

THE BURLINGTON MAGAZINE

Front Matter

Source: *The Burlington Magazine*, Vol. 142, No. 1163 (Feb., 2000), pp. i-74

Published by: Burlington Magazine Publications Ltd.

Stable URL: <http://www.jstor.org/stable/888663>

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THE BURLINGTON MAGAZINE



ART IN EIGHTEENTH-CENTURY ROME

Print sources for Piranesi
Obelisk designs in Pius VI's Rome
Bellotto's early views of Rome

Filippo Juvarra Bernardino Cametti Domenico Muratori

Velázquez and Seville Tissot Fauvism Bruce Conner

USA \$33.00

FEBRUARY 2000

UK £11.80

Contents

Editorial	75
Bernardo Bellotto's seven large views of Rome, c.1743 BY CARL VILLIS	76
Some sources for Piranesi's early architectural fantasies BY BENT SØRENSEN	82
Obelisk designs by Giovanni Stern BY JEFFREY COLLINS	90
Shorter Notices	
Designs by Filippo Juvarra for the convent of S. Maria dell'Umiltà, Rome BY TOMMASO MANFREDI	101
Two angels by Bernardino Cametti in Madrid BY FRANK MARTIN	104
Domenico Maria Muratori's last painting BY DIANE H. BODART	108
Letter	
Morazzone's 'Madonna del miele' BY ALASTAIR LAING	112
Book Reviews	113
Venetian Colour: Marble, Mosaic, Painting and Glass 1250–1550 (<i>Paul Hills</i>); Taddeo e Federico Zuccari, fratelli pittori del Cinquecento. Vol. 1 (<i>Cristina Acidini Luchinat</i>); Palazzo Lancelotti ai Coronari (<i>Patrizia Cavazzini</i>); The 'Divine' Guido. Religion, Sex, Money and Art in the World of Guido Reni (<i>Richard E. Spear</i>); Saints and Sinners: Caravaggio and the Baroque Image (ed. <i>Franco Mormando</i>); Sinners and Saints, Darkness and Light: Caravaggio and his Dutch and Flemish Followers (<i>Dennis P. Weller et al.</i>); Caravaggio's 'St. John' and Masterpieces from the Capitoline Museum in Rome (<i>Maria Elisa Tittoni et al.</i>); Painting Religion in Public: John Singer Sargent's 'Triumph of Religion' at the Boston Public Library (<i>Sally M. Prome</i>).	
Exhibition Reviews	118
LONDON, VENICE and NEW YORK: Women artists in revolutionary Russia; LONDON: Moynihan, Hodgkin, Hume; PARIS: Fauvism; PARIS, MORLAIX, BOURG-EN-BRESSE and TOURCOING: Painting in France since 1955; SEVILLE: Velázquez and Seville; PITTSBURGH: Carnegie International; MINNEAPOLIS and FORT WORTH: Bruce Conner; NEW HAVEN, QUÉBEC and BUFFALO: James Tissot.	
Calendar	132

In the March issue

Dutch and Flemish art

A painted plate by Pieter Bruegel the Elder

Van Dyck's 'Los Meninos'

Rembrandt and Van Renesse

Dutch Classicism Apocalypse at the British Museum

Matthias Stom in Birmingham Ingres's pupils C.R.W. Nevinson

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Annual Subscription Rates (12 issues including postage):

United Kingdom £163
North America (air-speeded) US \$428.50
Rest of the world £185

Subscription Enquiries:

14-16 Duke's Road
London WC1H 9AD

Telephone: 020-7388 1228 Fax: 020-7388 1229

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Printed in England by BAS Printers Ltd,
Over Wallop, Hampshire

US mailing agent: Royal Mail International,
DIR 15303, P.O.Box 618000, Dallas TX 75261-8000
Periodicals postage paid at NYNY
The Burlington Magazine ISSN 0007 6287

Attributions and descriptions relating to objects advertised in the magazine are the responsibility of the advertisers concerned

THE BURLINGTON MAGAZINE PUBLICATIONS LTD.

