



Perry Hoberman, *Faraday's Garden*, 1990. Installation view.

or, rather, propositional; the artist left all the wires, mats, and switches exposed. The implicit behaviorism of the setup ultimately fell flat on its face; instead of a convincing illusion, what Hoberman courts is the viewer's willingness to suspend disbelief. Like his previous 3-D work, here the charm is due less to the total effect than to the presentation of artifice as artifice. The installation's poetry depends on the metaphoric potential of the preposition "if."

Perhaps a historical antecedent for this provisional world can be found in Charles Fourier's utopian visions. But instead of rivers of tea and chocolate or steamed spinach springing up in beds bordered with croutons, Hoberman conjures up a hot-house of dingy, outmoded commodities. Cut off from any utility, their ostensible autonomy is as absurd as the everyday alienation of the products of labor from the hands which made them.

The theatrical vitality of the appliances masks their functional anthropomorphism; each object has been designed to conform to or respond to the human hand. By shifting control from the hand with its superior dexterity to the comparatively inarticulate foot, Hoberman allegorizes the worker's confrontation with seemingly estranged goods in the marketplace. The foot switch displaces the pedestal, conflating the Biblical prohibition against graven images (the golden calf) with commodity fetishism à la foot fetishism. Here *Faraday's Garden* echos Haim Steinbach's esthetic, but its fantastic quality makes an earthly paradise of plain commodities.

If the fable of a naive dream gone sour clearly indicts capital's exploitation of utopian expectations, the installation's playfulness nonetheless suggests that the next phase of social transformation must be

sought in these selfsame aspirations. At stake here is the disenchantment and re-enchantment of the world.

—John Miller

## PERRY HOBERMAN POSTMASTERS

Perry Hoberman's new interactive installation, entitled *Faraday's Garden*, featured dozens of used household appliances, arrayed across a waist-high counter. Spanning an entire room, the platform was cut through with a circular path, carpeted with mats equipped with pressure-sensitive switches. As viewers made their way through the "diorama," their footsteps automatically triggered appliances ranging from hair dryers and electric knives to film projectors. Turned on inadvertently, the appliances seem almost autonomous, inspiring the childlike fantasy of a living garden of consumer goods.

Electricity is reinvested with magical powers, yet the suggestion is only partial.

