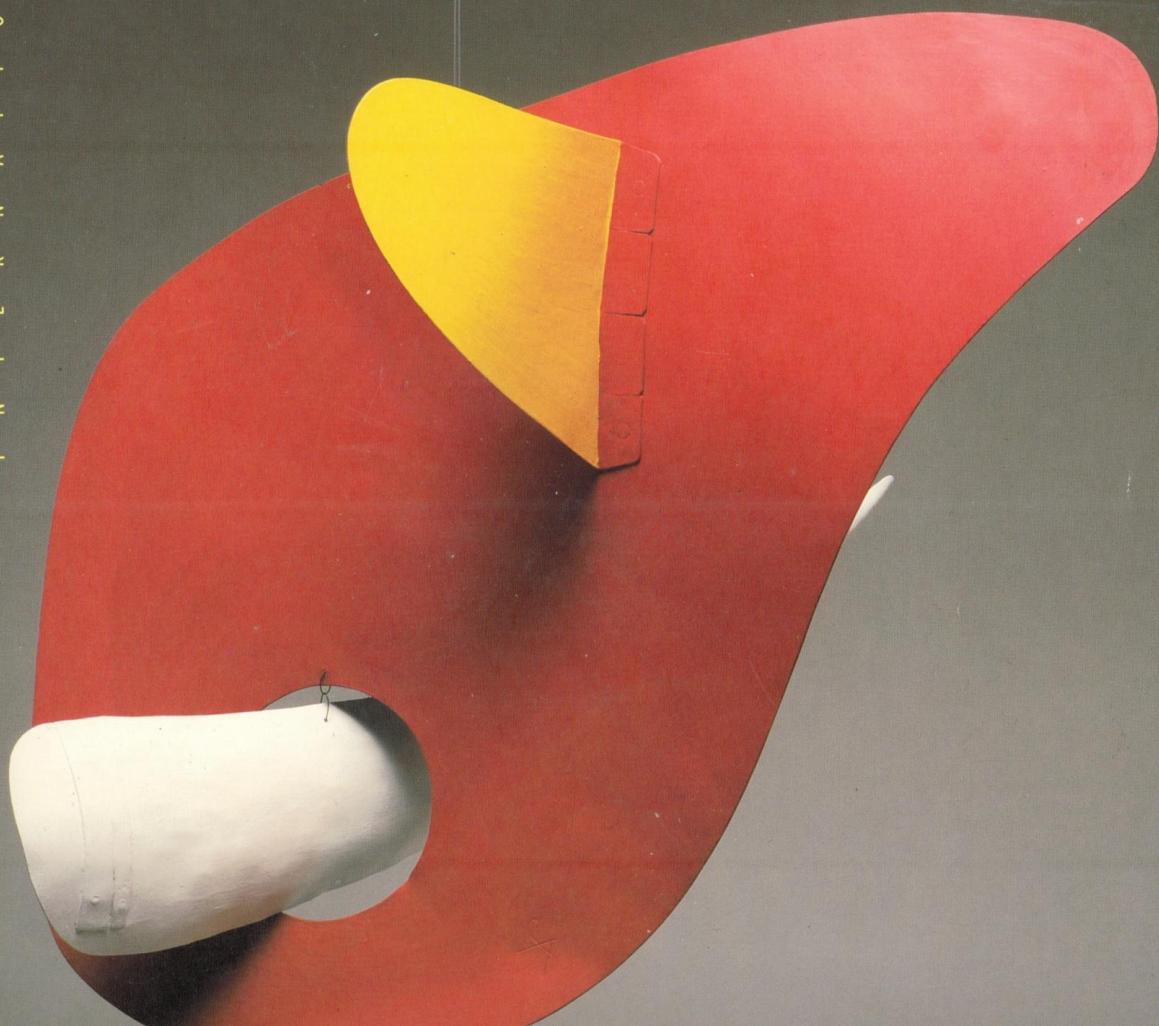


NOVEMBER 1986 \$6.50/CAN \$8

ARTFORUM

I N T E R N A T I O N A L



Eric Bainbridge

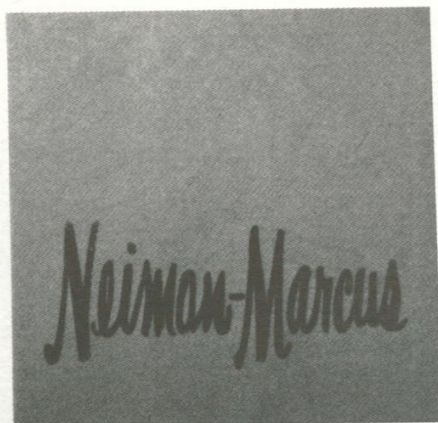
Eric Bainbridge at Walker Art Center, 1986

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Review by Mason Riddle

Artforum International, November 1986, Issue 3, P. 142-143.

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Anita David, *Neiman-Marcus*, 1986, acrylic on canvas, 48 x 48".

nmentary on art's ex-
ilities, it is a stunning,
ny comment on the ge-
itus as a second-class
e is quite different in
ip *Guston* (1913–1980),
re of two huge, clunky
re, scale operates on a
the size of the shoes
it won't be easy to fill
g in this mode, *Jackson*
a sculptural relief of the
in a web of brightly col-
yarn, as if to point out
persona, which is in-
his works, remains be-
standing.
tness that is jarring, and
Arneson personifies a
emotional inflections in
of his latest sculptures is
Addressing an issue that
—the possibility of nu-
—Arneson makes public
deformed heads that are
and comic. Clay, which
its found state yet rigid
n be said to mimic the
clear explosion on the
an continuing to extend
ng and rich history as a
Arneson has transformed
porary material, one that
forming some of the
ical caricatures I've

eson is not a one-note
of his detractors would
he made *Funk John* in
sted the limits of his ma-
as his subject matter, a
s him a powerful artist,

and a necessary one. His sense of ur-
gency is ours.

—JOHN YAU

Chicago Anita David Artemisia Gallery

Good taste—what “good” is it, any-
way?—abounds in Anita David's recent
series of paintings. The seven mono-
chrome works that comprised this in-
stallation function as emblems of es-
thetic seriousness, 48-by-48-inch
squares of plush gray, made using an in-
ventory of painterly effects. The names
that emblazon their surfaces are also
