

ELEANOR ANTIN

Eleanora Antinova, Black Ballerina of Diaghilev's Ballet Russe, makes her entrance. She is about to perform the ballet "Before the Revolution," in which she plays the role of Marie Antoinette as a shepherdess. She is rolling her painted figure/character on wheels, who is "talking" about the nature of the performance-to-come, saying smile, El-e-a-nora; you are the most important person in the room; a good series of bows can make up for the worst performance. Antin plays many roles through her painted

characters, from Louis XVI to a lamb, all of whom role about throughout the almost 90-minute piece. These flat painted characters who are just-less-than-lifesize make Antinova, who is a petite figure, appear just-larger-than-lifesize, a quality which she is seeking for the ballerina who was famous in her day but condemned by critics as "un-authentic, eclectic and self-indulgent." Now seems the time, Antinova suggests, for such an idiosyncratic and eclectic spirit to be reevaluated in a more favorable light, now, when intermedia artists such as Eleanor Antin have come to the fore.

Recognition is not yet here, she is asserting, while alluding to the nature of art, the nature of self-identity, central themes in her art. Her dramatic gesture and theatrical delivery appropriately transmit the tongue-in-cheek "art historical seriousness" of the presentation. The "music by Monsieur Mozart" adds to the

color of the scene as does the elaborate costuming. A moment of particular poignancy occurs when Antinova seats herself on a swing at the front of the stage and talks to the audience about who and what she is. The installation of costume sketches, lighting exercises, stage designs, and character studies accompanied by working notes acts as documentary accompaniment for this "revival" of the Black Ballerina, intended to try to "repair the neglect of decades." (Ronald Feldman, *February 17-March 17; The Kitchen, February 23-24*)