

### Edwin Schlossberg at Ronald Feldman

Artist, designer and poet Edwin Schlossberg's conceptual "drawings" are actually highly polished, midsize aluminum panels (3 feet in their largest dimension) applied in various ways with words and phrases. In "Reflecting on Culture," his recent exhibition of these pieces at Feldman, the viewer was included among their reflections, a factor intimately related to the content of the work. The visual aspects of the installation were impressive: a single line of 50 evenly spaced panels filled the gallery at eye level, while the texts, printed in caps of various sizes and fonts broken up into lines of simple phrases and longer observations, had the salutary effect of visual clarity, which seems to be Schlossberg's major concern. The simple but powerful presentation strengthened the artist's message that culture is "to be shared, rooted in continuity, focused on generations, transferred along the memory of sudden losses" (*Culture To Be Shared*, 2004).

In places, the texts are aphoristic, with a taut, abstract style—particularly in the large, stenciled title phrases, which can resemble slogans ("community above scarcity," for example). The viewer is invited to consider a visual shorthand that pares language down to essential statements; these coalesce around generalizations that are

hard to test as right or wrong ("unconscious attention unravels culture"). In some places, the language tends to undermine itself in self-referentiality, but elsewhere it spells out meaningful consequences: "Culture is the resting place of emotional understanding, yet always changing, defending it and our presence in threats to continuity, watching for fanning fires that break the respect for understanding" (*Culture Breaks*, 2004).

Schlossberg is clearly interested in the relationship between art and language in his insistence on the visibility of the object mediating the meaning of the words. In this, his work may be linked to that of other text-based artists such as Lawrence Weiner. Schlossberg is writing a kind of concrete poetry, whose forms are emphasized by repetition of representative phrases and also by their physical presentation. The reflective aluminum panels, encompassing the world of the spectator, reiterate his belief that culture needs to be humanized in order to become fully effective. —Jonathan Goodman

Edwin Schlossberg: *Community Above Scarcity*, 2004, etched poly-polished aluminum, vinyl lettering, acrylic paint, 24 by 36 inches; at Ronald Feldman.