filled with associations of a particularly
tasteful sort: “Gucci,” “Bloomingdale's,”
“Comme des Garçons,” and so on, an
impressive roster of trendsetting stores
whose nominative presence sabotages
the dignity of these painted fields.

The humor of this conceptual exer-
cise is obvious—equating paintings with
purses, scarves, even designer shopping
bags, as sites for the reifying logotypes
of high fashion. Less apparent here is
an examination of textural sufficiency,
of the sort of surface necessary to make
each work signify painting rather than
stage backdrop, to be seen as *itself*
rather than in the guise of, before con-
sideration of the words each bears at-
tacks this substantive claim.

Tiffany & Co's boldfaced serif type is
relatively small, appearing in the mid-
dle near the bottom of a canvas dappled
with gray acrylic lozenges. *Neiman-*
Marcus's gaudy scrawl runs from edge
to edge, superimposed on flaccid arcs
of paint that could have been applied

with a trowel. In *Gucci*, moments of
vivid magenta underpainting show
through a play of brushstrokes vaguely
reminiscent of David Budd. Indeed,
there are nods in the direction of Larry
Poons, Jules Olitsky, and Darby Ban-
nard, although specific references to
these painters' tactics could only com-
promise David's intent.

The names, lettered in by a profes-
sional sign painter, are reasonable facsi-
miles of each store's trademark typogra-
phy. Theirs is a credible resemblance,
established through our familiarity
with prior usages. But how about the
painting itself? Its claim to authenticity
resides in an attention to surface inflec-
tion which is thoroughly generic. Too
close an approach to another artist's
techniques risks incorporating an extra
persona in the work, as an actor whose
presence brings along precisely the
reference to *mise-en-scène* David seeks
to avoid.

