

Tricia Collins Contemporary Art

Devon Dikeou

From the Mixed-up Files of Mrs. Basil E. Frankweiler

From the Mixed-up Files of Mrs. Basil E. Frankweiler, an ongoing installation by Devon Dikeou exists as a selected section of Michelangelo's Sistine Chapel drawn to the exact scale in pastels on the gallery floor. Slowly, the gait of the visitors erases the drawing especially in high traffic areas. A black and white computer generated architectural schema accompanies the floor drawing indicating, in color, the area representative of the exhibiting space. Each time the piece is exhibited another section is added to the architectural drawing as well as other pertinent information. Time-lapse video of the current show is juxtaposed with video footage measuring the real time it takes to queue up and get into the Sistine Chapel. The title comes from the popular children's novel by E.L. Konigsburg, in which two youngsters run away to the Metropolitan Museum of Art, and in doing so, learn to appreciate the Renaissance while discovering a lost Michelangelo treasure in the mixed up files of a collector.

In his catalogue essay Charles Riley writes of Dikeou's work as "a virtuoso exploration of scale, viewer response, the interaction of color, the relationship between architectural and pictorial space, the part to the whole and a variety of other strategic issues in our experience of a work of art.... Devon Dikeou is an acute observer of the response of individuals, both insiders and novices, to contemporary art. The founder of *zingmagazine*, which is less a periodical of the common art critical sort, and more a 'curatorial project' bringing together original works and commentaries on them, she has established a long track record of exhibitions that turn the mirror upon the spectator and bring artistic action, interaction and reaction together in one moment."

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The 'Statements' sector at Art 29'98

A much sought-after platform for young art



Art 28'97 - Statements - Galerie ars futura, Zurich

This year, too, Art Basel will be the platform par excellence for the art of our century. Apart from the Classical Moderns, this year will once again see representatives of the whole panoply of the international contemporary art scene. Indeed, Art 29'98 is further intensifying its commitment to contemporary art, especially in the 'Statements' sector. Of the over 150 projects submitted, 26 galleries have been selected to present a 'one-person show' from their programme on these subsidised stands: six more than in 1997. In other words, the Fair is reacting to the success recorded by the sector in previous years and also meeting exhibitors' needs.

'Art Basel has become a major platform for us', says Brent Sikkema of New York. 'We find the Fair an excellent forum' echo Hohenthal und Bergen of Berlin. The New York gallery presents Kara Walker, a black

artist who tackles the racial problem in American society with black paper-cuts and large watercolours; the seductive elegance of her work placing the onlooker in a difficult position. While she has already exhibited at prestigious locations in the USA, Walker is still virtually unknown in Europe. The same holds true for **Devon Dikeou**. This young American woman born in 1963 processes literature into interactive installations. In the Hohenthal und Bergen booth she will be painting the ceiling of the Sistine Chapel onto the floor in chalk, after which the feet of visitors will gradually transform the picture.

Many galleries are using this opportunity for transatlantic – sometimes also trans-cultural – exchange. They regard Art Basel as a focal point at which the professional art world from every continent assembles to collect information within a concentrated period. Nowhere else can so much attention be caught in such a short space of time. Keith Edmier is virtually unknown in Europe. Friedrich Petzel of New York is bringing two new sculptures to Basel that Edmier, who formerly worked on special effects in the movie business, has created from his personal experiences. Gavin Brown's Enterprise (New York) is presenting a young artist from Thailand now living in New York: Udomsak Krisanamis paints over newspaper cuttings, turning them into dense monochromatic surfaces. Cairo-born, New York-based Ghada Amer shows her highly ambivalent embroideries at Brownstone, Corr  ard + Cie of Paris. The Art Concept gallery of Paris wishes to extract St  phane Magnin with her walk-on installation reminiscent of a flying saucer from the purely Francophone cultural circle. Martina Detterer of Frankfurt brings a highly promising artist back to Switzerland – Claudia Di Gallo – who has previously used a variety of media to interpret the themes work, bodies and the role society ascribes to women. In Basel, Di Gallo shows new creations featuring flying people whose images she has applied to fabrics from computer-processed photographs. 'This 'Statement' comes at just the right time for Claudia Di Gallo', says her gallery owner, 'since she has reached a new phase in the development of her work'.

