

Selections/ Winter '93

THE DRAWING CENTER

The drawings in this show seem to share a feeling of exhaustion—not peaceful exhaustion born out of healthy and fruitful exertion, but uneasy, nerve-fraying exhaustion provoked by obsession and the daunting prospect of endless options. The centerpiece of the show, displayed in a glass case in the middle of the gallery, is the collection of eerie notebooks by Charles Crumb, who ended his life last summer. Filled with tiny repetitive scrawls that blanket the page from top to bottom, these books reduce the process of mark-making to a machine-like ritual and ultimately record the artist's overwhelming desire to produce. At times the notations seem to mark off the millions of seconds the artist spent laboring.

Easier to view but not less unsettling are the whimsical rhymes of Kenneth Goldsmith's *73 Poems*. Framed separately, each poem is written in black over a light grey sketch of the preceding poem so that the verses constantly rewrite themselves. The words ("Deep Throat, Right Vote, Terre Haute, Bladder Bloat...") give way to symmetrical arrangements of lines that eventually turn back into words in an endless cycle that renders the rhymes meaningless and the humor as uniform and agitating as a nervous laugh. Obsession also seems to guide the hyper-stylized, antiseptic landscapes of Eric Wolf. These tight drawings take anal retention to new heights in what appears to be an attempt

at tidying up the colorful mess left by Van Gogh.

Janine Gordon's *Hypothetical Tattoos* and Carl Fudge's enormous reworking of Durer's *Resurrection*, clearly the most stunning piece in the show, both explore the myriad of options implicit in the act of drawing. Central to Gordon's work is the idea of tattoos. No matter what connotations hers call to mind, whether they symbolize the deviant signs of a Rock'n'Roll subculture or the decorative tribal designs used to mark rites of passage, all tattoos have one thing in common—permanence. These being "hypothetical" and presented with a long list of possible body locations resist ever becoming real. Instead they become part of an endless game of possibilities for the viewer and the artist, who can always add new designs to the collection. Rather than leaving his options unrealized, Fudge follows them to the Nth degree. He creates a spectacular mosaic of line blocks culled from his own compositional restructuring of the Durer drawing. Working from xeroxed copies, he rethinks and rearranges Durer's lines in terms of patterns of symmetry and repetition. This brilliant deconstruction manages to maintain the essence of the composition while completely altering its visual and emotional impact. The choices of line placement unfold in complex systems whose matrixes are completely dependent on previous decisions. The final elaborate outcome invests the image with both a sense of technological overload and the beautiful, finely crafted patterns of primitive decoration.

The exhibition also includes the monochromatic black drawings of

Quentin Morris, which explore the depth and spirituality of tonal qualities in ways that seem familiar, and the all-over organic markings of Cornelia Cottiat that recall the work of Jacqueline Humphries but are void of the fluid transformations and formal concerns for borders and lines that make Humphries' work so interesting.

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