

**"LIKE A BODY
WITHOUT A SHADOW"**

CURATED BY CHRISTOPHER FRENCH

L.C. Armstrong
James Drake
Ilya Kabakov
Niek Kempers
Claudia Matzko
Buzz Spector

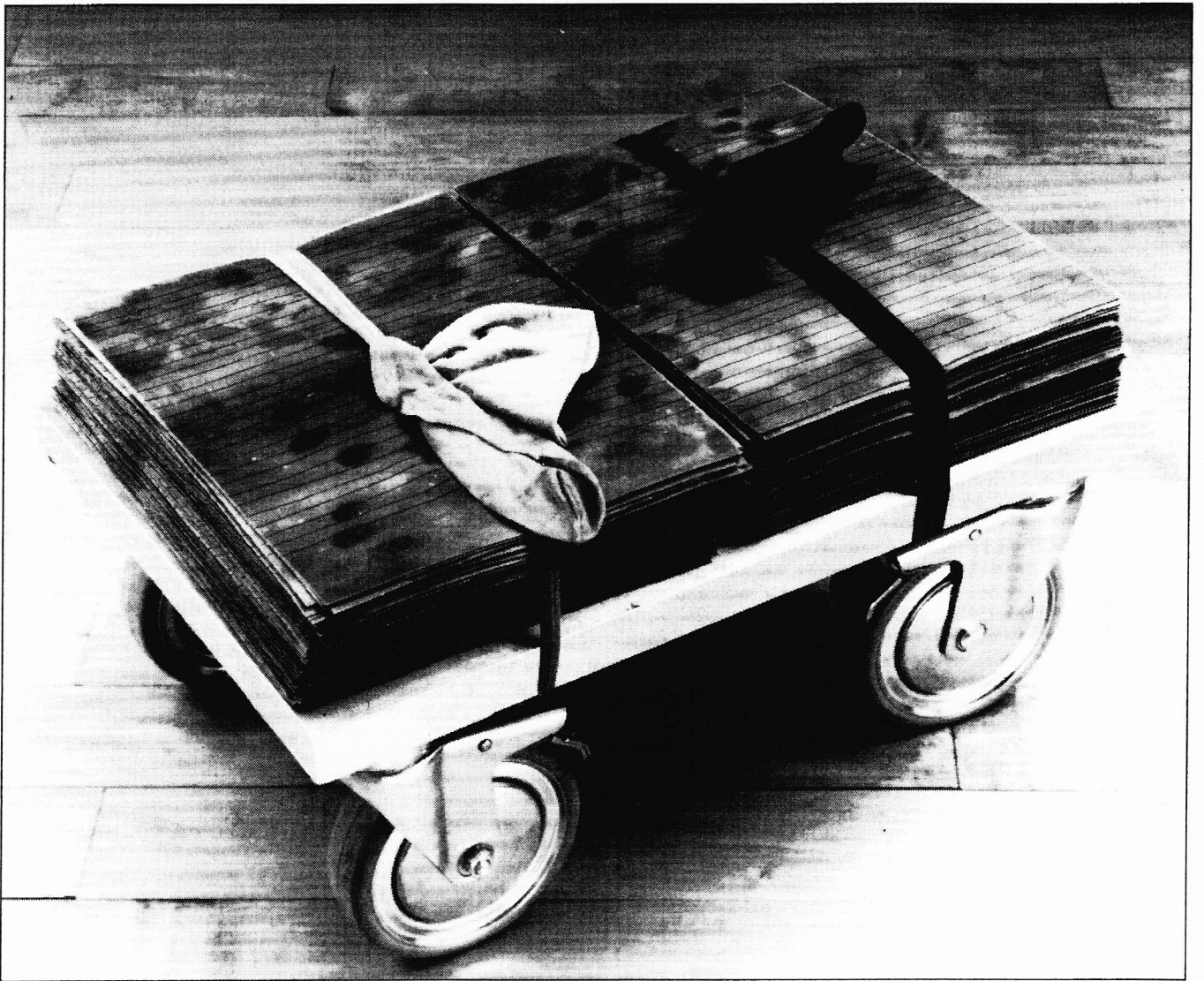
OCTOBER 1-30, 1993

Opening reception

FRIDAY, OCTOBER 1

6-8 PM

L . C . A R M S T R O N G

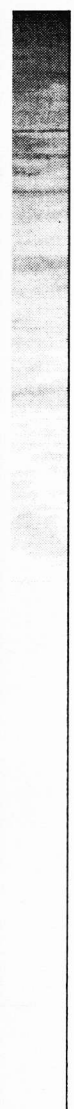


If, out of some perversity of tradition, only one version of some mythical event has come down to us, it is like a body without a shadow, and we must do our best to trace that invisible shadow in our minds.

