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WEEKEND Arts FINE ARTS LEISURE

Grey Flags

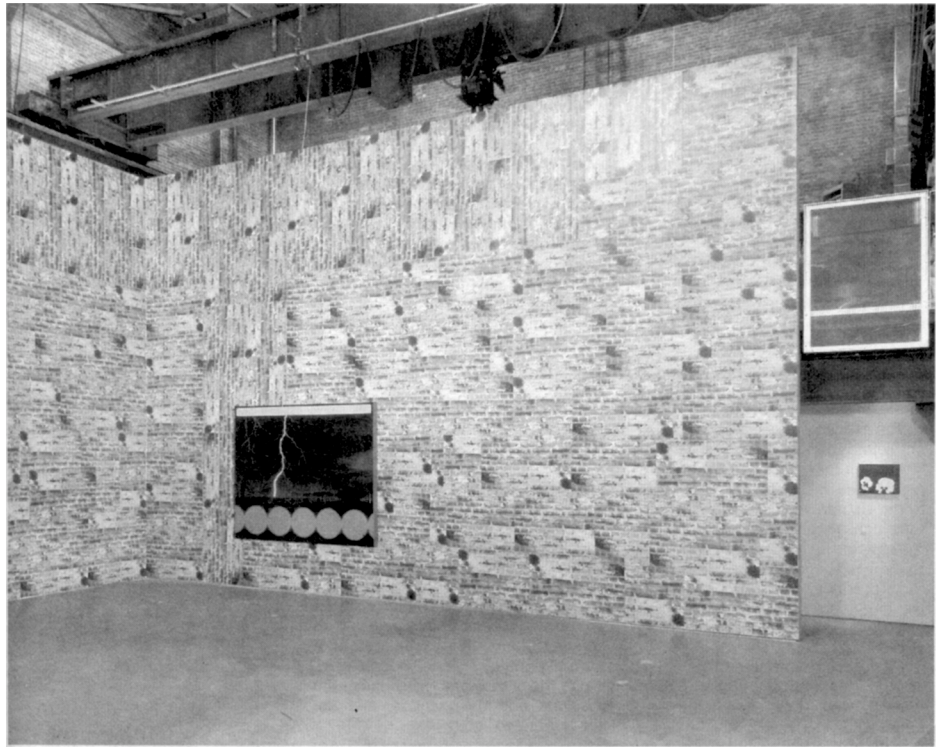
Sculpture Center
44-19 Purves Street, Long Island
City, Queens
Through July 30

In this exhibition, the real and the aesthetic are kept on very short leashes and then pitted mercilessly against each other. There's not much leeway in either direction, and the question of what makes something art, beyond its placement in an art space, hangs in the air.

Sometimes the distinction is sharp and pungent, as in Kelley Walker's piece, which entirely covers a brick wall with posters made from a photo of its bricks; on paper, the bricks look bigger, brighter, redder and shinier. On it hangs a painting by Jonathan Monk that inserts Walter De Maria's "Lightning Field" into a painting by Jack Goldstein, rendered in Mr. Goldstein's finicky realist style. Opposite, a large cluster of color photographs by Shirana Shahbazi gives the show its one moment of opulence, and nonchalantly evokes the globalized world (and the globe-trotting artist) with an array of climates, locales, values and economies.

In a small gallery, works by Wilhelm Sasnal, Lutz Bacher, Helen Chadwick and Gabriel Orozco range from painting to documentary, highlighting ways that nature can be toxified by the human presence. In the

Art in Review



Photographs by Jason Mandella

Kelley Walker's piece in "Grey Flags"; a brick wall covered with a picture of its bricks, and hung with art.



An installation by Helen Chadwick at the Sculpture Center.

large space, Al Ruppertsberg uses Post-its to riff on art collecting, marriage and social pretense against a backdrop of photographs in which he repeatedly masks his identity. Liam Gillick, John Armleder and Michael Krebber provide, respectively, a scattering of silver glitter, sleazy living-room accouterments (chrome-leather chairs and a pink shag rug) and an unchanging slide of a pink sea anemone, which conspire to evoke art's disco glamour and the matching of paintings to furnishings. Claire Fontaine adds the word "Strike" in large neon letters that light up only when an approaching viewer triggers a motion sensor. In the narrow downstairs galleries, Piero Golia points to the exit with an arrow spray-painted on a cheap Persian rug; Mr. Sasnal returns with a short film ruminating on the colorless nature of life in a Polish steel town and the daunting reality of its forges;

and Tacita Dean and the Atlas Group/Walid Raad view the setting sun through glasses tinted respectively Romantic and political.

Apichatpong Weerasethakul offers more to mull over with "Object at Noon," an 85-minute film from 2000 in which the tale of a teacher, her crippled pupil and a demonic visitor is recounted, enacted, analyzed and expanded upon by a succession of storytellers, actors, friends and school children across Thailand. The narrative slips and slides from one setting and level of reality to another, but you can find yourself feeling strangely attached to the characters, the people who represent them or those who comment on them without always knowing which is which. It is also one of the few works in the show that isn't dripping with attitude.

ROBERTA SMITH