

POST

Boys & Girls

N I N E P A I N T E R S

November 15, 1990 **ARTISTS SPACE** *January 5, 1991*



NINE PAINTERS

Ken Aptekar
Greg Davidek
Nancy Davidson
Greg Drasler
Lee Gordon
Margo Machida
Holly Morse
Lillian Mulero
Millie Wilson

Catalogue essays by

Carol Zemel
Michael Kimmel
Renée Green
James Saslow

Organized by

Ken Aptekar

Introduction

Post-Boys & Girls: Nine Painters is not a show for Jesse Helms, nor the Cincinnati kids who went after Dennis Barrie, nor the troops massing against the NEA. All of them would be offended by at least some of the paintings exhibited, and are hereby forewarned to stay home. And too bad for them. Rich with visual pleasures, this show means to stimulate people's thinking about what men and women are supposed to be, and about what a painter in 1990 can say about that.

The nine artists I have gathered together are all painting their way out of gendered corners. Additionally, their work challenges the notion that only the media arts can mount social critique, that a painting is simply too precious, too tradition-bound to make a difference. Some of the work wrestles with authority in the forms of the father, king or hero; the museum installation; or the minimalist painting that refuses to communicate. Some works assert the existence of gendered subjectivities that have mostly been ignored or suppressed: feminine, Puerto Rican, gay, lesbian, Asian-American. Other paintings invite us with their seductive illusionism and sensuality to freely desire even while social injunctions keep saying "NO." Yet other works turn the tables on language that has been used to restrain, discriminate against, or belittle, in relation to sex and gender.

No stylistic line dominates. Formal strategies range from abstraction to appropriation, romantic realism to cool conceptualism, expressionism to process art. Nor is any value attached to "pure" painting and drawing accomplished without the aid of photography; most of these artists use photographs or slides in the creation of their work.

This choice of using paint now comes at a price. To make paintings has been, with few

exceptions, the exclusive activity of white men, some of whom could then choose other white men to assume the title "artist-genius." For painters expecting to subvert or at least challenge the social order, participating in—or being shut out by—that old boy network triggers enormous conflicts. Despite all the satisfactions of making paintings and the medium's rich history, we can't avoid painting's identification with privilege, racism, sexism, Eurocentrism.

The artists in *Post-Boys&Girls: Nine Painters* all confront these contradictions; they get their hands dirty. While the look of each artist's work is distinct, all share the hope that painting can produce new freedoms for yesterday's boys and girls.

I would like to thank the four writers, Carol Zemel, Micheal Kimmel, Renée Green and James Saslow, whose essays contribute enormously to the meaning and pleasure of this show. My conversations with each of them have been stimulating and formative in shaping the exhibition as well as my own artwork.

There are many others whose comments, suggestions and support have been helpful to me. Marcia Tucker first suggested how an exhibition that includes painting can shape our ideas about gender with her show *The Other Man; Alternative Representations of Masculinity* at The New Museum in 1987. Her belief and interest in my work has set a high standard for me, and her ideas for this show have greatly enriched it. Connie Butler has been encouraging, accomodating and eager to join with me in making the show a success, as have Susan Wyatt and the staff at Artists Space. My special thanks to Laura Miller for this catalogue's thoughtful, fresh design. Others whose input I gratefully acknowledge are Robert Atkins, Carol Becker, Nancy Gonchar, Kellie Jones, Susana Leval, Melissa Myer, Lowery Stokes Sims, and Ann Snitow and fellow members of her enor-

mously stimulating seminar "Sex, Gender, and Consumer Culture" at NYU's Institute for the Humanities. Eunice Lipton, my resident critic, confidante, and cohort has profoundly influenced both my painting and my work on this project with her incandescent thoughts, passionate feminism, humor, commitment, and rigorous intellect. I'd be lost without her.

Finally, my gratitude goes to all the artists for their participation. The lively exchanges I've had with each of them about their work and mine, and about this show have made the experience a deeply satisfying one. This is the artworld I hoped to find when, as a graduate student in 1973, I moved to New York City: smart artists and writers feverishly creating work that made you overexcited, and talking to each other about it all with delight.