—ROBERTO CALASSO, *The Marriage of Cadmus and Harmony*

While we take for granted the daily physicality of our bodily existence, we also possess a shadowlessness, an abstract reality of which we are constantly aware. This self-conscious state—this “body without a shadow”—necessarily exists outside of time. The artists in this exhibition base their work on their recognition that the autonomy of self is fundamentally divorced from descriptive depictions of the physical world. Their hybrid forms acknowledge that responsibility for self exists independently of material scrutiny and analysis, or the variables of time and place. In this sense, their artistic inventions invert the presumptions of that most quotidian component of modern thinking, photography. Turning their back on photographic conventions regarding the recording of time’s shadow, their work is not about reportorial shadings or sentimental records. Instead, it replaces the objectivity of description with something like the authority of a declarative sentence, which emphasizes the subjective immediacy of “I” as a point of departure. This “I” also extends to and implicates the viewer’s participation in endowing the work of art as a communicative vessel.

Combining symbols of futility with structures of utility, **L.C. Armstrong’s** objects suggest metaphors for repression transcended. In her sculpture *Dead Lock*, two neatly stacked bundles of lined latex sheeting, marred only by the smudged fingerprints of the artist’s hands, are bound to a small, wheeled cart by two pairs of nylons—one dark, the other flesh-colored. Armstrong ensconces notions of female identity within this odd melange of seemingly unconnected industrial and domestic materials. In a similar sense, *Roll-A-Text* combines two totally unrelated materials with starkly different associations of usefulness—lint and an office rolodex—to evocatively suggest the blurred boundaries between the intimate privacy of individual autonomy and the group dynamic of societal identity.



Ilya Kabakov's art investigates displacement by charting the geography of the most humble and exalted of life's events. Ostensibly imageless, the diptych drawing *Inna Borisovna Zinchenko/Olga Borisovna Seminal* articulates and illuminates the mundane, dispirited haggling of a marketplace dialogue. The interior of Kabakov's drawing is pointedly empty: all the action is at the margins, as the artist withholds imagery while using language to circumscribe the boundaries of human interaction. On the other hand, the same format in *Elena Pavlova Elizarova/Elena Michailovna Gan*, complicated only by a delicately outlined pair of small wings attached to the vertical boundary lines traversing the center of the drawing, provokes a subtly ironic inquiry concerning the rights to ownership of spiritual attributes.

Buzz Spector's gridded compositions of postcards emphatically deny our access to the veracity of the photographic image. Partially obliterated through a delicate process of erasure, antique postcard images of lovers or views of pre-World War I Berlin vanish into thin air, with only the merest vignettes—a pair of lips, a church spire—remaining as nebulous but palpable indicators of a previous generation's history, gestures, and emotions. Whether presenting his collections of eroded fragments in a collage ensemble in *The Fool*, or sequencing them in a landscape-like arrangement across a concave, horizontally curved steel armature in *Rust Belt #3*, Spector intends that we the viewer complete the communication inherent in his pointed vocabulary of interruption and recontextualization.

In **James Drake's** lush charcoal drawings, animals collide with human culture, suggesting visceral metaphors for the artifice of divisions between the earthy qualities of physicality and the ephemeral manifestations of spirituality. Drake's emphasis on the duality of existence derives from his observations of the interconnected life of the Texas border town of El Paso and its Mexican equivalent, Ciudad Juárez. Stating his forms in terms of complimentary opposites, Drake describes the manmade world of culture in shades of black, rendering the other, more natural state through erasure in terms of light tones. In *Iguana Goblets*, he merges two discordant representations to highlight the material richness inherent to even the most diverse forms of life.