

If the relationship of Hamilton's work to the curators' theme for the International was elliptical, Christian Boltanski's was explicit. His *La Réserve du Carnegie International 1896-1991* (The Archive of the Carnegie International 1896-1991) made tangible the long history of the International, which is usually only mentioned in passing in press releases or brought up when some of the eminent jurors of the past are cited, such as Alfred Barr, Thomas Eakins, Robert Henri, Winslow Homer or Marcel Duchamp. Boltanski symbolically archived the artists of the Internationals such as The Carnegie's component institutions store their reserve specimens. In a narrow, damp corridor in the stone basement of the Mattress Factory, lit with only a few bare incandescent bulbs, metal shelves were stocked with cardboard boxes, each labeled with the name of one of the hundreds of artists who have participated in the Internationals, including the current one. They were empty, and so were the boxes with blank labels, for future surveys.

Among the other strong works in the International were several sculptures that had an engrossing presence, if no obvious connection to the theme. Tony Cragg's succinct, imposing yet playful pieces seemed stronger and purer for being independent works rather than installations. *Beasts of Burden* consisted of three stone trucks that looked like enlargements of toys but were actually based on old photos of trucks carrying war surplus; *Subcommittee* was a steel rack of rubber stamps" of Oldenburgish scale; *early forms* looked like two huge rubber bands made of bronze.

Bruce Nauman's installation consisted of eight pairs of life-size bronze, wax and resin heads rather savagely wired together back-to-back or with one looking into the hollow neck of the other. They were suspended in a pass-through gallery; the most direct path to the next room required visitors to dodge the heads. Moving among them, one discovered that the wax portions, which seemed benignly opaque from afar, looked fleshy as they dangled slightly above eye level. The heads looked almost real, yet at the same time they were mere shells that had a disturbingly diminished humanity.

Juan Muñoz's *Conversation Piece I-V* was particularly powerful. The installation consisted of five separate bronze male figures, each balancing out into a hemispherical base like a roly-poly toy. Each assumed a different expression of posture, from the secretive to the passive: one, turtlelike, shrank down into his coat collar, another pressed himself against the wall and another looked warily over his shoulder. Although these small figures, just over 2 feet high, were distributed randomly throughout a spacious gallery—their lack of interaction making them ironic—their distinct characters and sphinx-like self-absorption made them seem larger and more numerous than they were. Commanding the gallery in which they stood, the figures were both sinister and serene.

Except for the works of Kawara—conceptual objects that are paintings only technically—painting hasn't been mentioned in this account of the International. That's because there was very

little of it, and not much of that was interesting. An exception was Philip Taaffe's quartet inspired by Islamic decorative motifs—canvases so sensuously layered they appear to have been embroidered instead of painted.

Stephen Prina's installation was more akin to Kawara's than to Taaffe's. In this latest work in his "Monochrome Painting" series intended to survey the art of the modern era, his ostensible subject was the work of Barnett Newman as it related to the history of the International. The installation comprised more than two dozen beige washes on paper of various sizes, hung salon-style. Single capital letters on some of them spelled out the words "monochrome painting." Prina's catalogue entry reprinted a 1961 letter from Newman to the Carnegie Museum of Art and the museum's reply. With his wry letter Newman had sent a check for \$500 to be used for "The Barnett Newman Award for an Artist Not Invited to the Pittsburgh International." The check was returned. (The Newman letter was published in 1990 in his *Selected Writings*; the museum's reply was discovered in its files.)

Several artists made works that explicitly or implicitly established connections with the Library at The Carnegie or with the 18 branches of the Pittsburgh public library system, all established by Andrew Carnegie. Ken Lum painted poems in gold letters on brightly colored canvas banners and hung them in the art museum's foyer. The poems—one each in Inuit, Nepalese, Maltese, Vietnamese and Japanese script, chosen because they were likely to be unfamiliar to viewers of the show—came from bilingual anthologies that Lum donated to the branch libraries. The spine of each donated book was labeled with its call number in its country of origin as well as the one for the Pittsburgh system, as if to propose a worldwide exchange of knowledge.

At the Homewood branch library, Tim Rollins + KOS altered a page in each of 21 books they donated to the library (among them *The Red Badge of Courage*, *Invisible Man*, *The Autobiography of Malcolm X*, *Moby Dick*, *Fahrenheit 451*) by painting lines, emblems or faces or by inking graffiti. During the run of the show the altered books were presented together on one shelf; afterwards they took their places in the stacks, in effect extending their portion of the show indefinitely. One can't help wondering how many of these books will be reported vandalized, and how many other readers will be inspired to add their own alterations.

Huang Yong Ping's work was housed in the art and music stacks of The Carnegie Library itself, in the second-floor wing that was the original home of the Museum of Art, and of early Internationals. Titled *Unreadable Humidity*, it consisted of hundreds of surplus or outdated art textbooks that Huang macerated and processed in an industrial blender and then shut up in the library's handsome, old-fashioned glass-and-oak cases. There the books were, molding and seeping and smelling like the lockers of a high school gymnasium. Three shades of gray and as sculptural as old ruins, they were unexpectedly gorgeous, although their effect on the cases was

probably not so felicitous. According to the catalogue, "This is an act both of creation and destruction; the pulp becomes a generative mass, which simultaneously reminds readers of vain attempts by dictators and politicians to destroy culture and learning." Huang, who lives in Paris, left China in the month before the events in Tiananmen Square and has been unable to return.

One of the exhibition's implied subthemes—whether the curators intended it is a matter for conjecture—was the destruction of books and the migration of text to canvas, to the walls, even to windows (as in Lothar Baumgarten's majestic typographical invocations of "SILENCE," "CLARITY," "VISION," "MEASURE" on the glass panels of a Mies building at Duquesne University).

The International's own book, a two-volume catalogue, is unusually thorough for a survey of this sort. The first volume, published to coincide with the show's opening, includes artists' statements, biographies and bibliographies, plus prefatory material by the curators. The transcript of a wide-ranging conversation among the curators and Richard Serra and architect Alan Colquhoun on the subject of museum architecture and the function of museums has a useful bearing on the International's theme. (Serra, a co-first-prize winner in the 1988 Carnegie International, this time contributed gargantuan paintstick-on-line "drawings" with a site-specific component.) Also included in volume one were essays by Fumio Nanjo, of the International's advisory committee, and Zinoviy Zinik, the London-based Russian novelist.

As is usually the case, the artists' statements were of varying cogency, and they ranged from the long-winded (Judith Barry's treatise on classical memory systems, for example) to terse (Nauman's memo, "Re: Text for catalogue. I have no text for you"). Prina's entry quotes Newman: "The history of modern painting . . . has been the struggle against the catalogue." None was more arresting than Louise Bourgeois's "The subject of pain is the business I am in." And despite the inconsistent value of what the artists had to say, one turned to the catalogue frequently for help—not surprisingly, given the conceptual and often abstruse nature of much of the work in the show. (Inaccessibility was perhaps most literal in the case of the more than two dozen small drawings by Giulio Paolini displayed, like an interpretation of the frieze of a classical temple, on the facing of the sculpture hall's balcony, where they could be closely studied only by the person who hung them.)

The catalogue's second volume, which was in print before the show closed, presents curator Cooke's overview of the works that were exhibited, along with installation photos that record them—a commendable strategy that other organizers of ambitious installation-oriented exhibitions would do well to emulate. □

*The Carnegie International was on view Oct. 19, 1991–Feb. 16, 1992 at the Carnegie Museum of Art and additional Pittsburgh locations.*

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Detail of **Unreadable Humidity** 1991