

FRIEZE  
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# POSTMASTERS

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## Kristin Lucas

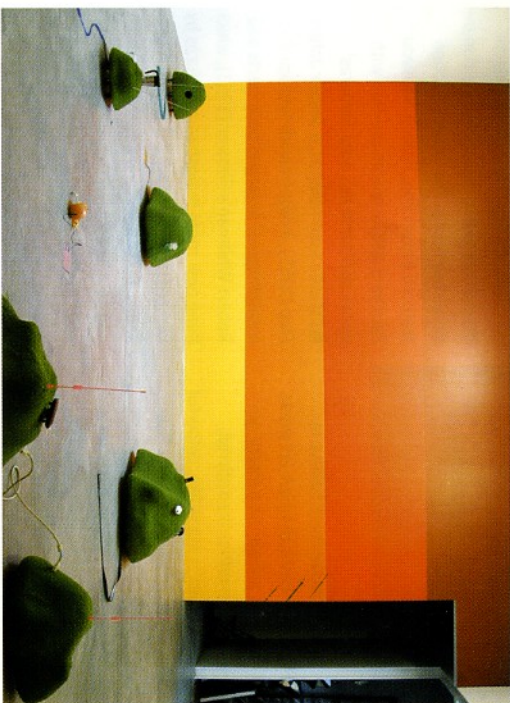
Postmasters Gallery,  
New York

If you hold the work of Valie Export and Adrian Piper dear, you will want to see what Kristin Lucas makes. Perhaps the comparison is premature since 'Alias' is her first solo show in New York, but, at the very least, her themes – spirituality, technology and the body politic – and her impressive exploration of complex ideas, put her in a category far apart from the 'gallerina' clique currently grabbing the spotlight in the New York art scene.

Kristin Lucas  
Installation view

*Mousepad Drawings* (all works 2001) comprises 15 black ink drawings. Lucas made them by filling a computer mouse with ink, and then going on a number of internet excursions using white mousepads as her canvasses. The resultant images 'record' the artist's emailing, gaming, researching and visiting websites or communities. Although the drawings look like quasi-traditional art objects – even a little 'Ab Ex' – they also echo what is happening on the 'server side': while Lucas surfs and interacts, translating experiences into compositions, on the other end of the line cookies and various databases record her information and behaviour. Fanciful counterpoints to the corporate surveillance that occurs as we point and click, *Mousepad Drawings* complicate what we like to think of as our virtual frontier, the Internet.

The centerpiece of 'Alias', a two-channel DVD video entitled *Involuntary Reception*, also documents the body's relationship to technology. When I first watched it, I was struck by the way Lucas yoked together the low, the high, the tragic and comic. The video is about a young woman (played by Lucas) who has too much electromagnetic energy in her body. Initially it came across as an updated fable for our techno-hyped moment. A feminist-informed, character-driven narrative, it centres on a woman isolated by her own magnetism, confused by her market value as a source of radiation, subject to endless unwanted signals, and struggling to find pockets of safety, intrigue and amusement. But it is the details which push *Involuntary Reception* to a more complex level. Without family or friends (even her pet died of static shock from being cuddled), the woman is alone, but not particularly heroic or even charming. She's hard to read. Shown with images of the beach, ocean, casinos, corporate monoculture or grocery stores, she often appears mirrored in both channels, with one frame revealing her electromagnetic infection (via meter and radiation wave effects). The duality of the two-channel set-up, the doubling of the narrator's visage and voice, and her lack of boundaries are accompanied by images both spiritual and profane. To me, these suggest a technologically advanced world more schizophrenic and out of control than it would like to admit. Despite the woman's calm acceptance of her situation, her small triumphs in enjoying casinos and swimming, the video is



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about a rootless character passing through a chaotic system. In this way, *Involuntary Reception* is informed not only by her feminist and technoart mentors, but by science fiction, horror films and Punk.

Also on display are five artificially green *Mobile Units*, wacky sculptures which evoke a hilly, littered, golf course, but are meant to serve as human companions. They're also receptacles for detritus: an outdated video camera, a coffee mug, some forks, a thermometer and useless postage stamps are some of the items implanted into their bright, toxic surfaces. Each unit is inflected with obsolescence, physicality and junk.

At the same time, they're designed to entertain and receive cathected emotions. Playing with these funny little sculptures, you couldn't help but read culture as a kind of rubbish bin. Lucas' well-intentioned *Units* are reminders that for all the (delusional) talk about 'virtual' this and 'instantaneous communication' that, equipment has a short life, techno-materials are toxic and production labour is real.

An animation of Lucas walking around the World Trade Center's parking lot, and a wall mural of a sunset rendered with flat, artificial colours round up a dense show. They're less conspicuous than the other work, but reiterate Lucas' salient theme: that there are some seriously unresolved disjunctions between individuals and their culture.

Rachel Green