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New York
Lori Hersberger
Swiss Institute 24 Jan - 9 March 2002

Brownstone Gallery 19 Feb - 30 March 2002

Lori Hersberger also works in an eclectic mode that depends on a theoretical articulation. His work carries an overarching poststructural effect, replete with sociological signage. To articulate one's intention in terms of a mediated sociology would seem, by now, somewhat difficult to sustain. This is particularly evident in Hersberger's large-scale installation entitled *How Can You Kill Me? (I'm Already Dead)*, shown at the Swiss Institute. One enters a darkened projection space with two large screens, facing one another with bales of hay placed indeterminately between them. According to Hersberger, the bales, "embody artificial forms of domesticated nature." The screens - signifying Plato's "game of shadows in a cave" - reveal film loops taken from two Hollywood action films: one from a western, another from an urban romance disaster. While the intended Freudian-based humor is abundantly clear, there is an underlying cynical edge to all of this, implying that Hollywood constitutes the real America. This strangely echoes a position felt by Germans who grew up after World War II during the Marshall Plan and whose first contact with American "life" came from exposure to Hollywood movies.

In a completely different mode, Hersberger has assembled a "painting installation" at the Spencer Brownstone Gallery in SoHo, a few blocks away from the Swiss Institute. Two works from this exhibition are quite beautiful - a simple, gestural neon piece reflected in two large mirrors on the floor, and another airbrushed painting with a sensitive, even rarefied use of spatial illusion and openness. The rest of the show mostly serves to self-consciously undermine what Hersberger is capable of achieving. The artist's challenge is ultimately one of developing an expressive discourse that embraces a clear continuity free from the overdetermined effects of cynicism.



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