Many gallery owners have based their selection on this criterion: their artists are on the threshold to a new phase in their work and often on the brink of broader international attention. Max Mohr has not yet quite managed the jump to the international scene. For Arndt & Partner (Berlin) he will construct a sculptural tent in the booth: visitors will be able to enter this tent which will be filled with a large number of small objects reminiscent of physical mutations. Michel Majerus concerns himself with painting. Nonetheless, the Berlin gallery owners neugerriemschneider hope that a 'State- ment' by the artist at Art Basel will provide the final impetus for his international breakthrough. Hammelehle & Ahrens of Stuttgart are thinking along the same lines: While Stefan Kern is

successful with his furniture sculptures in Germany, it is only at Art Basel that the Frankfurt-based sculptor is likely to become known to a larger international public. In Basel, Hans Hemmert, whose balloon sculptures have already appeared at large exhibitions, shows an early key work in the booth of Ulrich Gebauer (Berlin) that served as their original inspiration. Ralf Berger at Luis Campaña of Cologne focuses his attention on the theme 'work'.

Gallery owners set high standards of quality when selecting contributions. 'A 'Statement' should show what is best in a programme', stresses Klosterfelde of Hamburg which shows the painter Matthew Antezzo. Following an internal evaluation of proposed projects, Urs Meile of Lucerne selected Christoph Draeger who has attracted attention with his video installations of disaster scenarios.

Generally speaking, it is new works that are shown; often creations that have been devised specially for Art Basel. Indeed, Leni Hoffmann showing at Thomas Taubert (Düsseldorf) even focuses on the exhibition halls of Art Basel itself and links her own booth with its surroundings through the medium of a Plasticine work. Through her installation, the Maastricht-based Japanese artist Suchan Kinoshita who is exhibiting with van Dielen-d'Eendt (Amsterdam), wants to make time stand still for stressed-out visitors to the Fair. Manfred Pernice at the gallery Neu of Berlin explores the borderline between art and social intervention.

Art Basel has thus also become a forum for artists who appear to have created their own language on the fringe of international art activity. With her merciless close-ups shown at Andréhn-Schiptjenko, Annika von Hausswolff draws attention to the lively Scandinavian art scene as does the gallery Brändström (also from Stockholm) presenting the sculptor Edward Lipski. Camargo Vilaça of São Paulo brings the Brazilian Ernesto Neto to Basel. Showing at Helga de Alvear (Madrid), Eulalia Vallidosera of Spain presents shadow works. The gallery Continua (Siena) introduces Luca Pancrazzi of Milan.

For their creations the young artists use a wide range of media and forms that extend from drawings and oil painting to installations. Miltos Manetas, showing at Analix of Geneva, reacts to the Internet. Film and Video are much in evidence: The South African, William Kentridge, who was greatly discussed at documenta X, assembles stories from filmed drawings; to be seen at Stephen Friedman (London). Tacita Dean of London, whose 16mm reels consider space in film, shows new work at the Frith Street Gallery (London). In her endless loops, Marijke van Warmerdam at Van Gelder of Amsterdam considers the impossibility of ending. As in the past, the 'Statements' sector highlights an impressive

selection of media and topics. With contributions from every cultural environment, it once again gives an excellent overview of the current international art scene that the many galleries showing young artists outside the 'Statements' sector explore in greater detail.

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the village **VOICE**



Galleries

REVIEWS BY KIM LEVIN
UNLESS OTHERWISE NOTED.

DEVON DIKEOU: This back-room installment of an ongoing installation by Dikeou includes an exact-scale detail of the Sistine Chapel ceiling drawn in chalk on the floor (being erased by the feet of visitors), a computer-generated locational diagram, and a pair of videos. One offers footage of people lined up to see the Sistine Chapel; the other shows time-lapse images of viewers in the gallery. The title, *From the Mixed-up Files of Mrs. Basil F. Frankweiler*, is from a children's book about kids who discover a lost Michelangelo. Through 2/22. Grand Salon, 93 Grand, 226-1861.

VOICE
CHOICES

Time Out

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Germaine Brooks, *She became known as Nina Iverson*, 1997.

"Girls! Girls! Girls!"