— Ken Aptekar

KEN APTEKAR

Born Detroit, Michigan
Lives New York, New York

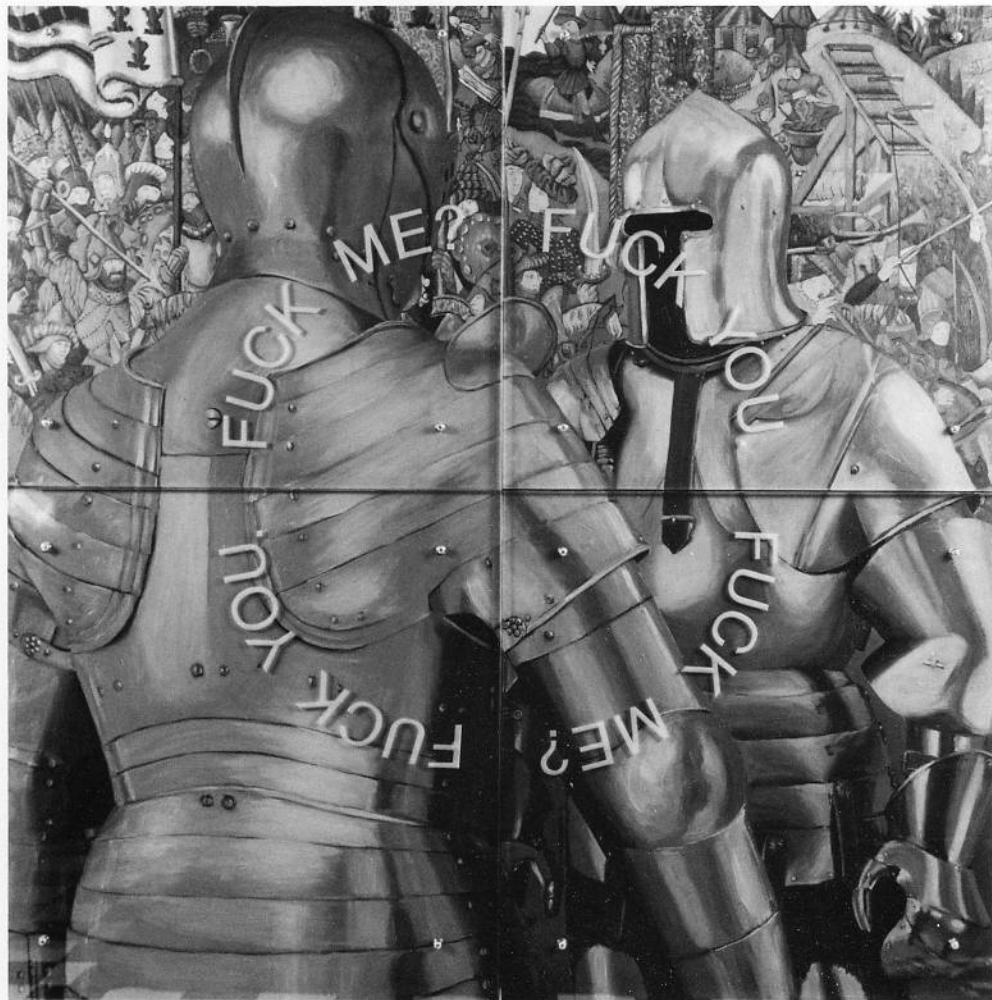
Education

1975 Pratt Institute, Brooklyn, NY MFA
1973 University of Michigan,
Ann Arbor BFA

Selected Exhibitions

- 1990 *Critical Revisions*
Bess Cutler Gallery
New York, NY
Ken Aptekar
Margulies-Taplin Gallery
North Miami, FL
- 1989 *Ken Aptekar*
Bess Cutler Gallery
New York, NY
Gender Fictions
SUNY Binghamton Art Museum
Binghamton, NY
Serious Fun, Truthful Lies
Randolph Street Gallery
Chicago, IL
- 1987 *The Other Man, Alternative
Representations of Masculinity*
The New Museum of
Contemporary Art
New York, NY
- 1986 *Group Painting Exhibition*
Art in General
New York, NY





Above:
Fuck Me? Fuck You. 1990
 oil on wood, sandblasted glass, bolts
 Polyptych, 60x60 inches overall

Opposite:
Handsome 1990
 oil on wood, sandblasted glass, bolts
 30x30 inches