The effectiveness of David's installa-
tion depends on a delicate sequence of
perceptions, assumptions, and con-
tradictions. For the most part, the
paintings live up to their names. They
are sufficiently well executed to serve
both as simulations of artworks and as
situations appropriate to the presenta-
tion of their fashionable labels. Less
successful was the extra device of a
price list tacked to the gallery wall. The
paintings were priced in descending
order of status, with *Neiman-Marcus*
and *Gucci* most expensive, down to a
“bargain basement” tag on *Macy's*.
Funny? Yes, but only at some cost to the
believability of the works themselves.

—BUZZ SPECTOR

Minneapolis

Eric Bainbridge Walker Art Center

Upon entering Eric Bainbridge's
show of five fake-fur-covered sculp-
tures, one felt a bit like Alice when she
tumbled into Wonderland and swal-
lowed a pill that made her grow small.
Looming up to 11 feet in height and
comprising disparate forms whose
identities are often obscure, the works
are at once humorous and disconcert-
ing. A low-slung dinosaur with a dis-
jointed tail wears on its back a sky-
scraper, a ship, and a human head; a
colossal swan is laden with a faucet, a
rose, a ship, and two bulbous forms that
look like furry hassocks. Uncomforta-
bly distorted and abnormal in scale, the
works by this young London artist rep-
resent more a Wonderland gone awry
than a recent development in the tradi-
tion of 20th-century British sculpture.

Constructed from chicken wire, ply-
wood, and plaster onto which the fur
fabric has been stapled and glued, the
earliest works from 1985 are dressed
primarily in ocelot. The 1986 pieces are
sheathed in a fashion parade of animal
skins, including tiger, ermine, and leop-
ard as well as solid black, purple, and
candy stripes, and assume a more rak-
ish air. In the most recent work, *Handle*,
1986, made in Minneapolis for this
show, Bainbridge painted huge purple
spots on a faun-colored fur. Regardless
of fur type, the individual components
of each work were inspired by either
human organs or the cheap mass-pro-
duced items that threaten to overrun

Eric Bainbridge

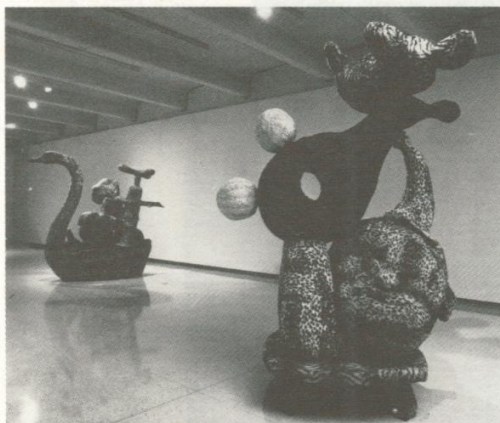
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Eric Bainbridge, left: *Dark Style Swan*, 1985, fur fabric, wire, and plaster, 106 x 64 x 107", and right: *Statue (of Tommy Ferzakely)*, 1986, fur fabric, wire, plaster, and wood, 118 x 79 x 50".



Greg Reser, *Between Two Coasts*, 1986, oil on paper, 30 x 44".

capitalist society. In *Dark Style Swan*, 1985, the not-so-graceful water fowl was modeled after a banal soap dish; a kitschy vase in the shape of a man inspired elements of *Statue (of Tommy Ferzakely)*, 1986. Salt and pepper shakers and a metal mold of Bambi were the genesis of *Handle*, Bainbridge's simplest and most puzzling composition to date.

Bainbridge's obsessive scrambling of objects and organs—dislocating heads from bodies, combining utterly incongruous objects—thwarts our attempt to recognize individual forms or to decode a piece. The furriness of the works further obscures their meanings. Like a sensory deprivation device, it homogenizes detail and inhibits a clear reading of form. Moreover, the multiple associations that we bring to the work—stuffed animals, parade floats, fake-fur coats, animal-skin rugs, and real animals—are never assuaged. Bainbridge's sculptures are, in fact, all of these things, but only for the brief moment before they transmute into their actual aberrant selves. Like Alice trying to comprehend her shifting surroundings, we are never able to grasp the specific content of a piece.

