

THE KITCHEN

CENTER FOR
VIDEO, MUSIC,
DANCE AND
PERFORMANCE

Afterimage, May 1982

REVIEWS

Manhattan short cuts

Janice Tanaka/Beaver Valley, Man-power, at Anthology Film Archives, March 20; **Deans Keppel/Quit Kicking Sand in My Face**, at Anthology Film Archives, March 6; **Skip Blumberg/Pick up Your Feet: The Double Dutch Show**, at Anthology Film Archives, Feb. 27; **Michael Smith**, at the Whitney Museum, Feb. 19-March 11; and **Space Force/Art of the State**, at The Kitchen, through February.

ANN-SARGENT WOOSTER

The gaudy patchwork quilts of electronic landscape produced by Space Force OECD (Ocean Earth Construction and Development Corporation) in "Art of the State" at The Kitchen raised almost as many questions as they gave opportunities for pictorial pleasure. If you like an abstract, particulate view of nature, Seurat from outer space, then the digital videotapes from the satellites surveying the earth provide a great deal of aesthetic pleasure. I don't find myself particularly concerned with the issue of whether or not they are art. Clearly, the Space Force thinks they are, asserting in the program notes: "Four hundred years after the beginning of the Renaissance ... Landsat has been said to be the most important photographic experiment in history; it would follow that it can become a basis for an important experiment in art history." I think the imagery is a new class of phenomenon—the violent hues are at once splendid grid painting and a more detailed form of coloring states and counties in order to distinguish them. I'm not sure, though, that an activity in which one of the key negotiations between NASA and the Space Force is about a "mathematically programmed display of meaningful colors" falls in the same class as aesthetic decisions made in painting, film or video. There is also the issue of plenitude. In a form of asexual reproduction, each square or pixel can be blown-up to become a "picture" in its own right. The potential volume of this mechanically produced "information" results in what the *New York Times* calls a "data glut," one that overwhelms our ability to experience it—imagine 200,000 Titans or two million Dorothea Langes. Scientists may argue they need the information to drill for oil or predict the weather, the military may declare they need it to keep an eye on the other side, but we are reaching the saturation point. Soon these machine-produced "art works" may only be seen by other machines, as their volume exceeds our ability to appreciate or analyze them.

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