

## André Kertész

National Gallery of Art

Washington, D.C.

The National Gallery of Art's resplendent André Kertész exhibition is scholarly and serious, but it is also pure delight, with one stunning picture after another. This first-ever comprehensive U.S. retrospective of the work of Kertész (1894–1985), organized by National Gallery of Art photography curator Sarah Greenough and on view through the 15th of next month, the show authoritatively confirms that the Hungarian artist was one of the pioneers of 20th-century photography.

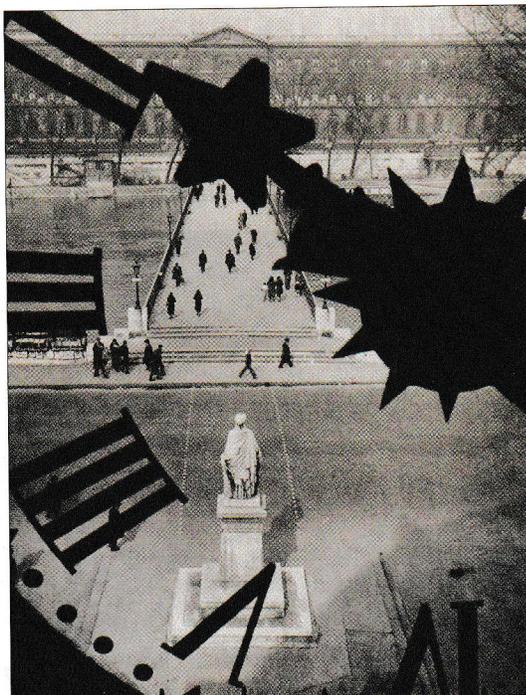
Kertész began making pictures in 1912. Some of the earliest images on view here were taken during his World War I service in the Austro-Hungarian army. Hardly bigger than commemorative postage stamps—Kertész did not have an enlarger—these photos capture the fleeting, poetic moments that punctuate tumult and destruction. In *Soldier with Cello* (1914–18), an infantryman sits alone on a stone bench beside a dirt road, absorbed in playing his cello. There is no audience and no explanation for the occasion. The clarity of the tiny picture is astonishing: each leaf and twig of the nearby underbrush is neatly articulated, and the focus dissolves perfectly down the lane toward a cottage in the distance.

Kertész moved to Paris in 1925 and quickly established a reputation as one of the city's foremost photographers, mingling with and taking pictures of other émigré artists, and documenting the charm and contradictions of Parisian street life. In 1936, the promise of lucrative commercial work drew the artist to New York, where he lived for the rest of his life. While his work was not shown much for many years, two startlingly lucid winter views of Washington Square here—one in 1954, the other in 1968—demonstrate that he continued to take great pictures. It wasn't until the 1970s that he was rediscovered by a new generation of photographers and scholars.

A highly informative, thoughtful, and readable catalogue with excellent reproductions accompanies the show.

—Rex Weil

The exhibition is at the Los Angeles County Museum of Art from June 12 through September 5.



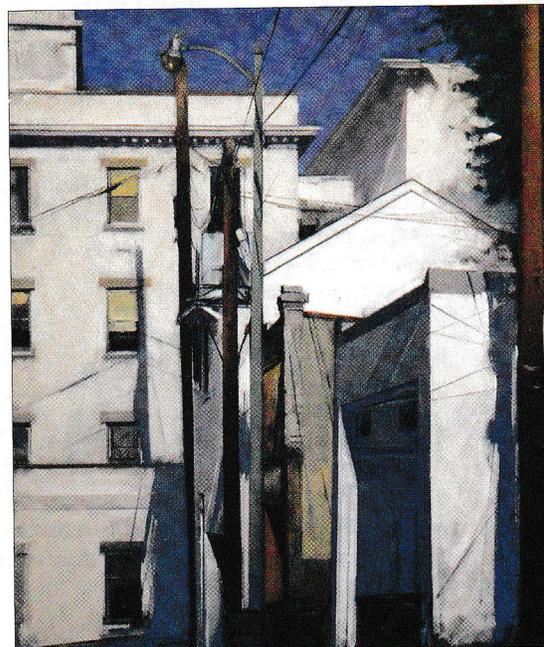
André Kertész, *Clock of the Académie Française*, 1929, gelatin silver print, 9¼" x 6¾". National Gallery of Art.

## Martin Kotler

Hemphill Fine Arts

Washington, D.C.

You could say Martin Kotler paints streetscapes, but what he mostly focuses on are the disheveled backsides of buildings. In this show, he revealed the alleys, service roads, and graffiti-spattered walls of Washington, D.C., the city where he



Martin Kotler, *Shadow #2, The White Alley*, 2004, oil on linen, 24" x 20". Hemphill Fine Arts.

lives and can occasionally be seen working *en plein air*.

There aren't many people in Kotler's work. His paintings are more about how ordinary buildings exist in the natural world, how they look during different seasons, in different light; how they interact with sky and nearby objects—garbage cans, streetlights, and gutter weeds; and how they appear from different angles.

Kotler recalls Charles Sheeler in the way that he works up precise compositions of planes, space, and curves until they veer into abstraction, as in *Shadow #2, The White Alley* (2004), which pulls a beguiling play of shadow and line out of a garage door.

Some paintings here suggested abandonment and alienation, but Kotler deftly varied the mood to hint at the lives and passions of people inside the buildings. In *A Backyard Tree, Winter* (2003), a succession of lines and angles lead past a tree trunk, toward the windows of a whitewashed row house, its parted white curtains framing a dark, upper-story room. Here and in many other works, Kotler keeps the center of gravity a bit off-kilter. You never quite settle into these paintings, and that fact, more than the works' content, lent them a genuine feeling of urban life—unsteady, fresh, and intimate.

