

GLADSTONE GALLERY

Heartney, Eleanor, "Review-Jim Hodges," *Art in America*, November 1998, pp. 135

shore scene enclose the words "They should bottle a day like this") to the insider joke. In *15 Men on a Dead Man's Chest*, bottles attached to the canvas enclosed magazine cutouts of macho or hefty men. The bottles pile up on a painted "corpse" of an ample, naked, clearly identifiable New York art-world figure. The same guy can be recognized by his eyes as *Octopus*, his multiple tentacles holding bottles (again real) containing, this time, snapshots of dealers, artists and art journalists.

Tower is probably destined to become a cult figure. This kind of eccentricity is too lacking in irony to attract the pundits who write the scholarly books, but it dazzles viewers with force of personality and will, to say nothing of manic irreverence.

[A selection of Tower's recent work was also seen in a solo show at Serge Sorokko Gallery, New York.] —Janet Koplos

Jim Hodges at CRG

The centerpieces of this exhibition were a pair of wall works set at right angles. As *close as I can get* is a mosaic of small, rectangular color chips set in a wozy grid. An adjacent wall held *Folding (into a greater world)*, a grid of small, slightly irregular mirror chips. When the viewer stood so that the former was reflected in the latter, the erratic pattern of the mosaic was intensified. One felt thrust into a cubist universe where the visible world is on the verge of disintegrating into broken shards of color.

At his best, Hodges effects a magical transformation on ordinary materials. His work is suffused with echoes of Fluxus, though certain pieces contain obvious debts to artists like Ed Ruscha, Sol LeWitt and Lawrence Weiner. But the artists with whom he shares the closest kinship are his contemporaries Tom Friedman and Tim Hawkinson. Like them, he is able to take an object or material which seems insignificant and make it into something arresting and lyrical.

Hodges's tools include displacement, scale shifts and conceptual and perceptual paradox. *Landscape* is a white dress shirt literally stuffed with other more colorful shirts of incrementally smaller size. One senses their bulk within the buttoned-up

garment laid out on a plywood table, but they are visible only inside the collar, where their edges encircle the neck area like the rings of an ancient tree.

The dress shirt reappears in *When the light comes on*. One half of the shirt would fit a fully grown adult but the other is child-size. The two halves are seamlessly connected, suggesting the coexistence of man and boy in the same psychic body.

The exhibition also contained a series of small drawings which seem to operate both as speculative exercises and, in a few cases, as prototypes for actual pieces. They range from the purely textual—one consists of the words, printed backwards, "If there had been a pool it would have reflected us"—while others include desultory sketches. The latter include a branch which grows in two directions and a shoe that, like the dress shirt but somewhat less successfully, is bifurcated into adult and child sizes. A continuous thread is the mingling of the natural and the artificial under conditions that are incongruous and contradictory.

While their larger meanings are elusive, Hodges's works produce little shocks of surprise and pleasure. They make the case for a poetry which is latent in everyday reality.

—Eleanor Heartney

p.t.t.red at Four Walls

The artist team known as p.t.t.red (for "paint the town red") is made up of Hans Winkler and Stefan Micheel, two Berlin-based conceptual provocateurs whose art projects are a form of intellectual sleight of hand. The duo, for example, once prompted a German newspaper to report that bears had returned to a national park after the artists were spotted prowling around the woods in bear suits.

More recently p.t.t.red joined with compatriots from the Brooklyn alternative space Four Walls to commemorate "Meeting Point: No-Man's-Land," a two-part work realized late last year near the Brenner Pass, a centuries-old alpine trade route across a historically disputed borderline between Italy and Austria. The centerpiece of that project is an elaborate spiritual retreat created by p.t.t.red in an abandoned shepherd's cabin about a two-hour trek from the



Jim Hodges: *Landscape*, 1998, cotton, silk, polyester and vinyl, 64 by 34 by 6 1/2 inches; at CRG.

pass. The two artists equipped the cabin with a bed, heater and other creature comforts and, after soliciting suggestions from scientists, philosophers and writers around the world, created a library of books in a variety of languages from writers as diverse as Peter Handke, Franz Kafka, T.C. Boyle, Lewis Mumford and Rudolf Bahro. Anyone can visit the cabin by signing out the key from a well-known tavern in Brenner.

In town, Micheel and Winkler organized an exhibition of work by artists from Italy, Austria, Germany and the U.S. Twenty-six artists from Four Walls sent over pieces based on p.t.t.red's hilariously sneaky Statue of Liberty transformation in June 1995. (Dressed in laughably fake park-ranger outfits, the two benign art guerrillas managed to place red filters over the statue's floodlights without being detected. Later, as the automatic lights came on, the statue was transformed into a brilliant and unsanctioned scarlet monument.)

At the Brooklyn event, Four Walls recreated its contribution to the Brenner Pass project through a group exhibition that evoked

the region's historic involvement in trade. Participants had exchanged their works for a variety of goods, trading with visitors to the Brenner exhibition. The results of the exchanges (including a \$100 bottle of Chateau Mouton Rothschild 1975 and, I can personally testify, several very good Cuban cigars) were put on display (or consumed) along with copies of the American works that had been traded. There were also films and videos showing the work of other invited artists installed at various sites around Brenner and in two railroad cars supplied by the government.

In fact, the entire project evoked the theme of borders being ignored, dismissed or transcended. Even contemplated from a small space in Brooklyn, the cabin project radiates a sense of transglobal invitation and serenity. It embodies a metaphorical and geographical respite from the emotional and political demands of prosaic nationalism, while providing an opportunity to contemplate an eclectic repository of the world's wisdom amid the isolated splendor of the Alps.

—Calvin Reid

p.t.t.red: View of shepherd's cabin near the Brenner Pass for "Meeting Point: No-Man's-Land," 1997.