14-16 DUKE'S ROAD, LONDON WC1H 9AD

Telephone: 020-7388 1228 Fax: 020-7388 1229 Editorial telephone: 020-7388 8157 Editorial fax: 020-7388 1230

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Website: www.burlington.org.uk

THE BURLINGTON MAGAZINE

Carnegie International. Pittsburgh

Author(s): David Carrier

Source: *The Burlington Magazine*, Vol. 142, No. 1163 (Feb., 2000), pp. 128-129

Published by: Burlington Magazine Publications Ltd.

Stable URL: <http://www.jstor.org/stable/888683>

Accessed: 17-09-2016 17:10 UTC

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Pittsburgh Carnegie International

There are several revealing routes by which to enter the current Carnegie International (at **Carnegie Museum of Art, Pittsburgh**, to 26th March). If you go in through the sculpture courtyard, you first encounter Olafur Eliasson's installation *Your natural denudation* blowing steam through a shallow pool of water. You then come to Suchan Kinoshita's sequence of makeshift wooden rooms on the stairs taking you to the second floor. If you come in by way of the Natural History Museum, you climb the stairs in front of the turn-of-the-century mural celebrating Pittsburgh's industries to reach Kendell Geers's installation of many monitors showing a suspect undergoing violent police interrogation. And if you enter through the main street entrance, you can watch Diana Thater's video of sharks and other underwater creatures projected on the wall behind the restaurant.

This first impression of an emphasis on installations and videos is confirmed in the enormous front and back corridors on the two floors of the Carnegie devoted to the International. On the second floor, in Ann Hamilton's *welle*, almost invisible water droplets run down a very long section of the high white gallery wall; Shirin Neshat's films projected on enormous double screens compare everyday life in Iran and America; and William Kentridge, winner of the 1999 Carnegie Prize, shows an animated film about life in South Africa. In a gallery behind plaster casts of Greco-Roman sculpture, Kara Walker's silhouettes illustrate the history of slavery; and Kerry James Marshall's hand-made comics, set in a vitrine mimicking storefront windows of the inner city, tell the story of a superhero. Looking down to the first floor, you see the open court filled with Martin Kippenberger's *The happy ending of Franz Kafka's 'Amerika'*



105. *The happy ending of Franz Kafka's 'Amerika'*, by Martin Kippenberger. 1994/99. Mixed media installation (Artist's estate and Galerie Gisela Capitain; exh. Carnegie Museum of Art, Pittsburgh).

(Fig.105), a gargantuan assemblage of cast-off furniture. Other second-floor galleries present further installations. Gabriel Orozco sets four ping-pong tables around a pond, Bodys Isek Kingelez builds an imagined city, Nahum Tevet fills a gallery bay with painted wood constructions, and Sarah Sze's assemblages of household utensils climb the walls like out-of-control ivy (Fig.107).

In this International, painting and sculpture play a marginal rôle. Three of Alex Katz's beautiful big paintings are displayed in the intense natural light of the entrance lobby. They have some connexion with the proposed theme of the show, 'a preoccupation with what constitutes the real'. But it is harder to make interesting links between this programme and the other paintings on display – John Currin's nudes, Chris Ofili's pop image appropriations, Edward

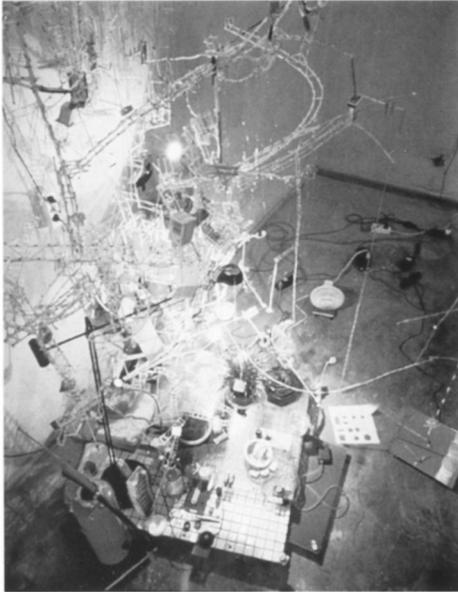
Ruscha's grim pictures, or Luc Tuymans's anaemic ones. One ritual associated with large survey exhibitions is the publication of a catalogue with essays devoted to theorising;¹ another, that the curator identifies the period style of the art on display. Here, the ingenious catalogue writers discuss urban planning, multinational capitalism and Jacques Derrida's reputation in America – topics difficult to relate to the actual art on display. I enjoyed taking off my shoes to climb into Ernesto Neto's *Nude plasmic* (Fig.108), a room-sized compartment constructed of stretchy fabric that stuck to my socks. And I liked entering the disorienting rooms built by Gregor Schneider. But you need not know much about cyberspace, deconstruction or economics to understand these installations. When the distance is so great between the art on display and such bookish catalogue theorising, I myself prefer to describe the period style of these artists in a simpler way.