Each is an intuitive response to the ideas, objects, and situations that encompass the artist. Their odd components coalesce in a subconscious manner and are not meant to be neatly understood. In its ability to subvert the conventional notions of fine art through materials and the use of common objects, Bainbridge's work is an eccentric synthesis of Dada, Pop, and *arte povera*. In the spirit of Pop, he gently mocks the formalist sculptures

of Barbara Hepworth and Henry Moore by punching holes through some of his forms. Unlike most Pop sculptures, however, Bainbridge's possess a dark, slightly perverse quality underneath their humorous skins, which links Bainbridge more directly to Joseph Beuys than to Claes Oldenburg. And like both Beuys and Marcel Duchamp, Bainbridge endorses the notion that any use of a material or object is possible.

Bainbridge's sculptures clearly straddle a fine line between being psychologically loaded forms operating on multiple levels and absurd '80s-style art gimmicks. The danger of their becoming the latter obviously derives from the fake fur and the works' refusal to release specific information. Ultimately, however, the enigmatic closure of these pieces and their ostensible promise of information make them seductive.

—MASON RIDDLE

Fort Worth

Greg Reser
Fort Worth Gallery

If one could generally say that Minimalism and its discontent dominated the '70s, then I think at this point it is fair to say that a kind of "layerism" has dominated the '80s. This layering of multiple images from diverse sources is a technique that may most readily be identified stylistically with David Salle, but certainly did not originate with him. A common fascination with both the popular media and beaux arts sources stands firmly behind this trend, but the commonality of the work ends there. Layered work can be either

abstract or literal, or both.

Greg Reser is a young painter whose work falls well within the boundaries of the literal camp. The referential images in his paintings are both stacked and juxtaposed side by side, usually combining colorful art-historical references with distorted black-and-white drawings of figures derived from the stock advertising images of the '50s found in the book *Clip Art* (1984). On a purely visual level, Reser's layering technique creates a play of deep and shallow space. For example, *Between Two Coasts*, 1986, is unequally divided into two adjacent rectangles: on the left is a blue sky clearly reminiscent of the horizonless space of Edward Ruscha's work; on the right, an excerpt of a painting by Edward Hopper of a shingled two-story house. The endless space of the sky vibrates between flatness and infinity, whereas the deep illusionistic space of the quoted Hopper picture penetrates the picture plane. Both become sets for Reser's distorted and floating *Clip Art* figures, who, like images in a fun-house mirror or science-fiction characters disappearing into a time warp, exist in a space without defined perspectival depth. All we know is that they do not belong to our space, and they do not belong to the spaces defined by their appropriated backdrops.

In the context of a group of works that all use the same kind of visual interplay, Reser's intentions become clear. Whether specific quotes, like the Hopper and the Ruscha, or more general art-historical references, his choice of images seems designed to instruct. *Between Two Coasts*, for example, is a vis-

ual metaphor for the West Coast artists from art establishment. More appropriation, these it scribe the broadness of Likewise, the sketchbo been chosen for the mes vey: all are involved in t of pointing and explaini generic teachers, or auth intermediaries between

Reser is just 25, and l impressive means of search for his own voic dergraduate art studen same format, although white figures were not y has since begun to cas thority figures into a never land. His person not have been enough t interesting if his paintin as good as they are. Bu nitely not student-calit are beautifully rendere fully composed. Reser images retain the pur original contexts, yet ad interpretation and feeli —SUSAN FREUDENHE

San Francisco

Bill Dane
Fraenkel Gallery

"Well, it's a fantasy p Sunday comic-strip fra window partition in or recent photographs. dressing view (*Shreves*, 1982) shows a big tedd fied in funnies and sp

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