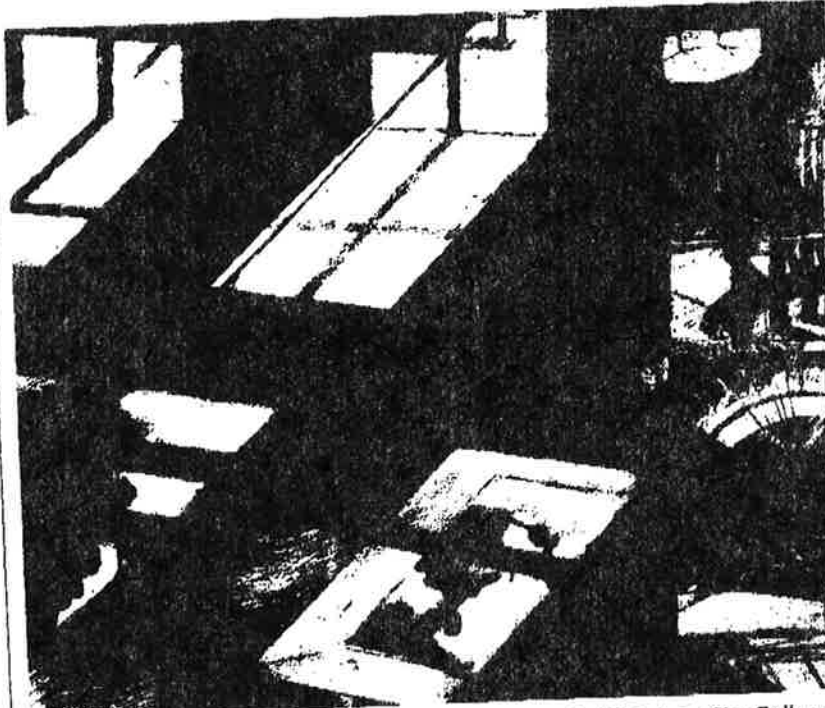


New York Reviews



Marcy Edelstein, *The Notebooks I*, 1981, etching, 23½ by 28 inches. City Gallery.



Kiki Smith, *X ray*, 16½ by 13½ inches, from "Life Wants To Live," 1983, multimedia installation. The Kitchen.

virtuoso performances, in which command of technique is beautifully subordinated to overall effect.

Also compelling, though more understated, were Cathy Kernan's intaglios. Her semiabstract landscapes are composed of airbrushed images broken down into layers to look very much like fractured Precisionist paintings.

A number of the works had somewhat surreal overtones. Marcy Edelstein's black-

and-white etchings depict deserted structures that have been rendered mysterious by cropping and unusual vantage points. Rick Harrison's playful transformations of ordinary household tools into exotic creatures are amusing tributes to M. C. Escher.

Reflecting the generally introverted nature of the show, only one of the artists explored the obvious relationship between printmaking and graphic design. The exception, Calvin Reid, submitted a set of humorous lithographs that combined words and images to convey contradictory messages. Also noteworthy were Kathy Carraccio's paper fans assembled from remnants of rejected prints, Kazuhisa Honda's mezzotint landscapes combined with real objects and Joan Kurahara's painterly depiction of a leaf.

All in all this was a gentle show that murmured instead of shouting, full of modest pleasures and ornamented with a few real gems.

—E.H.

KIKI SMITH

The Kitchen

ALL PERFORMANCE, and a good proportion of inanimate art, assumes the expressive importance of the human body. What this body is and does (and the difference between being and doing, which, cast as the problem of fate and free will, is of more than passing philosophical interest)

was the subject of Smith's "Life Wants To Live" installation at the Kitchen. Using an impressive variety of medical recording techniques, including CAT scans, X rays and stethoscopic readings of cardiac, respiratory and gastrointestinal functions, along with traditional photography, she produced a six-minute-long series of images and sounds of the body's internal processes and external geography; a few satellite views of the earth were included as well.

In color-slide form, these visual records were projected onto and around nine chesecloth sheets suspended from the ceiling, each painted with the light yellow outline of a skeleton. The ghostly skeletons—pale shadows suggestive of those left by humans incinerated at Ground Zero in Hiroshima or Nagasaki—dangled uncertainly amid a constantly shifting and dissolving sea of viscera (interspersed with a few LANDSAT views of the earth, our planetary body, as seen from space). On a separate pair of sheets, film loops of physical parts and landscape fragments were projected onto the midpoints of two skeletons sketched in black, in a facetious animated representation of the processes by which the emotional system introjects external phenomena and expresses internal physiological events.

A third set of sheets, hung behind the film and slide projectors, was painted with *New York Post* headlines and news-story excerpts heralding lurid crimes, mostly of intrafamilial violence and all perpetrated by women in acts of vengeance (which Smith believes are heroic). Abusive fathers and boyfriends and insupportable children are each in their own harrowingly appropriate way dispensed with, while the indefatigable avengers, one quote tells us, were "upset but not afraid." The sounds of heart throbs, heavy breathing, fighting and other less easily identified beats and drones united the three elements of this exhibition, bringing the characteristic rhythms of pulp drama to bear on the more authoritative images of life inside the organism.

Despite the sophistication of the apparatus used in the creation of this installation (which involved the credited assistance of more than a dozen people) and the breadth of its scope, the techniques and truths it presented us with were, for the most part, homespun. That the human body is an infinite and mysterious thing, whose biology and chemistry can lead to biologically paradoxical acts of destruction, is not news; but neither is it information that grows stale. And the suggestion that violence sometimes constitutes a "life-affirming choice," to quote the artist, is no less interesting now than it ever was.

—N.H.