

## Reviews



Eleanor Antin, *Carolee Schneemann*, 1971.

**Eleanor Antin, "Portraits of 8 New York Women, 1970" + Mierle Laderman Ukeles, "Maintenance Art Works, 1969-1979"**

Ronald Feldman Fine Arts, through Jun 13 (see Soho).

We seem to be in the middle of a nostalgia wave for early '70s art. The past few months have seen such shows as Paul McCarthy's photos of his early performance pieces, David Zwirner's survey of the formative years of conceptual photography, and Apex Art's screening of Laura Cottingham's *Not For Sale: Feminist Art in the 1970s in the United States*—a video documentary that also touches on the subjects of this exhibition, Eleanor Antin and Mierle Laderman Ukeles. Why all the interest in the ephemeral aesthetics of 25 or so years ago? Well, that is when the current generation of young artists and gallerists were born; for them, the '70s would naturally seem like the beginning of time. Ronald Feldman, however, is a veteran of those years; he's represented both Antin and Ukeles, so his reasons for doing this show are easier to fathom.

The front gallery contains Ukeles's "Maintenance Art Works, 1969-1979," a wall-to-wall conglomeration of photographs, statements of purpose, and the artist's correspondence with the Department of Sanitation. A classic example of early conceptualism, these "Maintenance Works" propose that the lowly act of maintenance is itself a form of art; they also liken garbage collection and office cleaning to the drudgery of housework.

Similarly, Antin's "Portraits of 8 New York Women, 1970" views its subjects through the lens of gender politics. Here, instead of resorting to traditional portraiture, Antin assembles various objects that pertain to the lives or careers of colleagues she knew and admired. Filmmaker Yvonne Rainer is "portrayed" as an exercise bike, while performance artist Carolee Schneemann is represented by an easel trailing a long train of red velvet.

Antin, of course, was wryly commenting on the clichéd view of women as objects, with the intent of turning the idea into something empowering. But in general, both her work and Ukeles's recall a time when the possibility of radically reshaping the role of women seemed simple and certain.—*Martha Schwendener*