This exhibition also included 14 small, exquisite flower paintings. It's hard to find anything innovative about a floral arrangement, and Kotler doesn't, but these decorative jewels showed his technical skill at rendering texture and light to great effect.

—Roger Atwood

## Ken Price

L.A. Louver

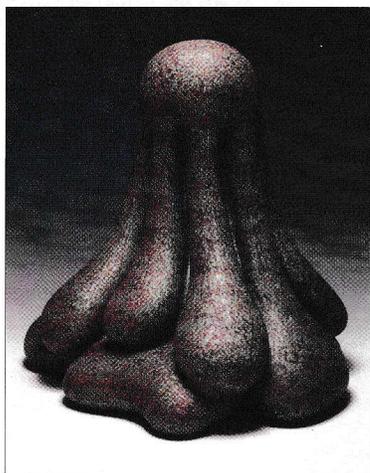
Los Angeles

Ken Price's recent ceramic sculptures looked as though they were dropped into place by an enormous pastry bag or by way of some crude bodily function. Several of the ten works on view here appeared to droop, sag, and melt atop their pristine white

pedestals. Even the few pieces that were coiled up from the base were collapsed at their tops. Like the skin of snakes and frogs, their surfaces are silky and sensual to the touch: not smooth like glass, but seemingly alive and breathing.

Despite the appearance of having been poured into place, Price's hollow sculptures are carved out of clay and fired in a kiln. During the process, sand granules emerge as tiny bumps on the exterior. Price then covers each sculpture with several different coats of acrylic paint—not the glaze typically used to color ceramics. Using fine sandpaper, he abrades the surface of each piece to remove the small lumps and reveal traces of underlying layers of paint.

From a distance, each sculpture glowed in a different, muted hue: blue, green, lavender, pink. Up close, each appeared to be made of Chinese cloisonné or micro-mosaic, the paint having separated



Ken Price, *Bloato*, 2004, acrylic on fired ceramic, 24" x 24" x 22". L.A. Louver.

into infinite patterns within patterns. Yet these sculptures are earthy in every way, the most recently completed being a pile of orange forms accurately titled *The Heap* (2004).

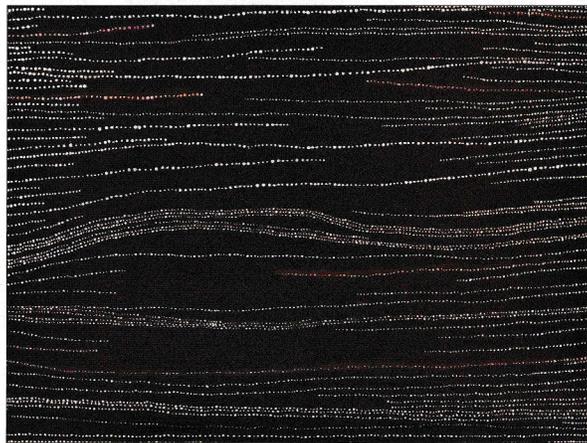
The relaxed, sloppy shapes stand in wry contrast with their own precious, seductive surfaces, proving once again that Price is a master of both his material and its meaning.

—Hunter Drohojowska-Philp

## Dorothy Napangardi

Crown Point Press  
San Francisco

The art world's restless search for novelty has had the unintended consequence of exposing art and artists in places once



Dorothy Napangardi, *Sandhills*, 2004, color soap ground and spit bite and sugar lift aquatints, 25 1/2" x 30 1/2". Crown Point Press.

considered marginal to the main currents of high culture. A few Australian Aboriginal artists, including Warlpiri painter Dorothy Napangardi, number among those who are benefitting from this widened attention.

Napangardi already enjoyed a considerable reputation in certain circles before Crown Point Press invited her to make a suite of prints. The gallery sent master printer Dena Schuckit to Australia to look into Napangardi's world and introduce her to various print techniques, particularly the intaglio process, which the gallery specializes in. Working in a print shop at the National Art School in Sydney, Napangardi produced a series of plates to be shipped back to San Francisco and printed in color aquatint.

This exhibition paired the resulting prints with Napangardi's recent paintings

on canvas, which have obvious stylistic affinities. Working intuitively in both media, Napangardi scatters each pictorial field, and typically the periphery, with patterns of dots. Eyes accustomed to looking at abstract art tend to read the markings as pure punctuation, but for Napangardi and those who share her worldview, works such as *Sandhills* (2004), a print, can evoke maps of desert journeys or spiritual steps toward connecting with ancestors or elusive truths.

Napangardi's prints and paintings restore in viewers comfortable with abstraction some of the bafflement and unease it can still inspire in those new to it. Crown Point brought to Napangardi's work the level of refinement it has granted all the artists lucky enough to have worked under its auspices.

—Kenneth Baker

## Judy Pfaff

Bellas Artes  
Santa Fe

In this show of Judy Pfaff's recent work, the 2004 MacArthur fellow continued to explore dichotomies of chaos and order, organic and man-made, Eastern and Western. But she packaged these themes in a new way. Her large, relieflike, unframed wall constructions, often composed of multiple parts, borrowed from both her past drawings and site-specific installations.



Judy Pfaff, *Tea Room*, 2004, ink, oil stick, doily, bamboo, and ledger sheets on Japanese paper and wood, 67 1/2" x 87 1/2" x 5 1/2". Bellas Artes.

An expert at making creative use of unusual and complex materials, Pfaff frequently employed doilies in this show, encrusting surfaces with them. She used