

ARTFORUM



Mildred Howard, *From Coal to Cotton... The Last Train*, 1994, cotton, coal, baggage cart. Installation view. From "inSITE94."



Louise Wilson, *Possessed*, 1995, mixed media. Installation view.

have inherited their voracious approach to painting, their sense of humor, their practice of implicating themselves in their work, and their subtle and overt self-criticism. One difference would be scale. Felice keeps his pictures small (drawings under 12 inches and paintings under 5 feet). When Kippenberger featured a real BMW it reeked of class and power; the theatrics of Felice's blue-collar prop is paltry and dreamy, more of a sand-castle vibe.

Felice's images include a human head with the face of a car; a car floating in a toilet; an acrobatic stuck 'n' lick fest, via Matisse-like cutouts on a car hood; a giant fish parked beside a car with lemon slices for wheels (an awesome picture); and his Toyota photographed a dozen times in various places or reflecting off a black limo. Felice casts his car in the lead role of the lonely hero, the freeway as the world, and the landscape as a living organ—writhing like miles of intestines into an infinity of complex scenarios, "Carboy, An Emotional Life." The auto-myopia is a combination security blanket, best friend/self-portrait, lucky charm, and angel—a graceful anchoring device.

The drawings are incredibly loose, wiggly, and soft. His painting palette is aggressive, garish, confidently out of hand. Every rude color combination is perfectly played out, very much a grotesque, cheerful party. Like the twisting tracks in the animated sequence that opens the TV show *Soul Train*, Felice's freeways bend and curve and break off, as if they were circumventing earthquake damage. But these destroyed freeways are like Philip Guston's doughy Klansmen—damn cute. As ambitious as the show is, there's an intense humility leaking through the work. Exalted mundanity and extravagant silliness (how else can you read glitter) are two of his many secret weapons. Making mountains out of

molehills is an honorable occupation, it's so often the other way around, the big idea falling face first in the mud. Taking micro-amusements and jacking them up to the spectacular level of an "Earth, Wind, and Fire" performance is what the common boy and girl need. Exaggeration is one of the true glories of art and life.

—Benjamin Weissman

SAN DIEGO/TIJUANA

"inSITE94"

"inSITE94"—an exhibition of over 100 artists at over 37 venues—basically cashed in on the fence that runs across the Northern edge of Tijuana and divides it from the U.S. as if it were the new p.c. hot spot—California's own Berlin Wall. (One of the artists actually added a graffiti to the fence establishing that connection.) The heart of the show was a series of symbolic works on the border itself that purported to comment on, or somehow collaborate with, the border crossing. There were unexplained breaks in the wall through which, from the Mexican side where young men wait for nightfall to cross into the U.S., the four-wheel-drive trucks prowling on American soil were visible. Next to a large gap in the fence, Silvia Gruner, an artist from Mexico City, affixed a series of replicas of a statue depicting an Aztec goddess giving birth. The implications of such a project are disturbing; Gruner seems to be saying that south-of-the-border lies death, or a pre-life state, and north of the border lies life.

Throughout the show, it was impossible not to be arrested by the troubling juxtaposition of work by young, college-educated, mostly privileged white artists attempting

to one-up each other with displays of iconographic cleverness and Mexican youths waiting in the darkness on the other side. (Interestingly, much of the work sited at the border was later vandalized.) Most of the pieces simply did not live up to the social and political intensity of the site itself. They couldn't help but trivialize the lives of those waiting to cross, only to be trivialized in turn by the harsh realities this place of crossing connotes. There were, however, some works that escaped this fate. Perhaps most successful was Terry Allen's piece which consisted of two vans with bull horns mounted on them situated on both sides of the fence so that self-selected speakers from opposite sides could address one another. There were no implications of hierarchy, or of inside and outside, only people speaking to one another across the expanse that separated them.

Other artists, perhaps prudently, chose sites in the city, such as José Bedia who placed heraldic banners emblazoned with images of colonization and enslavement in the railroad station. Chris Burden's *A Tale of Two Cities*, 1981—, had been shown before, but acquired a new resonance when it was installed in the Children's Museum here. Many smaller works, such as Pepón Osorio's *Public Hearing*, n.d., were housed in the Centro Cultural de la Raza. Outside the Centro was Marcos Ramírez "ERRES" squatter's shack, *Century 21*, 1994, composed of detritus from various parts of Tijuana, which though compelling would have been more convincing if the artist had been living in it.

"inSITE94" rode in on the wave of previous site-specific shows, such as those in Muenster, Ghent, Newcastle, and Sonsbeek, but arrived about five years too late. What it usefully revealed is that the site doesn't really work the way it once did. Today it is probably easier to make a state-

REVIEWS

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—Thomas McEvilley

MONTREAL

LOUISE WILSON AND ALEXA WRIGHT

LA CENTRALE GALERIE
POWERHOUSE

In an attempt to demystify modern medicine, Louise Wilson and Alexa Wright presented "*Corps-Machine engrenage médicale*," (Body-machine medical machine), a show that not only emphasized the highly codified and symbolic nature of the rituals of modern medicine, but gave the viewer a sense of where the human and the scientific seem distinctly at odds. Wilson and Wright contend that the precision-driven instruments, diagnostic procedures, and emphasis on objective data of specialized medicine leave the patient with little control over his or her own body.

For *Transplant I*, 1995, Wright presented her reconstruction of a surgical heart transplant in a corridor of the gallery, at the back of which hung a life-sized photo of a knight in armor. In Wright's words "the transplanted body and the armored body present two opposed expressions of being, both of them addressing some of the metaphors which exist around the body as malleable or invulnerable object." Speakers inserted into the walls broadcast a recording of a heart-transplant operation that took place at St. George's Hospital in London earlier this year. Minute, backlit, color photos of another operation, each disconnected and with no apparent relation to the next, or even the corridor site, emphasized how invisible the elements of our body are to us without the aid of technology. The macabre neutrality of the gallery space exacerbated the sense that technology splits the body into simple visual packages or fragments, and in so doing questions its wholeness. Wright's corridor suggested a place of passage, a temporary, labyrinthine, and depersonalized site within a site. In conjunction with the exhibition, Wright presented *Transplant II*, 1995, at La Maison de Grefés, an organ-transplant hospital in the east end of Montreal. Here, texts written by organ-transplant patients were available for reading on a table into which representations of all the body's inner organs except the heart were incised in frosted glass.

Wilson's *Possessed*, 1995, generated images of the human brain on a screen placed above an antique-looking analyst's couch set on a carpeted black platform in an open

SUMMER 1995 113

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