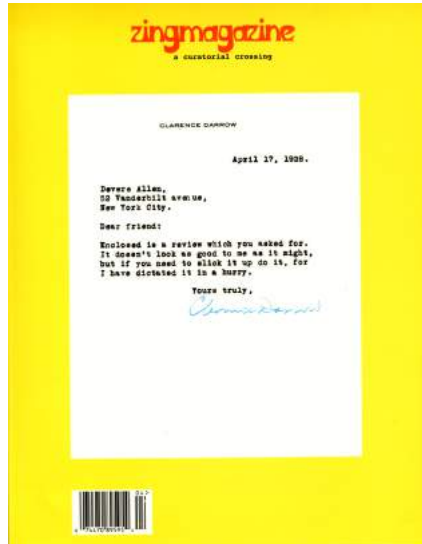
Tricia Collins Grand Salon, through Sat 2 (see Soho).

If this gallery has a house style, it's probably best described as a mix of the knowing and the naive. One month, you might find work with a heavy-duty conceptual edge—like Devon Dikeou's plan to re-create the Sistine Chapel—while the next month, it could be something folklorically inspired, like Michele Basora's whirling dervishes. These disparate approaches blend well in this summer salon, where 26 women artists (including Dikeou and Basora) make a lot of noise and have fun with the subject of womanhood and art.

Works of note include a nice sketch by Marzia Gandini of a smiling girl pushing back her hair. Another arresting image, by Claudia Zemborain, focuses on a child in a dark room, transfixed by a television screen. Germaine Brooks offers a portrait of a dreamy-eyed girl, though it's hard to decide whether her style is as unstudied and childlike as it initially seems, or a wink at early Picasso.

The show mixes craft with art and seasoned professionals with amateurs—a tactic that works especially well when it comes to exploring the nature of women's work. Some pieces (such as Jane Kaplowitz's painting of an engraved cocktail party invitation) seem to send up the notion of a woman's instrumental role in polite society, while other works seem to want to reemphasize it (the inviting table and chair, handpainted with roses by Ivana Kucan, for instance).

Hung salon-style, the works on the gallery's longest wall address topics ranging from childhood innocence to adult struggles with body image. Two mounds of green-white pigment—the concoction of Kara Somerville, a pastry chef—look like breasts, while Julie Evans's luscious, abstract *Petit Four* suggests an orifice of sorts, painted to 3-D perfection on several layers of vellum. But don't forget Elizabeth Cohen's photograph of a glass slipper made from laboratory pipettes, which hangs near the ceiling. Its melding of *The Wizard of Oz* and *Frankenstein* nicely underscores the weird yet engaging eclecticism of this show. —Carol Kino



DEVON DIKEOU: FROM THE MIXED-UP FILES OF MRS. BASIL E. FRANKWEILER; TRICIA COLLINS GRAND SALON: NEW YORK, NEW YORK

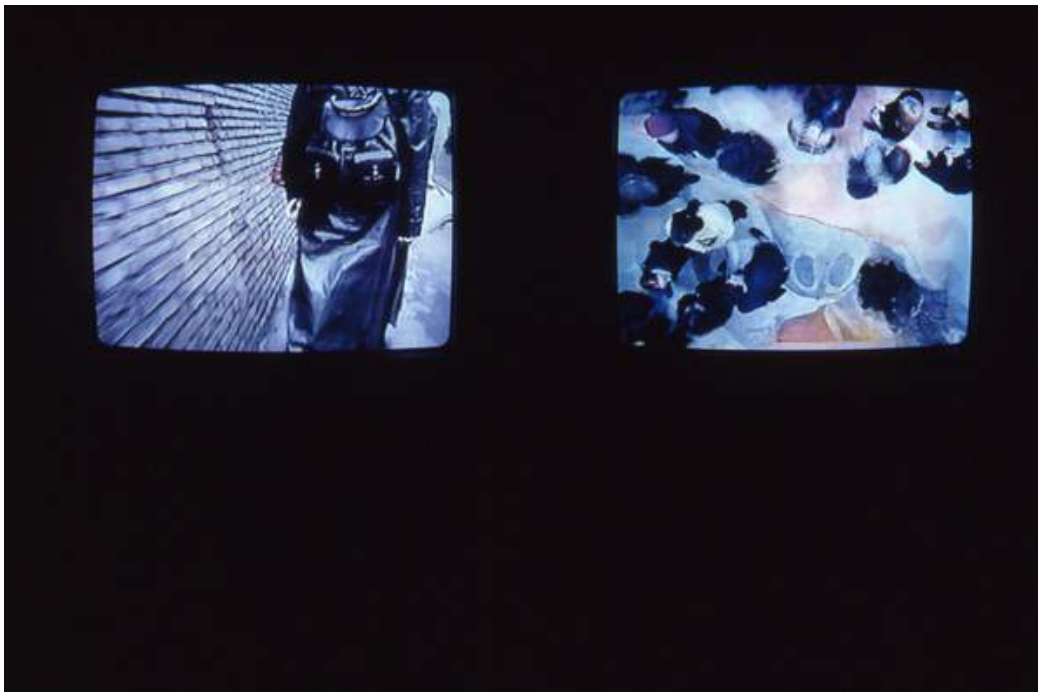
Like in so many works by Devon Dikeou, a citation, a title, or an anecdote, is at the origin of her universe. This time, the title refers to "mixed-up files" that are meant as "an appropriation of the Metropolitan Museum of Art's classic coming-of-age" (and a reference to a novel by E. L. Konigsburg). But this time, the charm of her show didn't rely so much on the fact that it was not immediately accessible to me. This show surprised me with its smart, compact style, and the seducing interplay of a variety of heterogeneous elements: pastel floor and wall drawings, video and closed-circuit monitoring, a computerized sketch, a travel video, an important cultural icon, and a quasi-meaningless book title.



