



DEBORAH FEINGOLD

Rodney Ripp's gargantuan, lethal-looking flowers, in the Whitney biennial

ART

Getting It Together

By April Kingsley

Art history was made this season: For the first time in 47 years, the Whitney Museum's Biennial invitational show has not been greeted with a chorus of boos. While praise is not exactly being heaped upon the show (at 945 Madison Avenue, to April 8), there's been a generally favorable response—perhaps it's the overall liveliness. Everybody can relax, forgetting the usual hard feelings about non-inclusions and thwarted aesthetic standards, since the Whitney hasn't made any attempt to include our best artists. Bypassing agreed-upon masterpieces by the best living artists is defensible on the grounds of representing current collective positions. Curiously, whole chunks of the current scene have been ignored.

Conceptual art, it would seem, does not exist. Nonminimal, hard-edge geometrical abstraction, and minimal monumental sculpture have both been excluded, as have non-figurative realism and Caro-derived welded-steel sculpture. The entire Greenberg-formalist contingent has been frozen out, in

fact, as have black artists, with one very minor and untypical exception. New Image Painting (as defined by the most recent Whitney show, which received universally ho-hum response) is well represented, however. Thus, the Whitney seems to be attempting to set a trend. They have even filled the post-card racks in the lobby with "New Image" reproductions. Because of the decision to represent most artists by more than one work, nearly 10 per cent of the available wall space was used to promote this particular pocket of the current scene.

Two works instead of one multiplies the significance of each choice, rather than simply adding to it. Philip Guston's inclusion as a father-figure for the quirkiest aspects of current figuration was an inspired choice underlined by this decision and Miriam Schapiro's exclusion despite her maternal role in the birth of pattern painting is conversely glaring. Frank Stella's relevance to some of the

wilder sides of recent abstraction was reinforced, whereas Ellsworth Kelley's minimalism does not seem significant to current "cool" art despite its featured treatment.

The overall tone of the show is undeniably upbeat, hysterically so in some spots on the third floor, where hyperactive, overcrowded surfaces vie for attention with glitter, intense color, heavy texturing, and multiplied patterns (there is, however, a slightly more restrained and classical atmosphere on the fourth floor). The highlights of the show, both to and despite my somewhat reserved taste, are Jackie Ferrara's twisted woodblock tower, William Beckley's intriguing text and photo blow-up narratives, Bryan Hunt's frozen cascading ooze, Joyce Kozloff's decorative architectural-motif assemblages, Robert Moskowitz's new "new images," Judith Murray's eccentric abstractions, Kenneth Price's oddly beautiful cabinet displays of ceramic ware, Rodney Ripp's *Rosette*, a night

blooming garden of gargantuan lethal-looking flowers, and both Barbara Schwartz's peculiar and Christopher Wilmarth's exquisitely severe wall-oriented sculptures.

Amid the give-it-all-you've-got ambience of the show, Robert Mangold's bland geometry, Bruce Marden's cold noncolor color, and Richard Serra's studiously dumb surfaces had about as much resonance as a thud. If the show establishes anything about the current scene, it is that content is in, formalism out. More is definitely more than less is, and besides surface opulence, compositional daring, innovative use of materials, and the rejection of traditional formats, the new work either spells its meaning out in capital letters or at least implies it so insistently that you are compelled to locate a message in it.

The Whitney Biennial also reaffirms the presence of women on the art scene. The women's movement is still alive and well, at

least in art, where the most important development in feminism since the Women's Bank is about to take place. The New York Feminist Art Institute—the first comprehensive program of instruction in the visual arts based on feminist principles—will open in the Port Authority Truck Terminal, 325 Spring Street, next September. For two years, Miriam Schapiro, who pioneered West Coast innovations in feminist art education with Judy Chicago, has been developing the school's radically experimental curriculum with other women artists. A benefit to raise door-opening money for the institute is planned for Friday, March 30, on the mezzanine of One World Trade Center from 6 to 9 p.m. Gloria Steinheim, Marlo Thomas, and Eleanor Holmes Norton will host the festivities, and Carol Bellamy will introduce the guest of honor, Louise Nevelson. Tickets cost \$25 and are available from Nancy Azara, 46 Great Jones Street, N.Y. 10012. ■

GALLERIES

New Exhibitions

FRITZ ABADIE—Phoenix, 30 W 57, 245-5095 (Mar 17-Apr 5). Painting-collages.
"AFRICAN SPIRIT MASKS AND FIGURES"—African Tribal Arts, 84 E 10, 982-4556 (to Mar 31).
RICHARD ANUSZKIEWICZ—Alex Rosenberg, 20 W 57, 757-2700 (to Apr 14). "Centered Square" paintings.

