

... of which is largely made up of briefcases and file drawers. This serves as an oversized plinth for a small, found statuette of Atlas carrying the world on his shoulders, which in turn appears to support an improbably ponderous urn shape, towering almost to the gallery's ceiling. You ask yourself how the thing stays up. Surely there could be no more graphic comment on the weight of the male burden? But Iron is not in the business of crude symbolism: this Atlas has a couple of youthful helpers, and the urn is, in fact, suspended from the ceiling. The piece defies gravity more than one sense.

The oddest and most irresistible object in the show is *Innerglow*, a tall vase rising on a found pedestal. As you look at it you realize, with mounting disbelief, how Iron came by the empty aspirin bottles in *In Memory*. The vase is constructed from several thousand aspirins laboriously glued together, and a light directed down into it causes it to appear to glow softly from within like an illuminated honeycomb. Anyone who can elicit poetry from a heap of aspirins is clearly a force to be reckoned with.

—John Ash

LORNA BIEBER

JULIE SAUL GALLERY

... pulled from vintage sources—decorator's magazines circa the late '40s and early '50s—Lorna Bieber's photographs of interiors map the domestic landscape of America. The views they present evoke the rise of the American middle class, the room a just before the parlor was turned into a living room. The coziness of these rooms—adorned with side tables and protected from drafts by drapes in every window—keenly offset by a sense of dissatisfaction with the overall decor, a combination of French provincial and "country living."

Chairs, 1994, the tripartite imagery seems to document the gaze of a decorator as it scans the room, slides over an armchair, jumps back, freezes, and glowers at the guilty side chair. Besides the offending furniture, there is also the outdoors to contend with; it beckons loudly from the open windows and casts its reflection in the ever plentiful mirrors. Sometimes it even moves directly indoors. The atmosphere of *Drapes*, 1993-94, is tremulous with the shadowy play of leaves that appear to haunt the living room.

The key to the sense of malaise that suffuses these photographs seems to lie in the scene entitled *Cabin*, 1993-94. Like the dwelling in the woods that pops up in every fairy tale, this cabin is at once cute and sinister. Remember the dwarf in the red slicker



Lorna Bieber, *Hassock*, 1993-94, gelatin silver print, 20 x 24".

in the movie *Don't Look Now*, 1973, who menaced Donald Sutherland all over Venice by reminding him of his drowned daughter? Well, there's a similar thing going on with this dratted cabin. It keeps turning up unexpectedly throughout the show, always off in the corner of the picture. It's the dream house—the one that can be matched neither by a decorator's efforts nor by the everyday expectations encoded in suburban interiors.

In making these pictures, Bieber employs cropping and montage techniques that recall those of Oliver Wasow. But where Wasow crafts a seamless Technicolor view of imminent apocalypse, Bieber sticks to the home front, evoking an irrevocably past era with good old-fashioned black and white. Her work makes dramatic use of traditional dark-room effects—the images burn and glare—though her use of the grease pencil can turn into extraneous frosting, while the more self-conscious collages, such as the one with baby heads on Mommy's and Daddy's bodies, look like silly knock-offs of Hannah Höch. Bieber's acumen as a photo director is much more compelling. When she makes the floor fall away from the room in *Hassock*, 1993-94, the perfectly appointed nimbus that remains is an alluring phantasmagoria.

—Ingrid Schaffner

"CARTOGRAPHIES"

BRONX MUSEUM OF THE ARTS

The Museum of Modern Art's 1994 exhibition "Latin American Artists of the 20th Century" divided a wide range of work according to country of origin, at the same time that it rendered much of it

subservient to European and North American models. Ivo Mesquita's recent "Cartographies," a much smaller show, rejected the colonizing stance of its predecessor, choosing not to emphasize geopolitical divisions, but rather something more elusive: an exploration of "territories under the rule of desire, sensibility, and knowledge." Mesquita's curatorial scheme, in which cartography becomes a metaphor for the curatorial process and desire is the common denominator, was at times too vague and elliptical to be useful in a show that presented 14 artists from seven countries. Though desire is as essential to Guillermo Kuitca's work as it is to Alfred Wenemoser's *Caracus*, 1993—an absurd two-part structure that evoked a post-natural world where the libidinal is figured by detritus—the more politically engaged works of José Bedia, Gonzalo Diaz, and Juan Dávila suffered somewhat from the elision of context inherent in Mesquita's approach.

Perhaps because it is capable of disturbing our sense of Modernism's trajectory, abstract art from "Latin" America is often subject to misreading. In this show, the pieces by Carlos Fajardo and Iole de Freitas, both of which draw sustenance from Brazil's profoundly influential neo-Concrete movement, suggested an alternate genealogy for abstraction, in their use of abstract forms to suggest a sensual engagement with the work of art. Fajardo's pieces are deceptively elegant in form and coloration—here they included a blue-green sphere made of glycerine, a mound of pink tulle resting on a stone slab, and a number of clay rods stretched along a slim shelf. De Freitas' intensely subjective structures wrest fleshlike qualities from sheet-metal, mesh, and wire through rhythmically contorted surfaces and subtle shifts in color and texture.



José Leonilson, *Puros y Duros (Pure and hard)*, 1991, mixed media, ca. 9 1/2 x 8". From "Cartographies."

Sensuality coupled with a Minimalist approach to form infuse Maria Fernanda Cardoso's sculptures, but in her work these elements are married to iconic imagery. The drying guava candy in *Bandera*, 1992, arranged in the form of a flag, evokes fragments of flesh. *American Marble*, 1992, consists of truncated cattle bones standing on the floor like raised fists. In Mario Cravo Neto's obliquely ritualistic black and white photographs, static compositions are counterbalanced by emotional weight, and by the rich, dark tones of skin, props, and background. More explicitly concerned with ritual, Marta María Pérez Bravo's photographs deal in part with an identity inflected by syncretic myths surrounding motherhood and femininity.

In other works, the body as emblem was eclipsed by bodily desire. With their lush, bruised imagery, suffused with longing, Julio Galán's paintings were more familiar than the late José Leonilson's odd, tender pieces made from cloth embroidered with text and Nahum B. Zenil's obsessively rendered, ochre-washed drawings. In Zenil's work almost every figure bears the artist's frozen features and his sexually charged scenes become windows on self-knowledge and on death.

"Cartographies" might have benefited from a sharper focus—at times it seems to promote the view that Latin American art can best be understood as mapping a mysterious, exotic territory—though Mesquita's strenuous efforts to steer clear of overburdening the works he selected with a particular agenda at least avoided misguided attempts to "educate" viewers. Even when flawed, shows like this one remind us that there exist parallel traditions at the very least equal in integrity to those that we have come to regard as all encompassing.

—K. Marriott Jones