



For immediate release:

An exhibition of assemblages in boxes by AIMEE RANKIN will be on view at Postmasters Gallery, 66 Avenue A, New York City, from March 6 through April 5, 1987.

E C S T A S Y by Aimee Rankin

"How can Love do so much damage?" --Ad for Obsession Perfume

Ecstasy is not about feeling good. By definition, ecstasy involves a 'something more' that cannot be coded, a transgressive element which somehow escapes the constraints of the social order. Ecstasy is the site of an excess, an eruption of what is termed "Beyond the Pleasure Principle" by Freud: the point at which the edge between pleasure and pain has ceased to hold meaning, where desire confronts death in a delirious deconstruction of difference. The psychoanalyst Lacan describes this mystical state as a disintegration of the limits of flesh and feeling, a fullness of sensation overlaid by an absolute sense of loss.

"Too Much is iNever Enough" --MTV Slogan

Inspired by my study of the 19th century and its fascination with sensual excess, the grotto-like bedrooms in The Theater of Love, included in my show last year at Postmasters, provided the basic floor plan for the elaborate settings of Ecstasy. However, in this new project it is an entirely contemporary image of passion which emerges in the complex orchestration of objects, images, and sound in the interiors. Puccini has been replaced by Pop Music as the appropriated arias of divas as diverse as Judy Garland and David Bowie reveal our culture's often perverse preoccupation with love. Soul, Country, Heavy Metal, Disco, and Techno-Pop all seem oddly monotonous in their use of powerful emotional archetypes to appeal to the ears of a populace obsessed with erotic entanglements. Ecstasy consists of 13 boxes arranged in a loosely narrative sequence of elemental emotional states: Attraction, Bliss, Perversity, Suffocation, Fury, Sex, Possession, Jealousy, Sadness, Cruelty, Fear, Loss, and Memory. Each box is an environment of objects chosen for their signifying function in a complex fabric of metaphor and metonymy which milks the dumbest of puns and cliches to provoke the powerful psycho-sexual aspects of fantasmatic spectacle.

continued....



Ain't Nothin' Like the Real Thing, Baby" --Marvin Gaye & Tammi Terell

The banal, featureless exteriors of these boxes are a sardonic comment on the slickly packaged emptiness of art as sublime 'simulacrum'. Here, however, the deceptively 'imploded' blankness of the outside conceals an explosive detonation of that meaning in a blowout of sensual overload on the inside. Through the last remaining affective force found in sheer physicality, these works exist as reliquaries for the rotting shreds of the real. Packed with decorative debris such as reprints of famous paintings, kitsch collectibles, perverted toys, exotic artifacts of nature, and mass-produced memorabilia, this Disneyland of Desire also marks the death of the Object which is parodistically enshrined within each piece. Non-reproducible as a point of resistance to the machinations of mass culture which have so robbed the referent of its power, no photographs will be taken of the interiors because no accurate portrayal of them is possible. The final effect of this work can thus only be imagined until it is actually experienced in the flesh.

"In Which Bedroom Will You Catch the Fatal Virus of Love?"

To activate these artworks, the spectator must insert the jack for a set of headphones into an orifice in the "Control" component of each piece. The issue of control is complicated, for at the same moment that the viewer as voyeur assumes the position of penetrating gaze, the resonance of unconscious associations embedded within each piece mirrors the media's manipulation of the viewer by provoking the emotional equivalent of a Pavlovian response. The gesture of turning the boxes on and off also functions, like Freud's "Fort-Da Game", as the repetitive re-enactment of a symbolic presence and absence playing out the powerful implications of loss. The crucial solitude of the spectators and their physical connection to the art object, which acts as a specular prosthesis, foregrounds the box as an obtrusive barrier and heightens the tension between 'wanting in' and 'wanting out' of this synthesis. One of the most important aspects of the Ecstasy project is its articulation of ambivalence. It is through this ambivalence, and the subtle interplay of repetition and difference at work across the range of variations on a single obsessional theme, that I wish to describe the complexity of desire in all of its euphoric and terrifying force.

"Are You Ready? Are You Ready?" --Sada, In the Realm of the Senses

\* \* \* \*

For more information contact Magdalena Sawon at (212)477-5630.  
Postmasters Gallery is located at Avenue A between 4th & 5th Streets.  
Gallery hours: Wednesday through Sunday & by appointment.

**POSTMASTERS GALLERY • 66 AVENUE A • NYC 10009 • 212/4775630**