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cover:
Neil Jenney *Hunter and Hunted and Helper*. 1969 55" x 60" acrylic on canvas

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APEX



HUNTER AND HUNTED AND HELPER

Ornament and Landscape

On the Nature of Artifice

curated by **Tom Huhn**



Ann Agee *Pink Budino* 1996 12" x 30" gouache on paper

ORNAMENT AND LANDSCAPE
On the Nature of Artifice

"Ornament : any decoration that has no referent outside of the object on which it is found."

OLEG GRABAR

"The landscape thinks itself in me."

CÉZANNE

"...with what intensity nature or a landscape can negate us. At the heart of all beauty lies something inhuman, and these hills, the softness of the sky, the outline of these trees at this very minute lose the illusory meaning with which we had clothed them, henceforth more remote than a lost paradise."

CAMUS



Helen Berggruen *Path Work Luxembourg Gardens* 1996 41.25" x 31.75" oil on canvas

"A landscape as depicted by an artist is a manifestation -- such a work of the intellect assumes a higher rank than the mere natural landscape. For everything spiritual is better than anything natural."

HEGEL

"Like money, landscape is a social hieroglyph that conceals the actual basis of its value. It does so by naturalizing its conventions and conventionalizing its nature."

W. J. T. MITCHELL



Robert Berliand *May Hickory* 1996 24" x 16" oil on masonite

The work assembled here prompts the distinction, which is nonetheless obvious, between ornaments and landscapes.

Yet these works not only sustain but also dissolve that distinction. The dissolution of that distinction

is an event occurring *between* the works as well as a force residing *within* individual ones. In short, the exhibition enacts the continuity between the made and the made-to-resemble-nature.



Richmond Burton (title withheld at artist's request) 1995 45" x 36" oil on linen



Vija Celmins Ocean Surface Woodcut 1992 19.25" x 15.5" woodcut

Landscape is less a thing and more an event, regardless whether it comes to appearance as vista, genre of depiction, or simply within the imagination alone.

Landscape takes place as the act of fashioning nature into an expanded, as well as an expansive, thing. It was

Cézanne who most fully recognized at what cost these expansions were fabricated. Cézanne recoiled from landscape's



Alison Moritsugu Landscape_End of Day 1996 42" x 58" x 2.5" oil on wood (logs)

expansive projection of space precisely because the trajectory of that project tended only outward and away from the body of the beholder. Space was thus eviscerated by the very technique invented to evoke and to maintain its boundaries. In his rich writings on Cézanne, the phenomenologist Maurice Merleau-Ponty presents the painter's solution as a turn toward space and landscape depicted as inhabited rather than projected. Cézanne thus paints the experience of being within space rather than



Peter Hristoff Song 1996 30" x 12" mixed media on panel

looking out upon it. His paintings embody space without disavowing it, by finding the internal complement to an externalizing projection.

Ornaments are equally just such internal complements. So too do they take up space, however modestly, as well as taking up the project of space. Indeed, it is precisely in their modesty that their wealth



Georgia Marsh Bad-dart 1997 72"x36" oil acrylic / canvas

(a tradition that might also be likened to the vision of real estate). Hence the space of ornament -- of an object which "has no referent outside" itself -- is unrecognizable yet homey. Ornaments look like nothing we've seen, indeed they even withhold asserting that they resemble anything at all.



Ellen K. Levy Cabinet of Wonders: Two orders 1997 36" x 24" oil on wood

resides, for ornaments are products, like Cézanne's landscapes, of a turn inward and away from projected space. Ornaments do not so much reject spatialization as they rather introject the production of space. They are thus at once both critiques as well as enhancements of the primary tradition according to which space has been produced



Doug Martin Homestead 1996 40" x 30" oil, maps on canvas



Ann Messner Island 1996 60"x47"x21" tree trunk, cast iron, electric cable, heating element with cable, wax, wood and metal

The techniques enacted by the works here, according to which the introjecting and inhabiting of space take place, are those of adornment and decoration. Since ornamentation consists first and foremost not in the display of an object or a space but rather in the gesture of referring back only toward itself, ornaments are produced by the technique of an endless inward pointing. In this regard ornaments -- and especially those placed upon our bodies -- always move only toward us, perhaps as if they even begin already within us. Since ornaments inexorably point and refer only to themselves, it seems extremely odd that they point or refer to all. What impulse gives rise to ornament -- to ornament's insistent self-referencing -- and more particularly, what gives rise to the ornamenting of landscape?



Michael Norton #11 1996 15" x 20" egg tempera on gesso panel



Jules Olitski Early Tide 1996 15.5" x 17" oil on ragboard

Ornament itself provides an answer to these questions: the impulse arises from the absent experience of space. Rather than thing-like, let alone a mere thing, space is, like landscape, an event which requires conjuring up. The ornamental aspects of the work in this exhibition are not simply decorative appropriations of the genre of landscape. Unlike appropriation, an artistic technique which is but an ironic version of shopping, ornaments are instead hieroglyphic upon the body of landscape. These ornaments would have that body turn aside from all gestures away from itself, in order to return more directly to itself. Space without expanse, breadth without vision, ornament promises the inhabitation of a space we haven't yet glimpsed. Ornaments look -- or rather feel -- like the return of pleasure.



Harriet Shorr Dreaming of Delray 1995 50" x 25" 1995 oil on canvas

Tom Huhn ©1997



John Torreano Untitled 1996 42" x 66" Krylon, acrylic, gems on wood