

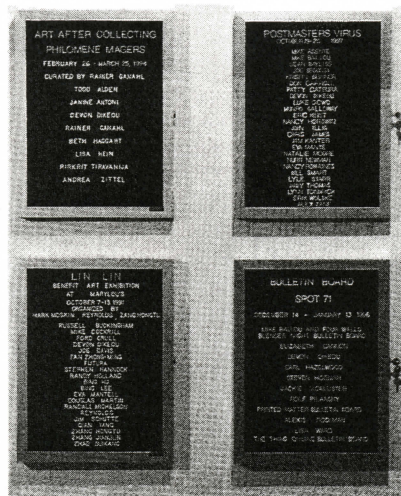
DEVON DIKEOU

POSTMASTERS GALLERY

Art about the art world is practically a genre unto itself, and a fairly limited one. We've seen paintings of art gallery advertisements, drawings of museum floor plans, bar graphs tabulating the output of famous Abstract Expressionists, and in Houston several years ago, a room full of

large canvases with artists' résumés silkscreened onto them, by a conceptualist named Mark Flood. Devon Dikeou's recent installation, a series of signboards recording every group show she has participated in since 1991, resembled Flood's, but had a formal obsessiveness that threatened to lift it out of this cozy realm of metacritique. She documented her group shows, sixty-one in all, using metal-rimmed announcement boards—those ordinary glass display cases with moveable white letters on a black background, frequently seen in churches and the lobbies of SoHo gallery buildings—which she hung in crisp double rows around the walls of the gallery. Each case contained an exhibition's title, opening and closing dates, and a list of participating artists.

In an accompanying statement, Dikeou compared the project to On Kawara's canvases recording the dates on which they are painted, as well as John Baldessari's *Painting That Is Its Own Documentation*, 1968-. These references are apt, but they fail to acknowledge that the project also has its catty side. Documenting her own exhibition history, from major shows to benefit auctions, Dikeou also tracks the comings and goings of other artists, including many famous names. In doing so, she is exposing a "scene"—mostly in New York, from 1991-97—in all its incestuous, internecine glory, and is allowing the public to study how the players paid their dues and climbed (or fell off) the ladder to stardom. Yet her formal presentation strongly militates against this reading. These are not large or elegantly painted canvases, or bar graphs that make information easily



Devon Dikeou, "What's Love Got to Do With It?" (detail) 1991-97, mixed media, 24 x 18" each.

assimilable. The announcement board is absolutely generic, reducing every artist and show to the same democratic level. (She did use different letter sizes, but mainly to accommodate the dozens of names in large group shows, such as the inevitable Christmas theme roundup.)

This overwhelming, bland consistency presented artists not as rising or falling stars but as interchangeable bits of data, masses of information at times coming to resemble strings of DOS commands on makeshift display terminals. In this sense, Dikeou reminds us that "the artist" is a highly malleable construct, vulnerable to context. But if the work does raise some intriguing questions about the politics of art and those of identity formation, in the end it still seemed like a bit of a clubby, inside exercise.

—Tom Moody

ARTFORUM
January 1998