This exhibition has some eighty works by forty-one artists – twelve women (including the identical twins, Jane and Louise Wilson; Fig.106), two Africans, three artists from Asia, three people working in Los Angeles and eight from New York. Making large installations or enormous video images is the easiest and most effective way in which to compete with popular media such as television. The Chinese artist Chen Zhen displays an assemblage of appliances and chamber pots; Takashi Murakami, who is Japanese, presents flying female figures becoming aeroplanes; and Willie Doherty makes documentaries about Northern Ireland's political conflict. This new international style permits artists to incorporate references to their local culture in ways that speak to international audiences as well as well-travelled curators. You need not know much about the cultures of China, Japan and Ireland to find these works impressive.

Today, as in the seventeenth century – another great age of international travel – much art inspires a sense of wonder. The strongest works here are the videos. In this demanding visual environment, it is hard



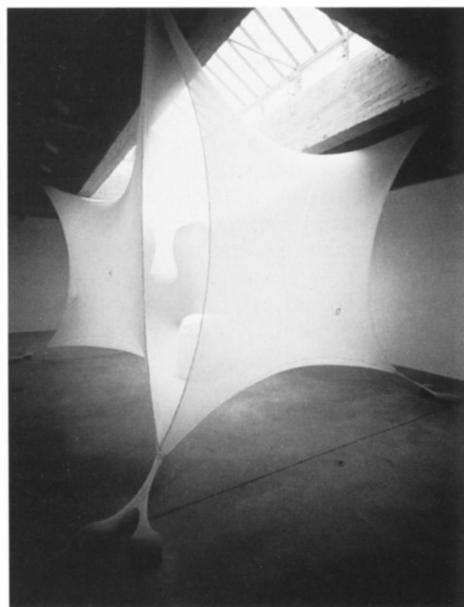
106. *Console: Gamma*, by Jane and Louise Wilson. 1999. C-print on aluminium with aluminium edging (Arts Council of England; exh. Carnegie Museum of Art, Pittsburgh).



107. *Second means of egress*, by Sarah Sze. 1998. Mixed media, dimensions variable (MORA Foundation; exh. Carnegie Museum of Art, Pittsburgh).

to focus on Laura Owens's well-mannered paintings or Thomas Demand's determinedly inert photographs. Set a large video-screen next to any painting or photograph and the viewer will turn from the still object to the moving image. We are easily astonished by movie pictures and installations and readily fascinated by violent scenes or images of hard-to-identify things. In this exhibition, Roman Signer's wry videos or Jeff Wall's restrained view of a workman cleaning the Mies van der Rohe building in Barcelona cannot compete with the more flamboyant images nearby.

The 1999 Carnegie International is best seen as a revival of the Wunderkammer, that pre-modern museum devoted to wondrous objects. The artefacts in this exhibition look more like the bizarre machines



108. *Nude plasmic*, by Ernesto Neto. 1998. Stocking, styrofoam and sand, approx. 365.1 by 427 by 640.5 cm. (Bonakdar Jancou Gallery, New York; exh. Carnegie Museum of Art, Pittsburgh).

and marvels displayed in Athanasius Kircher's famous Jesuit College museum in Rome, than a presentation of modernist art. To my eye, the work shown here is wildly uneven, but what matters in this International is less the individual artworks than the *Gesamtkunstwerk* established by the curator. Walking through the exhibition is like viewing a brilliantly composed movie montage. Madeleine Grynsztejn, a virtuoso organiser, makes very effective use of the setting provided by the Carnegie's galleries. She orchestrates our movement through the museum's spaces to achieve the maximum dramatic effect. A post-historical exhibition should be a spectacle. Astonish us, we ask – show us something wondrous! Judged by this test alone, Grynsztejn's show is a great success.

