

## 'A Minimal Future? Art as Object 1958–1968'

MUSEUM OF CONTEMPORARY ART  
Los Angeles

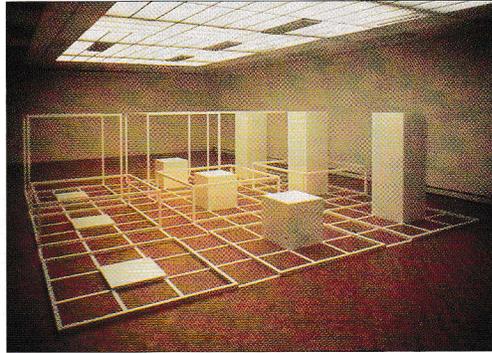
In "A Minimal Future? Art as Object 1958–1968," an exhibition of painting, sculpture, and works on paper from those heady years, the Museum of Contemporary Art's senior curator, Ann Goldstein, produces an eye-opening presentation that is distinctly nondoctrinaire.

Goldstein used an open-minded approach in choosing the 150-some pieces by the 40 artists in the exhibition (on view through August 2). In the capacious entrance gallery, she installed five of Frank Stella's black "pinstripe" paintings from the late 1950s, of which he famously explained, "What you see is what you see." The floor is covered with Carl Andre's steel plates arranged in a square. Nearby are Andre's long stack of beige bricks and two of his wood sculptures, including a fat zigzag, all from the early 1960s. This is Minimalism as most of us think of it. Big, simple, and monotone.

The adjacent gallery features Minimalism as relatively few might think of it: John McCracken's canary-yellow ziggurat, cerulean-blue archway, and crimson plank. The walls blossom with Craig Kauffman's luminous bubbles of pearly pink and banana yellow. This is fiberglass, high-chroma Minimalism as practiced during the same time period but in the parallel universe of Los Angeles.

Here Minimalism is addressed as the artists themselves saw it: as a breaking of all boundaries, getting out of the Abstract Expressionist or hard-edge painting gridlock into the clean, clear grid itself. The show includes works by oft-overlooked Los Angeles artists, such as the illusionist dot-and-line paintings of Robert Irwin and the smoked-glass cubes of Larry Bell, as well as pieces by oft-marginalized women: Jo Baer's white paintings with borders of black and a subdued color; Anne Truitt's masses, columns, and fences. Also included here were Dorothea Rockburne's quirky, soft-surfaced paintings and Eva Hesse's mind-bending melds of repeated forms. The uncompromising Agnes Martin is represented, unfortunately, by a distinctly minor array of paintings and drawings. Judy Chicago's sculptures of giant pastel-colored inverted angles are in a gallery with the mirrored pieces of Robert Smithson, as they were originally seen in the "Primary Structures" show at New York's Jewish Museum in 1966.

The show also includes Minimalist works by artists who later pursued Conceptual art, such as Douglas Huebler's geometric sculptures; Michael Asher's droll visual puns; and Hans Haacke's cube of condensation,



Sol LeWitt,  
*Serial Project #1  
(ABCD) Set B*,  
1966/85,  
baked enamel  
on steel,  
6'9" x 26'8" x 26'8".  
Museum of  
Contemporary Art.

pillar of melting ice, and sheet of chiffon kept perpetually aloft by an air machine.

The luminous paintings of Ralph Humphrey, David Novros, and Brice Marden are accorded a gallery each, as are the L-shaped, painted wood sculptures of Robert Morris. Sol LeWitt's white grid installation *Serial Project # 1 (ABCD) Set B* (1966/85) takes up one of the museum's larger galleries but nearly obliterates the subtle, early white paintings by Robert Ryman and makes for cramped viewing of the brilliant, shaped canvases of Robert Mangold.

Goldstein did not opt for a Minimalist installation. For instance, Donald Judd's wall and floor sculptures are squashed between a leopard-print chair by Claes Oldenburg and the baroque, crushed-steel sculptures of John Chamberlain. Undoubtedly, this arrangement is meant to generate a "conversation" among the pieces, but it seems confusing and historically suspect. These are merely quibbles, however, reflecting the fact that the curator wanted to do more, not less. Who could argue with that?

Goldstein demonstrates how important artists of the time responded to then-new ideas in Minimalism. She proves that Minimalism was bigger than most people consider it and deserves kudos for taking on entrenched art-historical categorizations. This is exactly the sort of exhibition that is in short supply: ambitious, unpredictable, maverick.

—Hunter Drohojowska-Philp

## Mitchell Johnson

TERRENCE ROGERS FINE ART  
Santa Monica

Mitchell Johnson's latest oil paintings of European beach scenes are fresh and pleasing. Using large brushy strokes and bright, often improbable colors, Johnson gives dynamic form to everyday life with an Impressionist sensibility.

In the 2003 work *Numana & Hossegor*, Johnson depicts bathers heading into the sea. The surf is rendered as an abstract swath of frothy white set against a vibrant green horizon. The sand is a field of neon orange, creating a visual correlative for the feel of the heat on one's feet.

In the 2003 work *Bornholm (Yellow Raft)*, Johnson turns an inflated lime-green inner tube, held by a sun-kissed child marching across white sand, into a geometric abstraction. The artist balances the composition with a large yellow rectangular raft held by another beachgoer. Both figures cast cool blue shadows, perfectly capturing the late-afternoon light of a sunny day at the beach. In a series of smaller canvases, Johnson eliminated the figures and zeroed in on geometric patterns, such as the radiating stripes of beach umbrellas.



Mitchell Johnson,  
*Bornholm (Yellow  
Raft)*, 2003,  
oil on canvas,  
14" x 24".  
Terrence Rogers  
Fine Art.