NORMAN and LILA BACON—Incorporated Glines, 1449 2nd Av (75), 628-1902 (to Apr 6). Pottery, paintings, etc.

BARBARA BANDES—Harness House Gtry, 4 E 75, 288-2169 (Mar 16-Apr 14). Abstract impressionist works.

RENE BANN, RUDOLPH STAHL, JAMES M. DELARATO—Lynn Kottler, 3 E 65, RE 4-3491 (Mar 17-30).

JULIA BARKLEY, JOAN GORDANO, PAUL ROSS, MERYL TARADASH—Women in the Arts, 435 Broome, 966-5894 (to Mar 24).

GLEN BAXTER—Gotham Book Mark Gtry, 41 W 47 (to Mar 30). Drawings and prints.

NIEVES MARSCHALECK BILLMYER—Bodley II, 1063 Madison (80), 249-2155 (Mar 19-28). Drawings done in the Hans Hofmann School, 1952-54.

DOROTHY BLOCK—47 Bond St Gtry, 475-3899 (Mar 18-Apr 7). Retrospective of paintings.

MARY BOTHWELL—Carlye Gtry of Fine Art, 18 E 78, 535-9443 (Mar 19-Apr 2). Paintings.
JOAN BROWN—Allan Frumkin, 50 W 57 (to Apr 6). New paintings.
MARY PEN-FONG CHAO—Cha-

tham Sq Lbr, 33 E Bway (to Apr 15). Watercolors.
CLINTON CLINE—Ericson, 23 E 74, 737-6155 (to Apr 26). Recent works.

ELISA D'ARRIGO—Weill Gtry, 92nd Street YM-YWHA, Lexington Av (Mar 14-May 24). Clay works.

GENE DAVIS—Droll/Kolbert, 724 5th Av (57), 541-6006 (to Mar 31). Retrospective of drawings, 1952-78.

PRISCILLA DERVEN—5th St Gtry, 336 E 5, 777-0898 (to Mar 31). Paintings, drawings, and reliefs on paper.

DALE DIRKS, ALBERT BREAUX, JERRY MADSON—Lynn Kottler, 3 E 65, RE 4-3491 (Mar 17-30).

JEAN DUBUFFET—Pace, 32 E 57, HA 1-3292 (Mar 17-Apr 21). "Theatres de Memoire: Scenes Champetres," paintings and drawings.

MARC EISENBERG—Ellen Sragow, 43 5th Av (to Mar 31).

JOHN EVANS—Key, 130 Greene, 966-3597 (Mar 17-Apr 14). Books, collages, paintings.
HERBERT FERBER—M. Knoedler, 19 E 70, 794-0550 (to Mar 29). Sculpture.

AGUSTIN FERNANDEZ—ACA, 21 E 67, 628-2440 (to Mar 24). Recent paintings and drawings.

"FIVE NEW PAINTERS"—SoHo Ctr for Visual Artists, 114 Prince, 226-1995 (to Mar 31). Works by Tony Bechara, Christian de Bosc-hnek, Allan Grollier, Melissa Meyer, Carol Ross Schmick.

"FOUR SCOTTISH ARTISTS"—Artists' Space, 105 Hudson (opens Mar 17). Works by James Birrell, Michael Davey, Gareth Fisher, Thomas Lawson.

Continued on next page

STAINED GLASS SUPPLIES

Rolando Peña
"The Black Prince"

Art directors

stephen s'soreff

Abstract
ABSTRACTFAITH
RINGGOLD