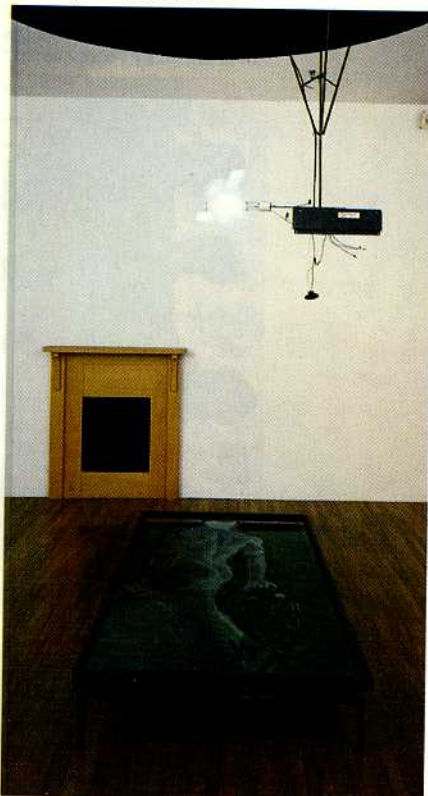


David Nyzio: *Adventures in Articulation* (work in progress), 1994, mixed mediums, 14 by 51 by 99 inches; at Postmasters.



David Nyzio at Postmasters

David Nyzio's work operates on the assumption that nature need not play a passive role in art. In his latest installation, *Adventures in Articulation* (1994), nature is less an object of contemplation than an active determinant. Nyzio always uses organic materials in his process-oriented work. Here algae made a photograph of the artist's own body. The means to this end was part madcap science and part real

invention.

Nyzio suspended a 4-by-8-foot acetate negative bearing a life-size image of his naked form above a slightly elevated 4-by-8 pool of water that had a sheet of paper on the bottom. He added algal cultures to the water and hung a bright electric lightbulb above the negative. Since algae grows faster with more light, as illumination passed through the light areas of the exposed negative over a two-to-three-week period, Nyzio "grew" a photographic print. The bizarre combination of organic ingredients with technological methods also contributed to the enigmatic beauty of the work.

The other works in the show bridged the nature/culture duality with similar eccentricity. In *Three Generations of Life and Death* (1993), a seemingly abstract drawing of five randomly placed circular shapes and a central rectangle was executed in a highly unusual medium—the excretions of milkweed bugs fed colored inks. The geometric figures were the outlines of food and water containers set on a sheet of paper in the bottom of a box; the delicate patterns on the surface of the paper were defined by the activity of the bugs.

The esthetics of all of Nyzio's works are for the most part nature's doing. In an untitled 1994 work in which he arranged two species of exotic beetles on glass, the simultaneously erratic and orderly rhythms of nature were suggested by the wavy lineup of insects. The beetles, as much as 3 inches long, were placed on two sheets of glass, which were stacked over a red background paper. The unaltered natural material created an amazingly artificial effect, giving a twist to supposed distinctions between nature and art.

—Debra Bricker Balken