the bottom half contains camp descriptions of the soldiers supposed sexual proclivity. These one-liners, on the one hand

ironic, demythologize  
otherwise stern patriarchs  
through the added text, fusing  
each identity into a hybrid  
which is not necessarily  
contradictory.



DONALD MOFFETT, **MY LITTLE SUNSHINE**, 1991

#### NOTES

- <sup>1</sup> Sigmund Freud,  
*Three Essays on the Theory of Sexuality*,  
Penguin, New York, N.Y., p.14.
- <sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 16.
- <sup>3</sup> Sigmund Freud,  
*Civilization and its Discontents*,  
Penguin, New York, NY., p.51.
- <sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 51.
- <sup>5</sup> Jacques Lacan,  
*Feminine Sexuality*,  
Norton, New York, N.Y. p.80.
- <sup>6</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 94.

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