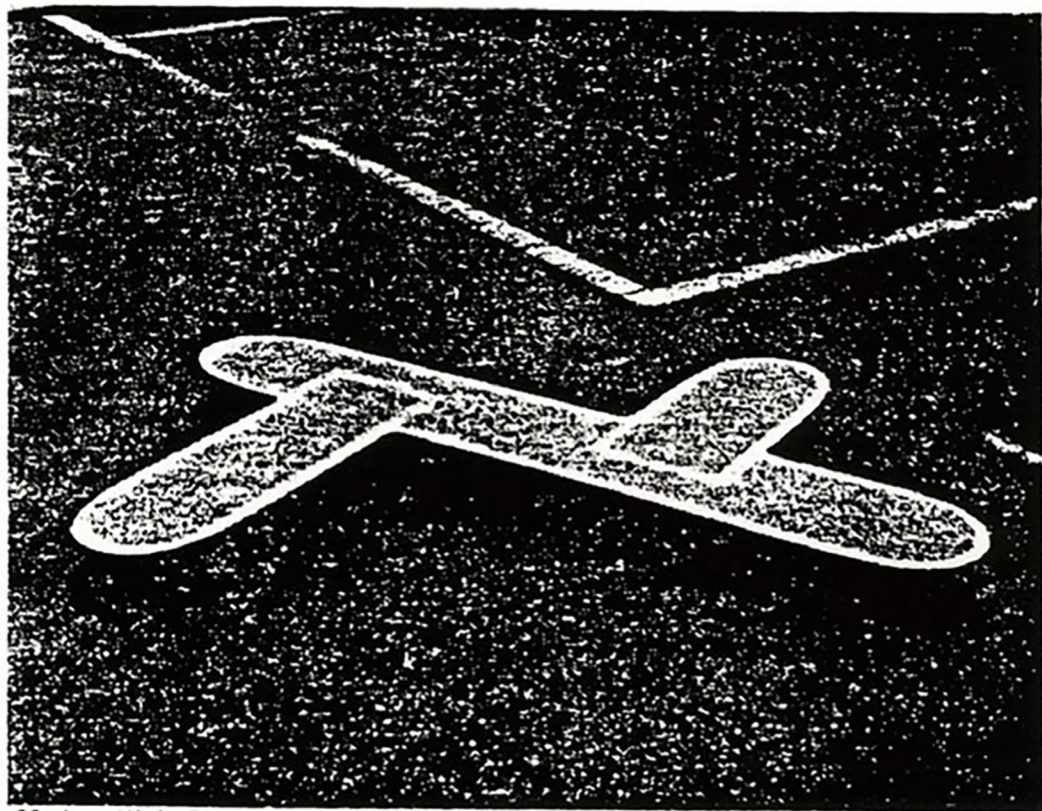


ART PICK OF THE WEEK

CHRISTOF KOHLHOFER; VIK MUNIZ; JOHN FRANKLIN

Artistic troublemakers come in all shapes and sizes. They don't have to be sexual or religious provocateurs (although those are the ones most likely to put Congress in a snit); other social presumptions, and aesthetic ones, are fair game for the tricksters, jokesters and rebels who, at their best, continue a time-honored heritage. Christof Kohlihofer, for example, might be considered a direct inheritor of Dada. He skewers both the form and the meaning of images derived from popular sources — tabloid newspapers, pulp novels, advertising, movie and TV (Kohlihofer visits some wicked manipulations on the Batman symbol) — in collages, drawings, watercolors and other paperworks. These info-crammed pieces apparently defy formal coherency as readily as they challenge subtlety and good taste. But look closer: these are more than messy cartoons. Kohlihofer is especially adept at layering pictorial elements, and making them “read” as artistic as well as social statements. Vik Muniz — like Kohlihofer, a foreign-born stranger in a strange land — reverts to extreme formal clarity and an almost sleight-of-hand manipulation of expectations. Muniz's elegant sight gags — an entire encyclopedia bound into one huge bookcover, a crosswise ninja board, a bonsai-grown table, a cinder block and its marble double — recapitulate the elusive Fluxus spirit in their almost Zen-like revelations of alternative realities. Certain of Muniz's reality fillips are more oblique than others (I defy you to identify what the foamy objects in the three photographs are). But that only demonstrates his ability to provoke surprise on more than one level. For his part, John Franklin pretends to be a Johnny-one-note, cranking out paintings set into fixed formulae. Franklin seems to be all about goofing on Mondrian and geometric painting, à la Roy Lichtenstein and Pop Art. But check again: Franklin is doing a number on, if anything, neo-Geo — a neat trick, as the “new geometry” is itself supposed to have incorporated strategies of appropriation and parody. Can Franklin send up a send-up? Yes, by doing an end-run around the philosophical pretensions of the original. Christof Kohlihofer at Zero One, 7025 Melrose Ave.; thru Aug. 4. Vik Muniz at Meyers/Bloom, 2112 Broadway, S.M.; John Franklin at Dennis Anderson, 1007 Madison Ave.; both thru July 28.



Modern Ninja Board, 1990, by Vik Muniz

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