Devon Dikeou, From The Mixed-Up Files of Mrs. Basil E. Frankweiler, 1997 Ongoing Installation View

On the floor of the gallery Dikeou drew, with pastel colors, a section of the famous painting of the Sistine Ceiling in Rome, much in the way we know from the chalk artists who sketch for tourist donations in the streets. Unlike these street artists who usually paint scaled-down versions of known paintings, Dikeou depicts a randomly selected scaled-up version in an

equally random 7:1 dimensional enlargement, which makes it almost unrecognizable for the viewer. The viewer's perspective is clarified with the aid of a video camera installed in the ceiling, that depicts the chalk painting and records viewers walking on the floor; this is relayed to a video monitor placed in front of him or her. Next to this video—which shows the painting in a recognizable form—is a video sequence filmed by a moving camera, which reveals visitors/tourists lining up in Rome to see the real thing (which is shown for only seconds at the end of the loop). Looking around, we see seven chalk panels on the wall (seven panels for 7:1 enlargement). On the opposite wall, a black-and-white computerized sketch shows the Sistine Ceiling with another architectural drawing of the gallery superimposed, mapping the exact position that the artist drew on the floor. This referential piece doesn't just show the particular aspect of the segment of the original painting, but lays the ground for future exhibitions as well. As such, it doesn't just have a "topological" functionality, but has an economical one--potential layouts for shows to come. The financial aspect brings us to the point of this show, which is to have a system at hand that justifies and produces shows, almost excessively, around the same parameters (remember the mass reproductions of this icon). However, I am less convinced by the intriguing displacements and oppositions--floor/ceiling, video/chalk, scale/perception, travel and tourism/fresco, etc., than by this system, which is a "carte blanche" for numerous shows, according to a refined and justifiable system. But I am highly suspicious of this as well.



*Devon Dikeou, From The Mixed-Up Files of Mrs. Basil E. Frankweiler, 1997 Ongoing
Video Still recording the process of finding the Sistine Chapel in the Vatican, video still recording
viewers' movements throughout the duration of the exhibition*

Why? Because this kind of smart self-referentiality and auto-poesis significant (and symptomatic) of the majority of today's art productions that function perfectly well within their own systems, without owing anything to an outside realm, or a conflicting, historical world. I feel left with art for art for art for art world's sake--and one has to imagine this last sentence videotaped, in 3-D animation, performed, theoretically over coded, refined, and sold in galleries (or boutiques). I am more in favor of these often vagabond traveling street painters that live directly off of tourism and its mediated, spectacular, "kitsch" idea of what art is supposed to be, without any illusions of what they do: bagging, and not art. Unfortunately, these historically rich "street issues" are not addressed. But then, maybe, my "files" are mixed up.

Rainer Ganahl

New York, New York

1997