



Winifred Lutz, *Threshold/Interface/Transition+(When)*, 1997. Mixed-media installation.

upper level of the Institute of Contemporary Art with skylights and clerestory windows, eliminating the spotlights and peeling back the light diffusing panels on which most display is dependent. In this illumination, the gray concrete walls, distressed with ochre scumble, lose their Modernist and hierarchic spatial authority. The floor surface is leafed with luminescent gold and is the ground for five slender trees 30 feet tall. A visitor to this "golden garden" also discovers what appears to be a cross-section of a tree trunk, but what is in fact a portal in the wall, revealing a platinum-lined tunnel between the room of golden sun-

light and that of iridescent silver moonlight.

The sparsity of objects and attenuation of forms here belies a subtlety of conceit. Lutz's minimal spatial aesthetic, engaged with the organic and architectural, the vertical and horizontal, and the advance and retreat of light, accounts for the works' poetic religiosity. —*Michal Ann Carley*

Pittsburgh "interiors"

Pittsburgh Center for the Arts

Installation art has become as pleonastic in the 1990s as painting once was in the 1950s. Why? Perhaps because this art form favors the idea of pastiche and an employment of objects borrowed from life's everyday items. Also, some artists realize it represents the

unofficial but official art style of the 1990s. Moreover, in this late Postmodern time, installation work has become a germane art form for artists impassioned to mine identity issues and to address society's ineptitude through personal symbolism, metaphor, and theoretical reference.

The "interiors" exhibition provided the viewer with a sampling of 1990s anti-object Postmodern expression that varied in significance and implementation. Composed of six installation rooms, this exhibition marks the commencement of Vicky Clark's curatorship at the Pittsburgh Center for the Arts.

According to Clark, "interiors" features the work of six artists who seek to penetrate the surface, to make the invisible visible, to explore the territory of literary and figurative interiors, thereby eliciting a wealth of associations, memories, connections, and feelings."

Peculiar to this installation show are Mark Perrott's large, black and white photographs taken of decaying interiors of Eastern State Penitentiary in Philadelphia. Despite Perrott not contributing an actual on-site installation to this ephemeral art pageant, his photographic interiors perhaps address the exhibition's theme with the most epigrammatic cogency. Recognizable objects and scenes, such as a shaving brush, a surgical room, and a dentist chair, are in several of the photographs. These pictures perform as windows into an unknown world; through them we are allowed to visually enter into abandoned, ambiguous interiors that were once restricted. They afford the viewer an opportunity to silently observe unknown spatial zones; our psychological and emotional association with the detritus life of prison, and its realm of interior confinement, is augmented by each of Perrott's darkly lit and softly focused documents.

Faith Wilding belongs to an older generation of women artists. But why is her piece, *Womb Room*, in this exhibition? (It was originally created in 1971 for *Womanhouse* in Los Angeles and recreated four times over the past 26 years.) She and other women artists in the late 1960s were acutely aware of their lack of status; *Womb Room* is bound to issues associated with an ideology rooted in early Feminism and its critique of the injustice of patriarchal society through gender entrapment. New generations of women have moved beyond such naive manifestations and have adopted mass media imagery and communication strategies. The recreation of

Wilding's installation is conceivably intended to serve more as a document of art history than as an example of contemporary art. The weblike quality of the hand-woven, white crocheted web against a black wall does suggest a trap but fails to create an actual environment that separates the viewer from the actuality of the gallery setting. Although elegant in presentation, its heavy conception remains nebulous and veiled.

All too frequently text and an artist's ideological intention have become in the 1990s a substitute for the actualization of a readable visual work of art. This fault especially applies to the work of Iain MacNeill and Delanie Jenkins. Iain MacNeill's *Bed Book 2* (1996) provides a precise model of hermetic Postmodern art. His recreation of a bedroom is composed of a hospital type of bed in which a TV monitor is set in its cut-out center and 11 white sheets hung on the wall resembling tapestries. The ambiguous stained shapes on the sheets, and the continuously playing abstract, blurred video monitor image neither fuse nor provide insights into the content of this piece. Despite the work's focus on the privacy of a bedroom interior, the intention of this artist remains cryptic.

Delanie Jenkins's installation, *Veil* (1996), is formally impressive because of its monumental grandeur and theatricality. Momentarily one is reminded of Eva Hesse's eccentric abstract Fiberglas and cheesecloth sculpture *Contingent* (1969). Hundreds of needles with cascading brown threads adorn a flesh color backdrop plane of rubber, suspended from the gallery ceiling. The needles provide a dual function; they support the threads and simultaneously on the back panel spell out the text from a passage in Sigmund Freud's essay "Femininity." Jenkins's installation functions as a stage in which she chastises Freud for his inflammatory text about women and their lack of substantive contributions to Western civilization. Despite the elegant formalism of this work, the writing is the sole carrier of the idea. If the viewer fails to read the specific text on the backside panel, it is impossible to grasp the meaning of this work. Augmenting the conundrum of this installation is an immense pin cushion in the shape of a tomato—as to its inclusion, it is incomprehensible beyond perhaps revealing the original habitat of the pins.

It is fact that the live dimension of television and video has radically altered our perception of the world and of time. Electronic

technology hence has further changed our perceptual patterns. Jennifer Charron is a "20-something" woman, who is aware of this and chooses to use the video camera in her work. In this austere interior, Charron engages both visual and audio media; the viewer is required to visit each corner of this darkened space in order to interact with the electronic apparitions inhabiting it. At one end of the room, a distorted illusionist portrait of herself tells an angst-riddled story, as television clips are projected over her blocked eyes. Directly across from this station the viewer finds a white stool that invites him or her to sit and to secure the dangling head phones. Once they are engaged, we are

informed about a stupid girl and her disparate feelings about bad relationships. This work holds promise for a brief moment but soon fades into a one-line statement. Charron needs to get beyond the sophomoric angst of Generation X and the spectacle of media technology.

Adrienne Heinrich's art, often included in exhibitions in Pittsburgh, repeatedly lacks potency in achieving resolved closure for her intended content. Heinrich's piece here consists of a translucent hull of a canoe form, suspended from the ceiling of a dimly lighted

Iain MacNeill, *Bed Book 2*, 1996. Mixed-media installation.