DAVID CARRIER
Getty Research Institute

¹*Carnegie International 1999/2000*. By Madeleine Grynsztejn and others. 207 pp., ill. throughout in col. and b. & w. (Carnegie Museum of Art, Pittsburgh, 1999), \$49.95. ISBN 88039-037-9.

Minneapolis and Fort Worth Bruce Conner

In 1988, Bruce Conner had a gallery exhibition entitled *Bruce Conner: Group Show*. The artist has used such a wide range of styles and media – assemblage and collage, film, photography, drawing, printmaking – that a selection of his work could well pass for the production of many different individuals. But the retrospective exhibition *2000 B.C.: Bruce Conner Part II* recently at the **Walker Art Center, Minneapolis** (closed 2nd January) and opening this month at the **Modern Art Museum, Fort Worth** (to 23rd April) makes clear that Conner does not really suffer from multiple artistic personality syndrome.¹

Born in 1933 in the Midwest, in Kansas, Conner has spent most of his adult life in San Francisco. His early assemblages are refined grotesquerie, Grand Guignol with humour and pathos. *The bride* (1960; Fig. 109) bowing to Miss Havisham of *Great Expectations*, relies on a favourite Conner material, nylon stockings, along with wax candles and a doily, to create a memorable portrait of thwarted desire and frozen time. An untitled collage from 1954–61 recalls Schwitters in its elegant arrangement of cardboard and other *povera* materials, but its back, covered with pin-ups and printed matter, resembles an American version of Hannah Höch. In works devoted to female subjects ranging from the movie star Jean Harlow to the victim of the notorious Black Dahlia murder, Conner presents both an adolescent vision of woman as sex object and an exposé of how women are fetishised and brutalised.

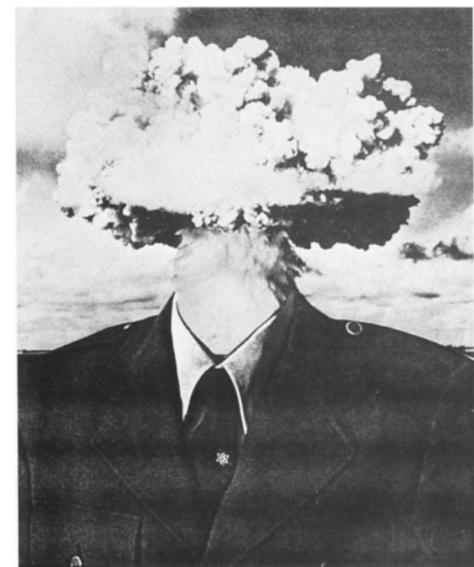
After a sojourn in Mexico that led to brightly coloured, highly ornamented pieces, Conner abandoned assemblage sculpture in the mid-60s just when it had earned him a considerable reputation. He felt he was



109. *The bride*, by Bruce Conner. 1960. Mixed media, 92.7 by 43.2 by 58.4 cm. (Walker Art Center, Minneapolis; exh. Modern Art Museum, Fort Worth).

being typecast as the 'stocking artist' and that assemblage was becoming too conventional an art form. By then, he was already involved in filmmaking. His first effort, *A Movie* (1958), was intended as 'an anti-movie'. It is a twelve-minute classic of experimental cinema, inspired by movie trailers and the Marx Brothers and made out of footage from a B-Western, newsreels, and novelty films. The encounter between Hopalong Cassidy and the atomic bomb on Conner's editing table produced what amounts to a capsule history of the twentieth century that moves from silliness to lyricism to horror, with just a hint of hope at the end.

A Movie played on the expressive possibilities of blank leader, countdown numbers



110. *Bombhead*, by Bruce Conner. 1989. Offset lithograph and photocopy collage on paper mounted on board, 24.8 by 19.6 cm. (Exh. Modern Art Museum, Fort Worth).